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RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF CHARLES TAZE RUSSELL AND THEIR REFLECTION IN THE TEACHINGS OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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The article examines the religious views of the founder of the Watchtower Society, Charles Taze Russell, and their influence on the development of the doctrinal system of Jehovah's Witnesses. The role of a religious leader in the eyes of his followers is described. The doctrines concerning the nature of the Divine, the name of God, human nature, the state of the dead, hell, the second coming of Christ, immortality and eternal life are illuminated. It has been established which views of Russell remained unchanged in the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses, and which underwent a certain correction.

Keywords: *Trinity, Jehovah, soul, Millennium, second presence of Christ, immortality*

Introduction. Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916) was the founder of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society and the International Bible Students Association. From this movement originated the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and numerous communities of Bible Students. Russell was born on February 16, 1852, in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Charles' parents belonged to the Presbyterian Church, but at a young age, he joined the Congregational denomination. After experiencing disappointment, in 1869 he began attending a small group of Adventist Christians in his hometown, and the following year Charles founded his own Bible study group. Later, his associates began to call him «Pastor Russell». In 1879, he began publishing Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence. Later, in 1884, Charles Russell founded the Watchtower Society and became its first president. This marked the beginning of the International Bible Researchers' Movement, headquartered at the Allegine Bible House. In 1909, the office moved to Brooklyn, New York. Russell is the author of a large number of articles in the Watchtower magazine, including a significant number of books and brochures. It is especially worth noting that he is the author of a six-volume work, *The Study of Scriptures*, in which he set out his doctrinal ideas that formed the basis of the above religious movements. Although his associates called him a «Pastor,» he had no special theological education¹. In 1882, Charles was chosen as his spiritual mentor by a group of his followers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. During his lifetime, Russell was chosen as a mentor to about 500 groups of like-minded people in the United States and Britain².

Charles Russell did not avoid open discussions with ministers of various Christian churches on controversial issues. His performances had a great impact on the audience. For example, immediately after one of the debates, a minister of one of the churches

¹ Chryssides G. *Historical Dictionary of Jehovah's Witnesses*. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2008. P. 119-120.

² *Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*. New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1993. P. 54.

approached Russell and said, «I am glad to see you turn the hose on hell and put out the fire»³. Russell during his life and after his death, like-minded people have repeatedly acknowledged: «a faithful and wise slave», mentioned in Matthew 24: 45-47. This statement meant that this man was appointed by God to: «provide timely spiritual nourishment for believers. «Thousands of readers of Pastor Russell's writings believe that he filled the office of « that faithful and wise servant»⁴. We also have evidence that Charles Russell personally called himself a «faithful and wise slave»: «His modesty and humility precluded him from openly claiming this title, but he admitted as much in private conversation»⁵. He often tried to spread his views among a large number of people. In particular, the first president of the Society used Newspaper Gossiping. Pastor Russell's sermons were published in many American periodicals, and by 1913 his articles had reached 15 million readers⁶.

The best way to spread his views was the biblical film «Photo-Drama of Creation», which premiered in 1914. This eight-hour film showed the entire biblical story, including the process of the Creation of the World and the Flood. The film entered the history of world cinema as «the first major screenplay which incorporated synchronized sound (recorded speech), moving film, and magic lantern color slides»⁷.

Pastor Russell also frequently preached in the cities of the United States and Canada, and since 1891 has visited Europe twelve times⁸. In particular, on March 24, 1911, the pastor visited the city of Lviv (Ukraine), where he planned to deliver a speech: «Zionism in Prophecy»⁹.

Charles Russell died on October 31, 1916, and Joseph Franklin Rutherford became the next president of the Watchtower Society¹⁰. It was he who, in 1931, at a public convention in Columbus, Ohio, announced to his fellow believers: «We desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, Jehovah's witnesses»¹¹. Since then, international Bible scholars have adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses¹². This movement is known to the world under this name to this day. The religious movement of Jehovah's Witnesses has spread throughout the globe, and today has representatives in 240 countries and territories, and continues to grow rapidly. As of the end of 2020, the number of Jehovah's Witnesses in the world is approximately 8.5 million¹³. Among them, in Ukraine, there are 128 thousand people¹⁴. As Charles Russell became the founder of the powerful and

³ Ibid. P. 130.

⁴ Biography // The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence. 1916. No. 23, Vol. 37. P. 357.

⁵ Ibidem.

⁶ Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom. New York: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1993. P. 58.

⁷ Timeline of Greatest Film Milestones and Turning Points in Film History: The Year 1914 // Filmsite: The Greatest and Best in Movie History. URL: <https://www.filmsite.org/1914-filmhistory.html>

⁸ Redeker C. Pastor C.T. Russell: Messenger of Millennial Hope, Distinguished Founder of the Bible Students and His Legacy. Temple City: Pastoral Bible Institute, 2006. P. 42-43.

⁹ 2002 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2002. P. 121.

¹⁰ Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom... P. 66.

¹¹ Isaiah's Prophecy – Light for All Mankind II. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2001. P. 53-54.

¹² This Is Our Spiritual Heritage // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 2013. No. 4, Vol. 134. P. 4.

¹³ 2020 Grand Totals // Watchtower Online Library. 2020. URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102020991>

¹⁴ «Country and Territory Reports» // Watchtower Online Library. 2020. URL: <https://wol.jw.org/en/wol/d/r1/lp-e/1102020992>

multimillion-dollar Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, there is a need to explore a number of his outstanding views that are reflected in the doctrinal system of this Religious Organization.

Historiography. Many researchers in world and domestic science have studied the dogmatic ideas of Charles Taze Russell. Most of these studies have focused on the biography and religious views of this charismatic figure and the history of the organization and beliefs of the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. Their studies can be divided into the following areas: 1) Soviet historiography; 2) modern scientific research – domestic and foreign; 3) confessional literature.

1) In the Soviet period, the authors, for example, E. Bartoshevich, E. Borisoglebskiy¹⁵, A. Moskalenko¹⁶ described the figure and views of Charles Russell, his activities and beliefs in the Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, guided by the narratives of communist ideology. However, their works contain significant historical material, as well as an analysis of the religious activities of this Organization.

2) Modern scientific works on the life and views of Charles Russell are characterized by adherence to scientific methodology. These include the works of P. Yarotskiy¹⁷, F. Zidek¹⁸. The peculiarity of F. Zidek's work is the description of the activity and development of Charles Russell's theology for each year of his life synchronously with the events, phenomena, scientific discoveries that took place in the world. A significant part of the sixth volume of the ten-volume work «History of Religion in Ukraine» edited by P. Yarotskiy is devoted to the description of the history, activities, and development of the doctrine of the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. In particular, it contains the stages of the formation of Charles Russell as a religious leader.

3) Confessional works can be divided into: a) works of Jehovah's Witnesses and Bible Students; b) works of authors of other denominations. The former include a book on the history of Jehovah's Witnesses published by the Watchtower Society¹⁹ and a book by C. Redeker published by the Pastoral Bible Institute²⁰. The authors of the second subgroup include: A. Dworkin's work «Pseudo-Christian sect «Jehovah's Witnesses»»²¹, which covers the history and views of Jehovah's Witnesses through the prism of the views of the Orthodox Church. The fundamental work of W. Martin²², a well-known Christian apologist from the United States, conducts a thorough analysis of the views reflected in the publications of the Watchtower Society on the part of Protestant ideology. In particular, he cites several quotations from the works of Charles Russell. There is a lot of useful information in these works, but its general content is biased, as the former tend to idealize Russell, and the latter tries to portray his views and activities mostly in a negative light.

¹⁵ Бартошевич Э., Борисоглебский Е. Именем бога Иеговы. Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1960. 160 с.; Бартошевич Э., Борисоглебский Е. Свидетели Иеговы. Москва: Издательство политической литературы, 1969. 216 с.

¹⁶ Москаленко А. Секта иеговистов и её реакционная сущность. Москва: Государственное издательство «Высшая школа», 1961. 70 с.

¹⁷ Історія релігії в Україні: у 10-ти т. / за ред. Яроцького П. Київ-Дрогобич: Сурма С, 2008. Т. 6: Пізній протестантизм в Україні (П'ятидесятники, Адвентисти, Свідки Єгови). 632 с.

¹⁸ Zydek F. Charles Taze Russell: Jego Życie I Czasy. Człowiek, Millennium I Posłannictwo. Białogard: Straż, 2016. 459 p.

¹⁹ Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom... 750 p.

²⁰ Redeker C. Op. cit.

²¹ Дворкин А. Псевдохристианская секта «Свидетели Иеговы». С.-Петербург: Формика, 2002. 78 с.

²² Мартин У. Царство Культов. Санкт-Петербург: Логос, 1992. 351 с.

The historiography of the study is extensive, but focuses largely on the study of the doctrinal system of Jehovah's Witnesses, with only partial attention to the views of Charles Russell. F. Zidek's work is primarily devoted to the life and work of the leader of the Bible Students, and only indirectly to the description of his religious views. And S. Redecker's book contains a biography and views of Charles Russell in the context of their influence on the beliefs not of Jehovah's Witnesses, but of the Pastoral Bible Institute, a group that broke away from the Watchtower Society. Therefore, in this article, we will attempt to highlight some outstanding dogmatic ideas of Charles Russell, which are covered in his fundamental work «Study of Scriptures», and explore how these views are reflected in the further development of the doctrine of the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Key definitions of this study. The Advent Christian Church is one of the main denominations that emerged from the movement of William Miller in the 1830s and 1840s, who preached the imminent Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the United States. The organizational church structure of this doctrine was formed in 1860. One of the founders of this movement was the miller Joseph Turner. The religious views of Adventist Christians were covered in the periodicals Second Advent Watchman and World's Crisis. The Adventist Christian Church was distinguished from traditional US denominations by its belief in the conditional immortality of man, as opposed to the belief in the immortality of the soul. As of 2007, Advent Christian Church had 23,000 members in the United States and has representatives in 20 countries²³.

A look at the nature of the Deity. Throughout his religious career, Charles Russell consistently denied the Christian doctrine of the Triune God. He conducted a thorough analysis of this teaching, examining whether this teaching is consistent with biblical content and common sense. The catechisms of the traditional churches, which profess the doctrine of the Trinity, believe that there is a Father, a Son, and a Holy Spirit are components of one person, and they are equal in glory and power. Thus, official church documents simultaneously acknowledge the one God and, at the same time, say that there are three Gods. This inconsistency is recognized even by the most famous defenders of this doctrine, saying that they are not able to truly understand, understand, and even more so to explain it. However, they emphasize that it is: «an incomprehensible, unexplainable great mystery»²⁴. And the origin of this teaching is not the Holy Scriptures, but the traditions of the so-called Fathers of the Church of the II-III centuries, from which the system of the Papacy arose. Therefore, the doctrine of the Trinity became one of the delusions by which Satan, through the Papacy, overshadowed God's truth. Trinity and the recognition that there is unity in the relationship between the heavenly Father and the heavenly Son. However, this unity is not evidence that Heavenly Father and Son are one person and that they have the same greatness and power²⁵.

Jesus Christ in his prehuman existence is represented as the Archangel, ie the highest angel, named Michael. He is the «only direct creation» of the Almighty God²⁶. While all the

²³ Advent Christian Church // The Association of Religion Data Archives (ARDA). URL: https://www.thearda.com/Denoms/D_1101.asp; We Are Advent Christian // Advent Christian General Conference. URL: <https://acgc.us/about/#Structure>; Land G. Historical Dictionary of the Seventh-Day Adventists. Toronto: The Scarecrow Press, 2005. P. 11-12.

²⁴ Russell C.T. Studies in the Scriptures. Brooklyn: International Bible Students Association, 1923 Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 60.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 54-55, 59-62.

²⁶ Ibid. P. 88.

other sons of God, that is, angels and men, received their existence through Christ. Jesus was exalted to such a level as to be next to Jehovah in greatness and power. That is why, like other created beings, the Son of God is not worthy to worship, because only Heavenly Father has the right to do so²⁷.

In turn, according to Russell, the Holy Spirit is not a divine person but is «the spirit, influence, or power» used by Heavenly Father and the Son of God²⁸. Russell found no reason to believe that he was another Divine being, a separate person from the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit can also be called the «divine will» because it is a force used in all parts of the universe to do God's will²⁹.

Jehovah's Witnesses profess this view of Charles Russell on the nature of the Godhead.

View of the Trinity: «Beyond a doubt, the Trinity doctrine has confused and diluted people's understanding of God's true position»³⁰.

A look at the status of Jesus Christ concerning God the Father: «Jehovah God alone is Almighty. He created the prehuman Jesus directly. Thus, Jesus had a beginning and could never be coequal with God in power or eternity»³¹.

A view of the nature of the Holy Spirit: «Holy spirit... is a controlled force that Jehovah God uses to accomplish a variety of his purposes»³². This force is comparable to an electric current.

Name of God. In 1931, 15 years after Charles Russell's death, the International Bible Students Movement adopted the name Jehovah's Witnesses. The title emphasizes that: «Jehovah» is the personal name of God, which is still one of the hallmarks of this religious organization. In Pastor Russell's writings, this name is quite common. In the six-volume *Studies in the Scriptures*, it is mentioned more than 500 times, and in the Watchtower from its first issue in July 1879 until the death of this religious leader in late 1916, it is used more than 2,200 times. «Jehovah» is the name of Almighty God, which means «Self-existent,» meaning «Immortal». It cannot belong to anyone but Heavenly Father. The exception is the use of this name to His special messengers when they speak on behalf of the Creator, that is, are His representatives. The name Jehovah is used several thousand times in the Hebrew original books of the Old Testament. However, the reader of the Bible does not often notice it in the pages of Scripture, because the error of the translators, who translated this name as «Lord», became apparent. Charles Russell emphasizes that this special name of God is mentioned only four times in the most common English translation of the Bible, the King James Version. In other cases, alternatives are used: «God» – 298 times, and «Lord» – more than 5,000 times. The reason for this change of God's name, the leader of the Bible Students believes the religious views of the translators themselves. The translators were «supporters of the Trinity,» so they were wary of using Jehovah's name in every place³³.

Jehovah's Witnesses continue to hold this view. They believe that Jehovah is «the personal name of the only true God»³⁴. In their work on the Name of God, Jehovah's Witnesses consider cases where, in their view, Jehovah's name has been replaced by the

²⁷ Ibid. P. 53, 72-74, 84, 88.

²⁸ Ibid. P. 165.

²⁹ Ibid. P. 165, 169, 182.

³⁰ Should You Believe in the Trinity? Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2006. P. 30.

³¹ Ibid. P. 16.

³² Should You Believe in the Trinity?... P. 20.

³³ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 40, 47, 65.

³⁴ Reasoning from the Scriptures. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1989. P. 191.

title Lord in the books of the New Testament. «This example demonstrates how the removal of the name of God from the Greek Scriptures contributed to confusing Jesus and Jehovah in the minds of many»³⁵.

The nature of the human soul. Russell emphasized that the Bible does not say anything about the transmission to each person: «part or spark of God's life»³⁶. It is the idea that the divine particle is transmitted at birth to each person that has become the basis of many false religious systems. As a result, the theory of eternal torment in hell emerged. But if man were created like animals, he could die without fear of eternal torment. But having the spark of divine life in him is eternal because God himself is eternal. It follows that God is not capable of destroying His creation, even if such destruction were desirable. And if man's existence has no end, then there must be a place where he will be: eternal bliss imitates a small number of saints, and eternal torment and suffering await those who have been reluctant to live in holiness. As a result of such considerations, the conclusion arises that the idea of the natural immortality of the human soul deeply degrades God's power and character. This statement makes sense because God, who has the power to create man, does not have the power to destroy him because he had a universal spark of life of the Creator himself. Thus, this theory not only has no biblical basis, but on the contrary is a fiction of the Middle Ages, which God's Word strongly rejects. Therefore, according to Russell, man «composed of two elements, body and spirit»³⁷. These two components form the soul, an intelligent being endowed with sense organs. The body is related only to the physical organism, so it is not able to embody the whole human personality, although without the body can not exist and man. Nor can the body be identified with the soul, because God «can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna». (Matthew 10:28). However, on the other hand, without the body with its ability to feel could not be the soul itself. Similarly, the spirit of life does not represent the whole human personality, although without the breath of life man also cannot exist³⁸.

The spirit, the life force that Adam received, was also present in all animals: birds, beasts, reptiles. When one of them loses this vital energy, as a result dies, «man as well as the lower creatures»³⁹. Everyone dies in this way, only a human differs in that a ransom was paid for him by the sacrifice of Christ, and he will receive in the future the promised liberation from the power of death through the resurrection of the being, the soul.

So Russell believes that Christians who believe in the immortality of the soul «made a league with death»⁴⁰ because they consider death their friend. And the Bible states that it is man's greatest enemy and retribution for his sin. However, these Christians have agreed with the grave, as they consider it only a place where there is an earthly body, which, in their opinion, is not bad to get rid of. Therefore, when they do not acknowledge that the punishment for sin is death, oblivion, they are ready to believe the deception of the devil that retribution for sinners is eternal torment⁴¹.

Today, Jehovah's Witnesses have the same view of the human soul.

Man himself is a soul, not a soul: «Man was a soul, he did not have a soul as something

³⁵ The Divine Name That Will Endure Forever. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2006. P. 26.

³⁶ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 307.

³⁷ Ibid. P. 308.

³⁸ Ibid. P. 307-308, 338-339.

³⁹ Ibid. P. 320.

⁴⁰ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 370.

⁴¹ Ibidem.

immaterial, invisible, and intangible residing inside him»⁴². Also, the concept of the soul does not mean something immortal and indestructible. The soul is the result of a combination of two elements: «The Genesis account shows that a living soul results from the combination of the earthly body with the breath of life»⁴³.

About Hell. Charles Russell suffered a severe death at the age of nine. His parents also buried their three young children. Therefore, the fate of the dead was of great interest to Young Charles and became decisive in his further spiritual search. In his youth, he refused to accept the traditional doctrine of the eternal torment of sinners: «I cannot believe that there is a just and wise God who would do such a thing to a poor, unfortunate human being»⁴⁴. In 1869 he began attending the Advent Christian Church⁴⁵. This denomination rejected the above view and believed that: «the wicked will be «punished with everlasting destruction;»« and «suffering complete extinction of being»⁴⁶.

The Hebrew word «Sheol» and the Greek word «hades» are translated in the King James Version Bible as «Hell». The closest in meaning to these words, which are found in the original text of Scripture, is the word «forgetfulness.» There is nothing in the word «Sheol» to indicate joy, suffering, or any other expression of feelings. Sheol, hades, oblivion accepts the dead, all without exception, good and bad. There is no light, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, no meditation, and no tongue glorifies the Lord there or despises Him. That place is also described as «a condition of absolute silence»⁴⁷. Sheol in most cases in the biblical text means «grave», but in a more detailed study, this word is not just a grave in its usual meaning, namely - oblivion⁴⁸. Also in the word Sheol, there is not the slightest hint of fire or suffering, and this is only the cessation of life. The greatest argument that Sheol is not a place of suffering is the biblical words that tell of its future destruction (1 Corinthians 15:55: Revelation 20:14). Therefore, even if one thinks that the souls of sinful people are suffering there, at least he must admit that this place will not exist for all eternity because the Lord Himself has predetermined that it will be destroyed⁴⁹.

Jehovah's Witnesses today continue to take a similar view on this issue: «Sheol, or Hades, is thus not a literal place in a specific location. Rather, it is the common grave of dead mankind, the figurative location where most of mankind sleep in death»⁵⁰. It is worth noting that today this Religious Organization recognizes that the Sheol is «most of mankind», and not all the dead. According to this view, the rest of the dead are now in Gehenna and have no hope of resurrection⁵¹.

The second coming of Christ. Charles Russell played a significant role in the events of the Second Coming of Christ in his doctrinal system. However, he had his own, special view on the subject. His first work in 1877 was a pamphlet entitled *The Object and*

⁴² Insight on the Scriptures. Vol. 2. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988. P. 1004.

⁴³ Ibid. P. 1005-1006.

⁴⁴ Rutherford J.F. Oration at evening service // The Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence. 1916. No. 23, Vol. 37. P. 373.

⁴⁵ Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom... P. 43-44.

⁴⁶ Statement of Faith // Advent Christian General Conference. URL: <https://acgc.us/about/#Beliefs>

⁴⁷ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 354.

⁴⁸ Ibid. P. 363.

⁴⁹ Ibid. P. 354, 363-364, 373.

⁵⁰ What Does the Bible Really Teach? . Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 2016. P. 212-213.

⁵¹ Who Will Be Resurrected? // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 2005. No. 9, Vol. 126. P. 16-17.

*Manner of Our Lord's Return*⁵². For him, the way Jesus Christ comes and appears is paramount in the proper perception of God's plan for mankind. He called for avoidance of misconceptions about the purpose and manner of this event, which were widespread in many churches. This event, as many expect, is not intended to destroy the earth and most of humanity in the fire, but in fact, it will be «the time for the bestowment of the favors»⁵³. The Second Coming cannot be considered a one-time event, as this period will be stretched in time. Therefore, Russell, reflecting on this topic, prefers the word «presence». Many people, when considering the Second Coming, very often refer to the event or moment of arrival, and it would be worthwhile to keep in mind the «period of presence», as in the case of the First Coming of Christ⁵⁴. However, the Second Presence of the Lord will cover a much longer period than the duration of His earthly life, and it will last a thousand years⁵⁵

It is a great mistake to think that the glorified spiritual body of Christ is the same body that was crucified on the cross and laid in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. And the crucified physical body of Jesus was supernaturally taken from the tomb and at the same time «it did not decay or corrupt»⁵⁶. Russell does not say for sure, but suggests that God made Jesus with the human body: 1) it is decomposed into a gaseous state; 2) it is still preserved somewhere by God, as a majestic monument of His love and redemption⁵⁷. Therefore, after His resurrection, the Lord Jesus was raised to the level of «divine nature» and is no longer a human being, but a spiritual being that no human being can see unless he makes himself visible in a supernatural way⁵⁸.

As a result, in His Second Coming, Christ will be present in an invisible way, doing work that people in the world will not be aware of for some time. In other words, His coming must quietly take place, unobserved, it will be completely unknown to the world, just as a thief comes, that is, without noise (Matthew 24: 33-34)⁵⁹. The fact that Christ is already present can be seen not with natural vision, but only to the eye of faith, through the study of biblical prophecies⁶⁰. Sometime after the beginning of the invisible presence of the Lord, there will be great sorrow. Then will come to an end, all sorts of state and religious institutions. There will be social chaos and anarchy until the full establishment of the Kingdom of God with society, which will be organized based on justice, love, and equality⁶¹.

Jehovah's Witnesses continue to profess this view of the Second Coming of Christ.

Jesus Christ was resurrected in «a spirit body,» and his physical body was decomposed into elements by God so that it did not undergo a process of decay⁶². Therefore, the return of Christ «would be an invisible presence as a mighty spirit person»⁶³.

⁵² Jehovah's Witnesses-Proclaimers of God's Kingdom... P. 47.

⁵³ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 2: The Time is at Hand. P. 104.

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 107.

⁵⁵ Ibid. P. 103-107.

⁵⁶ Ibid. P. 129.

⁵⁷ Ibidem.

⁵⁸ Ibid. P. 128-131.

⁵⁹ Ibid. P. 143.

⁶⁰ Ibid. P. 149.

⁶¹ Ibid. P. 143, 149, 168.

⁶² The Resurrection of Jesus – Its Meaning for Us // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 2014. No. 22, Vol. 135. P. 4.

⁶³ Keeping Watch for 100 Years // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 1979. No. 13, Vol. 100. P. 5-6.

Immortality and eternal life. According to Russell, the terms «immortality» and «eternal life» are broadly similar in meaning. However, on closer inspection, eternal life and immortality are not synonymous. To possess immortality means more than to live forever. Immortality is a characteristic of «the divine nature»⁶⁴. Neither angelic nor human nature nor the nature of any other creature is involved. It is possessed only by Jehovah God, and as an exception among the created beings the partners of the divine nature will be the Son of God Jesus Christ, and His Church, the little flock, the bride of Christ. It is worth noting here that Charles Russell distinguished between those who would belong to the Church of Christ and live with Him in heaven and those who would live on earth during the Millennium and be able to receive eternal life, not immortality. Therefore, in the future, millions of people will be able to enjoy eternal life, but only those who belong to a small flock will become immortal⁶⁵.

The word «immortal» means - imperishable, indestructible and imperishable. This is a state in which death is impossible, i.e., a state of inviolability of death. The existence of any creature depends on various factors and therefore cannot be considered immortal. From the beginning, only God had an existence that had no beginning and did not require any support. In turn, other beings, as well as the Son of God, we're all mortal. However, the term «mortal» describes the state not of the one who dies, but of the one who can die, because the length of his life depends on God. For example, spiritual beings such as angels are mortal because they can be destroyed by God if they rebel against their Creator. An example is Satan, who was one of the holy angels before he sinned. And Russell quotes from Hebrews 2:14 as the clearest statement about the destruction of Satan⁶⁶.

It follows that Adam was created mortal. In this state, he could both die and have eternal life depending on fidelity and obedience to his Creator. If Adam had been created immortal, incapable of death and destruction, God's warning and judgment would have been only an empty threat to him. In turn, Jesus Christ after His resurrection is called «who alone possesses immortality» (1 Timothy 6:16). Of course, in this statement about the exalted position of Christ, it must be understood that the unique and highest status of Jehovah God is not taken into account. At His resurrection, the Son of God received immortality, which is only an element of divine nature, because He perfectly fulfilled the will of Heavenly Father on earth. If the Son of God had immortality before His resurrection, He could not become the Savior of the world because He could not die. Christ, suffered and died for the sins of mankind and only after that was glorified by God to a state of immortality⁶⁷.

The opportunity for people to receive immortality was not promised to people who lived before the time of Christ's death. According to the Divine Plan, a special place will be occupied by «a small number of His creatures»⁶⁸. This privilege does not apply to angels, cherubim, or seraphim, but only to the Son of Man and His bride, the Church. Just as Christ became a partaker of the divine nature at His resurrection, so the Church will experience this change at the resurrection from human nature to the glory of the divine nature during His Second Presence⁶⁹.

⁶⁴ Russell C.T. Op. cit. Vol. 5: The At-One-Ment between God and Man. P. 388.

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Ibid. P. 389-392.

⁶⁷ Ibid. P. 391-393.

⁶⁸ Ibid. P. 393-394.

⁶⁹ Ibid. P. 393-396.

Thus, those who will enjoy eternal life will become physically perfect and morally and mentally like the Creator. However, in the state of immortality, greater benefits are available. And those who will possess it will receive not human, but divine nature and will become «new creatures», «the image of God's being», born of the Holy Spirit⁷⁰.

This view of the difference between immortality and eternal life continues to be professed by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Jesus received immortal life after His resurrection, which is «not just eternal - it cannot be decayed, it cannot be destroyed»⁷¹. Those who will be with Christ in heaven will also have immortality: «the anointed members of the Christian congregation... Receive the resurrection to an immortal spiritual life»⁷². Regarding God's angels, even they are mortal⁷³. Therefore, «you can see the difference between immortality and eternal human life»⁷⁴. Other saved people from the «other sheep,» who do not belong to the «anointed», to the «little flock», who will rule with Christ in heaven, «whose hope is everlasting life on earth»⁷⁵.

Conclusions. Charles Russell played a prominent role in the formation of the International Bible Students movement. He was a spiritual leader, his works had great authority among his associates. He was considered a «faithful and wise servant» whose appearance was foretold by Jesus Christ. After his death, several religious groups of Bible Scholars were formed, among which the defining one was the one led by Joseph Rutherford. It was this lightness that became known as Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931. Today, this Religious Organization has many millions of followers around the world. Ukraine also has a significant number of representatives of this doctrine.

Charles Russell developed a holistic doctrinal system that bore many differences with the teachings of traditional Christian churches. The most noticeable of his views is the rejection of faith in the Triune God. Russell introduced this view as a product of the early papacy. In his view, Heavenly Father, who alone is worthy of worship and has the right to bear the name of Jehovah, has long since given existence to His Son, Jesus Christ. And already through Christ God created the whole world and all living beings. The Holy Spirit is a divine power or influence that God uses to accomplish His purposes.

Russell noticed that the name Jehovah was hardly mentioned in the popular King James Version. In his opinion, the reason for this was the Trinitarian views of the translators themselves.

As for the view of human nature, he believes that the human soul is similar to the souls of animals, only with the difference that man is created in the image of God. Man, like animals, at death passes into a state of non-existence, but to rebel them he hopes for resurrection. For this reason, the concept of «hell», Hebrew «Sheol», Greek «hades» is not a place of eternal torment with burning fire, but simply a place of oblivion. All the dead are there waiting for the resurrection.

Charles Russell also had his own opinion on eschatology. Yes, he believed that the Second Coming of Christ would be invisible to people because Christ was not raised in a

⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 393-396.

⁷¹ Insight on the Scriptures. Vol. 1. Brooklyn: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1988. P. 1189.

⁷² Ibid. P. 1189-1190.

⁷³ Ibid. P. 1190.

⁷⁴ Questions From Readers // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 1984. No. 7, Vol. 105. P. 31.

⁷⁵ Gathering Things in Heaven and Things on Earth // The Watchtower Announcing Jehovah's Kingdom. 2006. No. 4, Vol. 127. P. 24.

physical body, but as an invisible powerful spiritual person. This event will not be one-time but will last for a thousand years. Therefore, Russell is more inclined to use not the expression «Second Coming», but prefers the expression «Second Presence». This event will not have the goal of destroying the earth by fire, but will be the time of the gift of special blessings from the Lord to all mankind.

Russell makes a clear distinction between the concepts of «immortality» and «eternal life». By eternal life, he means a state in which a person lives without the risk of losing it, but realizing that his existence depends entirely on God. It can be received by people who will live on earth during the Millennium. And immortality means a state of indestructibility and is a quality of divine nature. Immortality is influenced by: 1) Jehovah God forever; 2) Jesus after his resurrection and purification to the divine nature; 3) The Church of Christ, the «little flock», during the Second Presence of Christ.

The religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses left certain points of Charles Russell's doctrinal ideas unchanged, and some were corrected. In particular, this applies to the view of Sheol. The nature of Sheol has remained unchanged, but it is in this place that most people are, and not all who died without exception. A certain number of the dead are in «hell,» and they have no hope of resurrection.

Thus, Charles Taze Russell had a fundamental influence on the development of the religious views of the Religious Organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. Many of his ideas are professed by representatives of this religious group to this day. This article did not aim to fully consider Russell's doctrinal system. Only attention is paid to the significant milestones of his teachings. For example, this article did not conduct a detailed study of the different levels of saved people, those who will live in heaven and those who will live forever on earth, and the relationship between them. Israel's important role in Russell's eschatological system has also been raised.

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Релігійні погляди Чарльза Тейза Рассела та їх відображення у віровченні Свідків Єгови

У статті розглянуто релігійні погляди засновника Товариства Вартової Башти Чарльза Тейза Рассела. Окреслено їхній вплив на розвиток доктринальної системи релігійної організації Свідків Єгови. Поданий короткий опис діяльності цього релігійного лідера, та значення його постаті в очах його однодумців. Висвітлено концепції, що стосуються природи Божества, імені Бога, природи людини, стану померлих, другого пришествя Христа, безсмертя та вічного життя.

Джерельну базу складають безпосередньо праці цього релігійного керівника. У процесі дослідження виявлено, що члени руху Міжнародних Дослідників Біблії вважали Чарльза Рассела «вірним і мудрим рабом» про появу якого передвіщав Христос.

Засновник Товариства Вартової Башти був прихильником ідей антитринітаризму, визнаючи Христа першим Божим творінням, а Святого Духа – божественною силою та впливом. Вважав, що ім'я Єгова може належати тільки Небесному Отцю та рахував помилкою заміну цього імені різними титулами у тексті деяких перекладів Біблії.

Рассел відкидав ідею природного безсмертя душі. Натомість, на його думку, людина сама є живою душею, результатом поєднання тіла з духом, іскрою життя. Шеол, природу смерті, він сприймав як стан небуття. Однак для усіх без винятку померлих є надія повернення до життя завдяки воскресінню. Тема способу другого приходу Христа у цього релігійного лідера тісно пов'язана з його воскресінням. Оскільки, на його думку, Ісус воскрес не у фізичному, а в духовному тілі, то і його повернення слід очікувати невидимим для людей. Тому він часто використовував вираз «друга присутність».

Рассел вважав, що поняття «безсмертя» та «вічне життя» не є тотожними. Перше має ширше значення та є характеристикою винятково божественної природи та його отримують лише Христос і невелика кількість обраних Богом людей.

Визначено, що Свідки Єгови і надалі сповідують вказані погляди Рассела. Лише, як вони вважають, у шеол потрапляють не усі померлі, оскільки декотрі перебувають у стані вічної смерті, не маючи надії на воскресіння.

Ключові слова: Трійця, Єгова, душа, Тисячолітнє царство, друга присутність Христа, безсмертя

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