

# PEOPLE'S PULPIT...



Sermon by  
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## Doctrines of Christ Versus Doctrines of Men.

Whoever will do the will of My Father which is in heaven shall know My doctrine. Ye do make void the law of God through your traditions—the traditions of the ancients (John vii, 17; Mark vii, 13; 1 Peter i, 18).

Brooklyn Tabernacle, March 6.—Pastor Russell preached twice here today. His discourse on "Inferno" was delivered in Brooklyn's largest Auditorium, the Academy of Music, which was overcrowded. It was estimated in advance that this subject would draw a larger crowd than the Tabernacle would accommodate. The other meetings of the day were held in the Tabernacle. We report Pastor Russell's discourse from the text foregoing, as follows:—

It is difficult to please everybody. The duty of a Christian minister is to seek chiefly to please the Lord. "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer" (Psalm xli, 14). Our ministerial friends seem to be annoyed because we preach the "doctrines" of Christ. In substance, their sentiment is: Brother Russell, Do you not know that in the fashionable topics of our day doctrines are tabooed by the great ministers of all denominations? Instead, as you perceive from the newspaper announcements, it is now quite the thing to discuss political, scientific and sociological doctrines. You should give the public lectures on subjects like these: Social Democracy; Rapid Transit in Brooklyn, from the text, "Many shall run to and fro;" Female Suffrage; The Boys' Brigade; The Best Novel of the Year; The Narrow Way of the Bicycle Rider; Will the Comet Sweep the Earth With Its Tail; Can Football Survive, etc.; or occasionally, for effect, gently rake the rich on better housing for the poor, or belabor the Trusts for soaring prices of food. Such topics as these, Brother Russell, interest the Christian public in our day. And the public constitute our principal congregations when we lift our largest collections. The only people who will be interested in the doctrines you are preaching are the old fogey, out-of-date folk, and you will find the majority of them poor in this world's riches. For pity's sake stop teaching the "doctrines of Christ"! Doctrines were good enough in the days of Jesus and Paul and Calvin and Luther and Wesley, but the people are not accustomed to them nowadays.

I have no fault to find with my Christian brethren in the ministry of the various denominations. It is not to me, but to the Lord, that they must give an account of their stewardship—of their grand opportunities for declaring the Gospel of Christ. To their own Master they must stand or fall. It is not for me to forbid them because they follow not with us. It is for each one who stands as an ambassador of Christ and of God to follow his own convictions faithfully. Besides, I am assured that many of them are loyal to the core.

It is my understanding that, as a minister of the Gospel, I should take for my guide in this matter the instructions of my ordination. Like St. Paul my ordination to preach the Gospel was from the Lord. I must preach the message which I believe he has given me (1 Timothy ii, 7). As his ambassador I must preach the Word, following the example of the Lord and the Apostles. As they avoided politics, so must I. As they avoided vain philosophy and "science falsely so called," so must I. As they preached the doctrines of Christ, so must I—whether men hear or forbear to hear. I remember the words of St. Paul to Timothy: "Preach the Word, . . . with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own preferences they shall gather teachers to themselves; having itching ears they shall turn away their ears from the Truth and shall be turned unto fables" (1 Timothy iv, 2-4).

### There is a Reason.

There must be a reason why Christian preachers and their hearers have abandoned the study of the "Doctrines of Christ" set forth by the Apostles and Prophets. Is it not because they no longer believe those doctrines? Is it not true that the College and Seminary Professors have led the majority of the ministry afar into unbelief in the Bible, and that these ministers are gradually leading their confiding flocks into other "pastures green" than those which the Great Shepherd and his appointed nouthpieces, the Apostles, approved? Is not the Higher-Criticism infidelity of the colleges gradually penetrating even into the Sunday School Lessons and even into the High Schools of our land—undermining all faith in God's Book? But what led to this departure from the Word of God—into Higher-Criticism infidelity and into the Evolution theory, which makes void the Word of God; and into Christian Science, which puts a premium on

falsehood; and into Theosophy and Spiritism, the deceptions of the fallen angels—demonism? How comes it that all these unscriptural theories now flourish, whereas only a century ago God's Word was respected and its doctrines were studied by Christian people of various and conflicting creeds? The answer is that with the increasing light of our day the creeds of the past are seen to be fallacious, irrational, by all who use their thinking apparatus. The leaders in the various Churches discovered this in advance of their flocks. They promptly and reverently set their creeds on a high shelf where the people might not so particularly notice their flaws, but might continue their reverence for them, until gradually their attention would be drawn aside and their hope and faith transplanted to Evolutionary soil or Theosophic and Spiritualistic chimeras.

With the decline of Christian doctrines, including heart union with Christ and an understanding of its terms and conditions, Churchianity came in, to take the place of Christianity. Today the pride of all denominations centers, not in their doctrines, but in their institutions. The people are no longer exhorted to hold fast to the doctrines of Methodism, Calvinism, etc., but to hold fast to the System. They are no longer encouraged to think of their system as being the only one, outside of which there would be no salvation, but they are encouraged to cultivate a partisan spirit, which takes pride in their organization, its wealth, the value of its church property, the largeness of its collections, the grandeur of its music, the wisdom, learning and ability of its preachers, and the fashion and wealth of its constituency.

It is not our wish to offer a single unkind or unbrotherly criticism. It is our duty and privilege, however, to point out that the creed doctrines of the various denominations, now set on the shelf as too frail and imperfect to stand handling and investigation, are not and never were the doctrines of Christ and the Apostles. It is our duty and pleasure to show forth to Christian people to the extent of our ability that the teachings of the Bible, the doctrines of Christ, are grand, noble, reasonable, "worthy of all acceptance." To the extent that we succeed in doing this we are bringing back straying Christians from the deceptive bogs of Evolution and Higher-Criticism to the firm foundation, the solid rock of Truth—God's Word.

### "The Wounds of a Friend."

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend" is the Divine assurance. We cannot, therefore, better show our friendship and Christian love to our brethren than by pulling down from the shelf their revered creeds and allowing them to fall in pieces beyond repair. If every church could be thus induced to pull down its creed-idol, the present Laodicean stage of the Church would speedily come to its senses, as suggested by our Lord. Then, instead of feeling themselves rich and increased in goods and having need of nothing, our dear Christian brethren of all denominations would realize the meaning of our Lord's words—that Churchianity as a whole today is poor and naked and miserable and wretched and blind (Revelation iii, 14-22). As Christians of all denominations we have cause of rejoicing that we have outgrown the trundle-bed creeds of the past and that we can no longer wrap ourselves comfortably in the narrow bigotry of error. The Lord caused this to be written in the long-ago through the prophets, saying, "For the bed is shorter than that a man can stretch himself on it; and the covering narrower than that he can wrap himself in it" (Isaiah xxviii, 20). If in connection with this growth which has come to us and by which we have nobler conceptions than had our forefathers of the rights of man under the Golden Rule, it is a cause for rejoicing. Even though the transition has been accompanied by a great falling away into Higher-Criticism, Infidelity, Evolution, etc., nevertheless even these errors are in many respects preferable to the blindness and bigotry. Happy are we, dear friends, if, the eyes of our understanding being opened, our hearts are led to a closer walk with God, a more careful and prayerful study of his Word, and to a subsequent growth in grace and in the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Do some inquire for clearer specification respecting the features of the reels put upon the shelf, which we think should be no longer cared for, but allowed to fall? We answer that of course there are good features in all of our creeds—truths which will never fall. But with these truths are mixed the errors which are, as the Proverb says, "Dead flies [that] cause the ointment to stink" (Ecclesiastes x, 1). There is plenty more of the ointment in God's Word. It is indeed the "balm of Gilead" and pure—without the corroding fly of error. This is what we all want, whatsoever our denominational name, and the sooner we get it the better for us, for the Cause and for "the brethren," whom we love to serve.

I give an illustration: Those of us who are Calvinistic may well hold fast to some of the precious Scripture teachings so long revered, but we want to cast out quickly and effectively the gross error which teaches that all the non-elect, instead of having hope for a blessing through "the elect," are to be everlastingly tormented. Those of us who are Arminian in doctrine have much that is precious, but need also to cast away from us the thought that our loving Heavenly Father is merely good-intentioned and lacks the power, the ability, to make his benevolent desires effective towards any except a small handful of humanity. Our Disciple friends should cast aside the thought contained in their teachings that only the water-immersed experience forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God and salvation from eternal torment. Similarly those of us who are Baptists, while holding to the precious truths which so long have comforted and strengthened us, should insist now on casting away as unscriptural and irrational the thought that has long perplexed us, namely, that no others than the water-immersed could be members of the Church of Christ, heirs of glory, and be saved from damnation. Once we get these absurdities removed, not only from our heads and hearts, but also from our professions, we shall be ready and anxious to have the doctrines of Christ on these subjects. Then we will search the Word and have God's blessing in finding its harmonies. "He that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Matthew vii, 8). But so long as we hold to the fallacies how can we seek or pray for or find the Truth?

### The Value of Doctrines.

The word doctrine signifies teaching. The doctrines of Christ, therefore, are the teachings of Christ; the doctrines of men, the teachings of men. What the Church needs today is, to receive into good and honest hearts afresh the doctrines of Jesus and the Apostles—allowing these to displace the doctrines which Christendom now holds but disesteems, and which were formulated in a time of less light than the present. Instead, therefore, of discouraging each other in respect to the study of the doctrines of Christ, we should, as Christians, become more earnest in the study every day, hoping and expecting that in the wonderful light of our time God would be able to make clear to our understanding the harmonious interpretations of his Word. We should study to find the relationship between Election and Free Grace. We should clearly understand what is meant by baptism and what kind of baptism is necessary for our induction into the Body of Christ as members. On every line we should be looking for the harmonies, instead of rejoicing in the errors which have long divided us into hundreds of sects and parties.

However, in some respects sectarian energy is better than federated death. Might we not even say that if all the creeds were dashed to pieces and each Christian stood forth unshackled as respects denominational bonds, and the result would be a great improvement so far as individual thought, study, and relationship to God would be concerned? In a word, each Christian should have his own creed, his individual faith; and none should do more or less than to assist his mind to a full understanding of the Word of the Lord in respect to every subject.

### Doctrines of Men.

All doctrines which cannot show a foundation and full authority in the teaching of Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets, are doctrines of men. The teachings from above come to us through heaven-appointed channels. The jargon which prevails in Christendom in respect to Christian doctrines proves that they are of human origin. The Scriptures alone furnish us

### The Doctrines of Christ.

Briefly stated they declare, "To us there is one God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians viii, 6). To us there is one Holy Spirit; to us there is "one Church of the Living God, whose names are written in heaven;" to us there is "one Lord and one faith and one baptism; one God and Father of all" (Ephesians iv, 4-6). However impossible these statements may have appeared during the "dark ages," they are no longer so. The light of Divine Truth is now shining. God has not only put into our possession wonderful Bibles, and wonderful helps for Bible-study, but has also given us the ability to read, to study the Word critically. And he is pleased now to assure us through the prophet that we are living in the time when "the wise shall understand" the "mystery hidden from past ages and dispensations," which could not be understood previously without working an interference with God's eternal purposes.

What, then, dear friends, shall we do? Shall we float on ingloriously, daily, hourly coming closer and closer to the great cataclysm: which is swallowing up so many now in infidelity, called Higher-Criticism? Or shall we accept God's Helping Hand, the doctrines of Christ, and know the Truth and be made free from the error and be brought into fellowship with our Redeemer on the highest plane? Let us, as the "wise virgins" of our Lord's parable, wake from sleep and trim our lamps, and, in the light thereof, see God's wonderful riches of glory as they stand revealed on the threshold of the New Dispensation—the Millennial reign of Christ!

In conclusion: Our Lord admonishes us along the lines of this discourse as follows: "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich, and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eye-salve, that thou mayest see" (Revelation iii, 18).

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