

such people that Paul wrote these words: 'Be ye imitators of God.'

We are now in a position to realize their significance. They implied a way of looking on God which was entirely new. For the first time people enjoyed the unspeakable privilege of having a God who could be imitated. The object of their devotion was no unknowable One, or disreputable many, but a being whose nature was love, and among whose chief attributes were righteousness and holiness. These were revealed to men in the Person of Jesus Christ, in whose human life the

very essence of divinity was manifested. Jesus called on His disciples to imitate Him (e.g. Jn 13¹⁵), and His example is held up for imitation in the Apostolic writings (1 P 2²¹, etc.). But since Jesus is so related to God that he who sees Him sees the Father (Jn 14⁹), in imitating Jesus we are imitating God.

Thus the study of the pagan background of the New Testament, illustrated by reference to the heathenism of the day, makes us more keenly conscious than ever of the wondrousness of the good news brought to mankind by Jesus Christ.

Recent Foreign Theology.

Dr. Loofs on 'Russellism.'

IN May 1918 Dr. Loofs wrote an article in *Deutsch-Evangelisch*, entitled 'The International Bible Students' Association.' Lutheran pastors had appealed to him for information concerning a sect which claimed not to be a sect, whose vigorous propaganda was disturbing their societies. Some mistakenly affirmed that the new teaching was Seventh-day Adventism in another dress; newspaper reports were usually a strange blending of truth and error. Dr. Loofs was, therefore, constrained to undertake a task for which he is eminently qualified. As a scrupulously fair-minded critic he began by pointing out some prevalent misconceptions of Russellism, and then proceeded to expose the fallacies of its main tenets as expounded in the works of its founder. This article, published as a pamphlet, is now issued in a greatly enlarged edition.¹

Russellites maintain that Charles T. Russell (1852-1916) was 'the greatest religious teacher since the Apostle Paul.' His biographer speaks of him as 'pastor,' but he described himself as an 'editor.' He made no claim to be a theologian, but only a Bible student. The suggestion that from the business point of view he made a good thing out of his propaganda is dismissed as baseless. His will shows that 'self-enrichment was

not his aim in life.' Nor is there any evidence that his divorce from his wife was owing to any other reason than that 'two human beings, each possessed of a strong will, were not able to adapt themselves to one another after they were both firmly convinced that they were called to be prophets.' The judges found that Mrs. Russell's complaints against her husband were not established, but decreed a separation inasmuch as there was no hope of a reconciliation. Russell allowed himself to be identified with 'the faithful and wise servant whom his lord hath set over his household,' but it was his wife who first applied Mt 24^{45ff.} to him. She, however, by 'extraordinary and ridiculous' exegesis of the parable, held that 'as in the human body there are two eyes, two ears, two hands and two feet' she and her husband were 'one in the Lord.' Later she found a reference to Dr. Russell in the closing verses of the parable, and expected to take his place when his portion was appointed with the hypocrites.

Concerning the Christology taught by Russell, Dr. Loofs says that it is Arian, although as it is sometimes formulated it might seem to have affinities with Gnosticism. The Spirit of God is not regarded as personal, and the doctrine of the Trinity is dismissed as nonsense. Jesus, as a spiritual being, appeared in various forms after His resurrection; His body was miraculously removed from the grave, and it is not necessary to know what became of it. Russell has, however, done greater justice than official systems of doctrine to the teaching of Ro 8²⁹ and cognate passages con-

¹ *Die Internationale Vereinigung Ernster Bibelforscher*, von Dr. Friedrich Loofs, Professor in Halle. Zweite, sehr erweiterte Auflage. 1921. Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung.

cerning the relation between Christ and Christians, that is to say, between the Head and the members of the body. That relation is described under the figure of 'a pyramid whose upper part is suspended above the rest; the upper part is in itself a pyramid, but a pyramid is also formed by connecting it with the lower portion, which is not a pyramid unless it is combined with the upper portion or head.'

The basal principles of Russell's eschatology are that the soul is not immortal; that when the body dies the soul sinks into unconsciousness, and unless it has part in the first resurrection suffers extinction, which is the second death. The number of the finally lost is, however, small; for, although few are now in the narrow way, in the millennium there will be, and already is, 'a highway of holiness'; all who are living then, and all who have had part in the first resurrection, in whatever age they have lived, shall find it easy to enter into eternal life, which will be a life upon this earth.

According to Russell the thousand years' reign has already begun. His study of Biblical chronology led him, from what Dr. Loofs regards as mistaken premisses, to the conclusion that the end of the 6000 years after the creation of Adam (4128 B.C.) was in the autumn of 1872. Russell himself recognizes the discrepancy between this date and the date arrived at by another series of calculations which fixed 1874 for the spiritual—not bodily—advent of Jesus. His own 'harmonizing' suggestion is that 1874 ends the 6000 years of sin, and the difference of two years is to be accounted for by 'the period of sinlessness in Eden which properly belongs to the reign of righteousness.' Reckoning the forty years of the great tribulation as beginning in 1874, Russell taught, before the Great War, that in 1914 the thousand years' reign began. In his latest writings traces of his original teaching remain, but the events of the last seven years have necessitated alterations as well as re-statements. For example, 1914 was, first of all, the date which marked the

end of the times of tribulation; afterwards it was referred to as closing 'the times of the nations and kingdoms,' and the beginning of the times of dissolution; indeed in 1918 the *Watch Tower* (*Wachturm*)—the official journal of Russellism—claimed that Russell had proved, from the chronology of the Bible, that 1914 would be the date of the outbreak of the Great War of the nations.

Since Russell's death (1916) the propaganda has continued, not only in his spirit, but in strict adherence to his own tenets. Dr. Loofs finds characteristic American exaggeration in the title of one of the most frequently advertised free and illustrated lectures: 'Millions who are now alive will never die.' In the forty-seven millennial years that have passed since 1874, there have not been conversions numerous enough to warrant the use of the word 'millions.'

Dr. Loofs refers to the anti-national teaching of Russellism: 'Nations are of Satanic origin; their time is approaching its end; no remedy can save them from the collapse which was initiated by the world-war.' Special attention is called to the strange amalgam of antiquated notions and modern ideas. On this account it is not easy to counteract its teaching; the only successful refutation of its fallacies must be based upon a faith in the gospel of the Reformation which does not shrink from historical criticism of the Bible. The more earnestly the Scriptures are searched, the more clearly will it appear that Russell's *Bible Studies* (*Schriftstudien*), so far from showing the way, lead astray, and those who know what the gospel really is will perceive that his *Truths* (*Wahrheiten*)—'artificial calculations and prophecies difficult to comprehend'—cannot be 'the truth' of which our Lord said: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes.'

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