

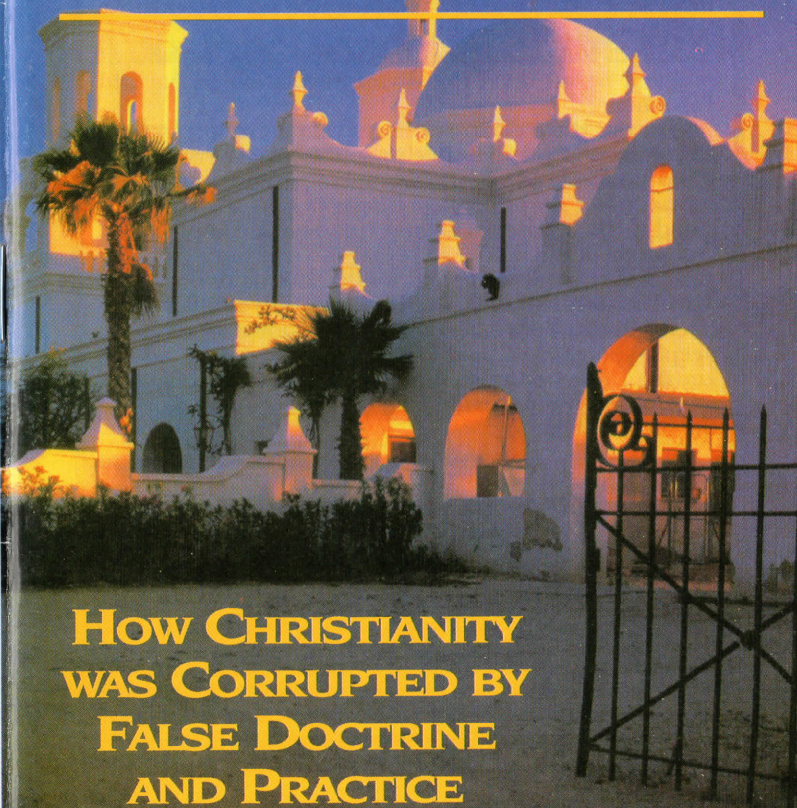
Herald of the Coming Age — SUPPLEMENT TO "LOGOS"

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# The Decline of Christendom

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**HOW CHRISTIANITY  
WAS CORRUPTED BY  
FALSE DOCTRINE  
AND PRACTICE**

**T**HE history of the Christian Church has proved to be a pattern of confusion and contradiction. A movement clearly established on the principles of Truth taught by Jesus Christ, has proved to be a catalogue of tragedy and folly. Not only have the doctrines and teachings of the Master been changed beyond recognition, but the practices that he set clearly before his disciples can no longer be seen represented in a church system that has so sadly degenerated over the centuries. Today, people are faced with the conflicting arguments over women's ordination, with the trauma of a movement which interferes with politics and indulges in the control of power, with a system that deprecates Bible study by the laity, and provides its clergy with a certain degree of infallibility.

It is a long road from the simple New Testament religion, based upon the divine revelation in the Old Testament.

Yet the Bible clearly declares that salvation for men and women is only possible upon the basis of their personal understanding of its teachings, and with a full conviction of its principles. These things are not to be found in the churches — and this booklet is placed in the hands of the reader to reveal the true nature of religion, and to show what God would have us to do in this age of contradiction. Please read carefully the facts outlined herein. Your questions and comments would be deeply appreciated, and can be directed to the editor. Let the Bible be the guiding power of our lives, and its hope of the future divine plan of salvation and glory be the means of our joy.

## **HERALD OF THE COMING AGE**

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**Edited by G.E.Mansfield,**

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# The Decline of Christendom

— the sad record of mankind's  
refusal to accept the True  
Apostolic Teaching of the Bible

**T**WO thousand years ago the greatest teacher, prophet and only saviour of mankind walked the earth and ministered to the people through remarkable acts of healing, caring and teaching. He presented a message of redemption by which mankind could avoid the condemnation that had fallen upon them through the sin of their forebears, Adam and Eve. That teacher was Jesus Christ, Son of God and “prophet of Nazareth”. His message of salvation was given primarily to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” — but that nation combined with the Roman authorities to put the Lord Jesus Christ to an ignominious death.

Yet he rose from the dead, and commissioned his disciples to carry his teaching from Jerusalem into the Roman world. As time went on, the wonderful message of salvation was widely disseminated throughout the earth, bringing hope and joy into the lives of men and women, prepared to accept the responsibility of discipleship, and to reveal a changed life in conformity therewith.

**T**HE impact upon society by the prophet of Nazareth was enormous. His public ministry only lasted three and a half years, and was limited to the towns and cities of Judea and its surrounding areas— yet his teachings have subsequently affected nations and influenced millions of people. Men and women accepted his wonderful message of salvation, and changed their lives to conform to his example of devotion and dedication. They chose to ignore the attractions of a godless society, preferring to exercise restraint and patience despite reverses, and often in the face of cruel persecution as a result. For them, the great hope of participation in the coming Kingdom of God was a joy far transcending present tribulation.

The immediate apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ were examples of such a transformation. Just after his resurrection they were gathered in Jerusalem, and provided a public testimony to their remarkable conversion. The Bible declares of those who gathered to watch and listen, that “when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). So dramatic was the change and conversion in these men.

But in the centuries that have followed those times, the church developed quite a different character. Instead of devoted, selfless service, the personal dedication of men to Christ became a religious career. The labor of the spiritual shepherds was assumed by a church hierarchy, and the stake of self-denial upon which Christ was sacrificed was changed into a Cross which became the emblem of apostate christianity.

Even the clear teachings and doctrines of Jesus Christ have been manipulated in church councils, questioned in church circles, and cleverly distorted to conform to the demands of the congregation, or the designs of churchmen.

#### **The Message of Jesus Christ: A Call to Personal Discipleship**

Originally, the work of Jesus involved a spiritual revival within his own country: Judea. He sought for an awakening of the Jewish nation to the commands of God and the responsibilities for the spiritual guidance that He expected from the religious leaders of His people (Isaiah 61:1). Such a work involved



a complete submission of individual will to the divine cause — and Jesus effected this in a way that no other has been able to achieve. Of him, it is written in Hebrews 10:7, “I come to do Thy will”. To the people Jesus announced “I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me” (John 5:30). This personal example was like a shining light in a dark age, continuing the strident and arresting message of his cousin, John the Baptist.

John had been a recluse, but emerged to become “a voice” calling for people to prepare for the One who should follow him. He was thus a “forerunner”; a man whose message was absorbed in his dramatic appeal to the society of Judea to “prepare for the King who was to appear”.

In contrast, Jesus mingled with the people and touched them with his penetrating insight and kindly compassion. None could avoid him; not the woman hoping to be healed incognito (Mark 5:30), nor the ruler from the highest Jewish council seeking to tentatively “sound out” the Lord’s credentials (John 3). But with the power of his teaching and the wonder of his miracles, the people at first readily accepted him as a prophet.

Yet he was more than a prophet. He was the Son of God, Heir of the World, who came to fulfil his Father’s will. But the Jewish world ultimately “received him not” (John 1:11).

The ministry of Jesus Christ was not different from the message of God in former years. It was part of a continuous message, the focus of the hopes of the prophets, who spoke of redemption and a glorious national revival. In fact, Jesus affirmed that their message was directly inspired of God. All his teaching was rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, from his first public preaching in the synagogue (Luke 4:17-22) to the forty exclusive days he shared with his disciples after the resurrection (Luke 24:25-27, 44-48).

#### **A Community Established on the Basis of Belief and Unity**

His small group of disciples were attracted by his message. Although uneducated by worldly standards, these men were commissioned with the Lord’s blessing and Holy Spirit guidance to launch a campaign that still affects millions today. “Ye shall be witnesses unto me” Jesus told them (Acts 1:8), and they certainly fulfilled that mission. The community they established “were of one heart and one soul (*mind*)” (Acts 4:32).

They were transformed men because they had been with the risen Lord. They fearlessly faced their own rulers, and those of Rome; they ignored angry mobs, disregarded personal safety — because they were fired with the living reality of Christ who had been raised from the dead, who was alive, and in due time would return to occupy the throne of the kingdom of God on earth (Acts 1:11; Luke 1:32-33).

The word of preaching went from place to place, characterised by violent contention (by the Jews) and careful analysis (by the Bereans, Acts 17:10-11), and derision from many Gentiles. But very soon, the growing band of believers faced their most deadly foe: the personal pride and ambition of men.

Peter warned against such an attitude (2Peter 2:1-3), Jude exposed their characteristics (Jude 4), Paul strove with them (Galatians 1:6-12; 2Corinthians 11:13), and John labelled them “antichrist”, and identified their key doctrine as error: 1John 4:1-3.

How could such destructive divisiveness arise in a body of people initially so united?

#### **The Corrupting Influence Soon Seen**

With the introduction of Christianity into Rome, Hebrew learning and thinking came into abrupt conflict with Greek and Roman culture. Though Rome had conquered much of the then-known world, Greek culture had “conquered Rome” and pervaded the world of learning. With the rapid increase of non-Jewish converts, Bible teaching soon became overlaid with Greek philosophy, and there was a marked shift away from the purity of Bible teaching.

The particular aspect of Greek philosophy that so effected man’s thinking was known as *Greek Metaphysics*. It treats with the theory of knowledge in general, especially of the most speculative or esoteric nature — a reasoning that began with Aristotle, and characterised all Greek learning.

With the vast amount of Greek literature and schools of learning being established throughout the Roman empire, Greek philosophy soon became the educational basis in the West. This philosophical approach to religion and science reasoned away fundamental Bible doctrines, and soon negated the Israelitish nature of the divine promises (cp. 2Peter 1:4). This type of education and learning over the last 1800 years has ensured that a



corrupted view of Bible teaching remains popular, and widely accepted. A reading of early church history soon makes this apparent.

Most of the important Bible doctrines were contaminated, and replaced by human philosophy. For example, there was introduced into church teaching, the erroneous doctrine of:

#### The Immortality of the Soul

This belief, so prevalent among the pagans, was introduced to the Greeks by the reasoning of Plato. He, and his associates, felt that their wisdom had advanced so remarkably, that it was incongruous to think that their "higher learning" should one day end in ignominy and death. The celebrated eighteenth century historian Edward Gibbon testifies in his account of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (vol. 1, pp. 448-449) that:

"... There were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted idea of human nature, though it must be confessed that in the sublime enquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers, when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment, in the most profound speculations or the most important labors, and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages, **far beyond the bounds of death and of the grave**, they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose that a being, for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth and to a few years of duration.

"With this favorable prepossession they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of Metaphysics. They soon discovered that, *as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple and spiritual, incapable of dissolution and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison.* From these specious and novel principles, the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity of the human

soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing spirit which pervades and sustains the universe."

A footnote added by Gibbon makes it clear that the doctrines of christianity were eventually effaced by Greek philosophy. He says: "The pre-existence of human souls, so far at least as that doctrine is compatible with religion, was adopted by many of the Greek and Latin fathers". Today, even modern historians recognise the unbiblical nature of the immortality of the soul. For example, *The Encyclopedia International* states: "Plato, in the *Phaedo*, advances the view that at death the soul, being set free from the body, which is concerned with imperfect and transient things, goes to be at one with eternal goodness, eternal beauty, and the other Platonic *forms*, which are at once perfect and beyond the reach of change, and to which the soul is akin. For the Christian, immortality is bound up with Christ's victory over death at resurrection. Basically, christian belief in immortality follows from christian belief in God. The doctrine of the resurrection of the body and Paul's conception of a spiritual body, indicate that in some sense, however undefined, christianity envisages a continuance of what we now know as the best elements of *bodily life*. ***In this way the Christian view differs from some of the Greek views of immortality, according to which the body was a tomb to be escaped from at death***".

This extract makes a distinction between the Christian and the Greek views. Yet, even today, so many churches confuse the teaching of the immortal soul with the resurrection of the physical body.

The Greek philosophy divides the human personality into three distinct parts: *body*, *soul* and *spirit*, but the Hebrew (in which the Old Testament was written) knows of no such distinction. In contrast, the word used in the Bible for soul (*Heb. nephesh*) is **also translated "body"** and is used of animals as well as humans. Consider this extract from theologian Matthew Fox OP (Director, Institute for Creation-Centred Spirituality, Mundelein College, Chicago): "...in Hebrew there is no word for 'body'. Lacking even a word for it, the Hebrews obviously were not involved in controlling the body. In fact, for the Jewish mentality, *'the body is nothing other than the living soul'*.



The body is the person and the person is the body... There is no dualism; that is to say, separation of spirit and matter, or spirit and energy in Jewish thinking. For this reason, the sensual is a gift and not a threat to the spiritual person... We act as the *imago Dei*, the likeness of the Creator. In contrast, for Greek thought, the body is a cage that entraps and limits and stifles the release to the world of ideas that Plato so sought after.

“In summary, the Greek spiritual journey or way is ‘the soul’s way out of the world’ to a better and more fixed and permanent world. The Jewish spiritual journey is one of bringing about a new creation IN THIS WORLD, one characterised by justice and goodness and a commitment to the future.”

The true Jewish understanding, gained from the Scriptures, is concerned with *this world*, because God has made it and intends that it shall be filled with His glory (Isaiah 45:18; Numbers 14:21). This concept springs from the Biblical promises which require the earth to be restored to harmony with the Creator, through the return of Jesus Christ (Acts 1:11) and his rule as King. In contrast, the Greek ideas of an after-life are completely pagan, and in conflict with Bible teachings.

#### **The Bible Teaches that the Soul is Not Immortal!**

Tracing the Hebrew word for “soul” (*nephesh*) through the Scriptures will clearly show that the soul does not have any inherent characteristic of immortality. The Bible declares:

“The soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezekiel 18:4). Christ “poured out his soul unto death” (Isaiah 53:12), teaching that even righteous souls die! Paul states that there is no hope apart from a resurrection from the dead (1Corinthians 15:12-20).

Bible teaching on the subject of immortality is clear. The English word “immortality” only occurs in the following five instances in the Authorised Version of the Bible. Please note their conclusion\*:

1Timothy 6:16 — God alone has immortality.

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\* The author draws attention to the English version. Bible students will find that the Greek word *athanasia* occurs 3 times, always rendered “immortal”. The word *aphthartos* occurs 7 times, and has been rendered “immortal”, “uncorruptible”, “incorruptible”, “not corruptible”. Hence there are 3 words in the Greek New Testament which carry the connotation of “immortal” or “immortality”, and which occur a total of 18 times. Examination of each occurrence will confirm the conclusion reached in the author’s statement.

2Timothy 1:10 — Jesus Christ brought immortality to light.

Romans 2:7 — We must *seek* for immortality.

1Corinthians 15:53 — Immortality is obtained at the resurrection.

1Corinthians 15:54 — Only then can we say: “death is swallowed up in victory”.

Thus, these verses affirm that we do not have immortality at present. We have to spend a life following Christ before we are granted it as a gift at the judgment seat of Christ.

#### The Pre-Existence of Christ and Later the Trinity

Another false doctrine has its roots in paganism, its key influence being from Greek mythology. The word “Trinity” never occurs in the Bible. In fact, the apostle John cites false teachings on the identity of Jesus Christ to identify the *antichrist* in 1John 4:1-3. The Trinity is a doctrine that denies the true origin and humanity of Christ and makes him the second person of an mysterious trinity: “God the Son”. Those who teach such are “deceivers” (2John 7), and “false teachers who privately shall bring in alongside damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them” (2Peter 2:1). Denying the humanity of the Lord Jesus, they deny his purpose: to condemn sin in the very arena of its activity: the human body. See Hebrews 2:14-18 and ch. 5:7-10.

In the Greek New Testament Scriptures the word *Logos* (which church doctrine claims to be the name of the second person of the trinity) is widely used to mean, simply, “word”. It is different from the word *rhema*, which indicates the “spoken word”. *Logos* refers to the plan or purpose that God had in mind when He conceived and later revealed His intentions in the creation of this world (John 1:1). Jesus Christ is that Word (*Logos*) “made flesh”, for God perfectly revealed and exhibited His purpose and moral excellence in the person of His Son, born of a virgin.

However, in their mythology, the Greeks also used the word *logos* for a sort of disembodied “spirit-being”, a lesser god — and this idea became confused with Jesus’ title: “*The Word (logos) of God*”. In this way the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ infiltrated christendom, claiming that Christ existed as a god in heaven before he was physically conceived of Mary. But



this idea is quite foreign to Bible teaching.

It is true that Christ is spoken of extensively in the Hebrew Scriptures before he was born, but this was in the form of prophecy. It did not prove that Jesus already existed, but demonstrated God's *promise* of a Son for the salvation of mankind (Gen. 3:15). The oft-repeated promises only became a reality when Jesus Christ was born, exactly as the angel told Mary: "The Holy Spirit 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" (Luke 1:35).

#### The False Doctrine of the Trinity

A rift among professing christians developed over the teaching of the *Logos* and the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. The philosophers argued as to how Jesus could be both Son of man and Son of God.

The contention was so sharp that Constantine the Emperor (who had just permitted freedom of religion by the *Edict of Milan* in AD313) became worried for the unity and security of his empire. As a result, he called a conference at Nicea in AD324, presiding over it himself, notwithstanding that he was a pagan and knew nothing of Biblical teaching. However, it was his casting vote that decided in favor of the Trinity — i.e., the teaching that God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are separate persons, gods in their own right, yet, at the same time, mysteriously, also One person.

And so, in a world that was becoming increasingly uneducated in the Scriptures, as the power of the apostate church grew, the teaching of the Trinity became accepted as one of the "mysteries of faith". When challenged by the reformers, churchmen eventually acknowledged, albeit with reluctance, that the Trinity had no Biblical base, but claimed "it was a necessary development of church teaching".

#### The Doctrine of the Kingdom of God

One of the central features of Biblical teaching, is that the Kingdom of God was established in the Kingdom of Israel in the past, over which God's anointed kings presided (1Chronicles 28:5-6). An oath was confirmed with king David, which guaranteed a continuance of this dominion (2Samuel 7:12-16;

Psalm 132). But the wickedness of the nation brought about its *temporary dissolution* (Ezekiel 21:25-27).

Nevertheless, the restoration of the Kingdom of God over Israel was a very real hope in the heart of true believers, beginning with the announcement of its coming Ruler to Mary (Luke 1:32-33), and was the nucleus of the teaching of Christ (Matthew 19:28; Mark 1:14; Luke 19:11; Acts 1:6). As a key feature of apostolic doctrine (Acts 3:20-26; 2Timothy 4:1), it clearly involved Israel's restoration (Romans 11:25-26; Acts 15:14-17).

Christ's teaching of a future divine kingdom upon earth, included non-involvement in the politics of the present: "*My kingdom is not of this world* (i.e., the "order" or "arrangements of things" as the Greek word *kosmos* means)" (John 18:36), and the disciples were taught passive forbearance of the affairs of this world (1Peter 2:17-20) because they were to be "strangers and pilgrims on earth... looking for a city... whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:13, 10).

The growing church, however, soon came to see this belief as a deterrent to the apparent advantage of *present* power and influence. In his *Decline and Fall*, Gibbon writes concerning the belief in the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth, a belief which had been held tenaciously by Christ's early disciples (vol. 1, pp. 454-455): "The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples and those who understood in their literal sense the discourses of Christ himself were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds... the ancient and popular doctrine of the millennium (the 1,000 year reign of divine rule) was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ... and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection... The assurance of such a millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. Though it might not be universally received, it



appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers... ***But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside.*** The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was *at first* treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism."

Thus the ancient hope of the Scriptures was relegated to the dust heap in favor of a well-organized church with political aspirations. As a result, the church proclaimed itself, the Kingdom of God! It was a harmful doctrine that caused the church to be more concerned about the present, than about the future aspect of Christ's rule on earth.

#### Worship of Saints Not Justified

In an endeavor to live in holiness, some men and women separated themselves from ordinary life to live alone in extremity and poverty, or, later, to join monasteries. Asceticism developed, separating many from family life and a normal association with others, in a balanced way of life.

Nowhere does the Bible advocate such social ostracism. In fact, the harmonious co-operation of Christ's body (Ephesians 4:13-16) makes proper human relationships necessary and important for every disciple.

Some of these "holy people" became venerated by the church, and, in time, invested with a "sainthood". They became regarded as "lesser gods". This was accepted by a people who had been accustomed to a multiplicity of pagan gods and statues in their temples. People who were already conditioned to worshipping a variety of male and female deities, were readily persuaded to change their affections to so-called "saints".

Gibbon also comments that those who joined the cloister, soon found opportunity for power and wealth that would have been denied to them in their former life: "Ambition soon discovered the secret road which led to the possession of wealth and honors... The monasteries were filled by a crowd of obscure and abject plebeians who gained in the cloister much more than they had sacrificed in the world" (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, vol. 4; pp. 6-8).

And so the growth of power by the priesthood and papacy

assumed monumental proportions, dominating political rulers, interfering in international affairs, asserting "divine" and superior prerogatives, exclusively organising education and invading every aspect of private life until all who questioned their authority became literally "fuel for the fire". Countless millions have perished over the years at the hands of the church.

#### **The Falling Away: And Apostasy Established**

These departures in Bible doctrine were a fulfilment of a final prophecy by the apostle Paul concerning those who would seek for religious position and prominence. He declared: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, *to draw away disciples after them*" (Acts 20:29-30).

This prophecy is supported by Eusebius, a historian of the 4th century: "They presume to alter the holy Scriptures, to abandon the ancient rule of faith and to form their opinions according to the subtle precepts of logic... Aristotle and Theophrastus are the objects of their admiration and they express an uncommon reverence for the works of Galen... they corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by the refinements of human reason."

Gibbon commented on these times: "The church still continued to increase its outward splendor as it lost its internal purity" (*Decline and Fall*, vol. 1, p. 496).

#### **The Traditions of Liturgy and Apostolic Ceremonies**

Over the years, the church developed a system of traditions and various types of services and observances of holy days and feast days. The priestly activities and vestments it adopted were unknown in the early congregation of believers, and were, in fact, without apostolic practice or precedence, being pagan in character.

With the phasing out of the Old Testament law of Moses and its ritual observances, there remained only two ceremonies required of believers: Baptism and the Breaking of Bread, as practised by the apostles. The Breaking of Bread ceremony instituted by Christ (known as *the Last Supper*), was a simple rite undertaken by thirteen men at the conclusion of a meal at an ordinary table in an ordinary room. There is no evidence of

altars, vestments, processions, crosses and chanting priests. Such things were not part of apostolic procedure, nor suggested anywhere in Scripture.

Church hierarchy and tradition have taken away personal Bible knowledge and a personal living faith — both being absolutely vital for acceptance with God. “This is life eternal”, said Jesus, “to know Thee, the only true God and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3).

The book of Acts contains the earliest record of the first century believers as an associated community, and clearly outlines their religious observances. When some of the Jews, hearing Peter’s forthright address, became conscience-stricken at the enormity of their sin in crucifying the Lord, they asked: “What shall we do?” (Acts 2:36-37). Peter replied: “Repent and be baptised”. Verse 42 confirms that only two ceremonies have the sanction of Scripture:

**1. Baptism.** This is a command of the Lord Jesus (Mark 16:16), and was practised in apostolic times by complete immersion in water (Acts 2:35-38). After baptism the disciples continued in:

**2. Breaking of Bread.** This second ceremony was to be kept regularly, and by custom on the first day of the week — the day of Christ’s resurrection (Acts 20:7).

This ceremony involved:

**Fellowship.** The sharing by believers, who are joined together as the “Body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-16) in faith, hope and charity. They are bound by:

**Apostles’ Doctrine.** The teaching of the apostles was followed because, along with the doctrine of Jesus Christ, it is the foundation of belief (Ephesians 2:19-20). Friendship with Jesus is dependent upon obedience to his words: “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:14). Finally:

**Prayer.** This is the means of communication with God whose guidance must be sought through life.

Thereafter, the apostolic practice and true Bible teaching was maintained by small groups of believers, who met in various places scattered throughout the then-known world. Mainly they suffered the opposition and persecution of the powerful, but apostate, church organisation then established.



### How Did the Christadelphian Community Come into Existence?

Christadelphians follow the beliefs and practices of first century disciples. The community developed during a period of intense Bible interest in the 19th century. At the time the "dark ages" of church-dominated ignorance had passed, and ordinary folk were able to benefit from opportunities for education. The distribution of the Scriptures was promoted, and a great interest arose in public and private discussion on the teaching of the Bible. In the past, this had been largely the province of the "learned" and the churchmen.

In this fervent search for Bible truth, the Christadelphians were formed as a body of Bible students from the efforts of one man seeking for Bible Truth. Originally, a Dr. John Thomas (a medical practitioner and son of a clergyman) was associated with the Church of Christ (formerly known as Campbellites), but his continual studies of the Scriptures revealed the false teachings of traditional christianity. His classical education and knowledge of both Greek and Hebrew, helped equip him in his search for Bible truth, and confirmed that the churches were largely astray.

Consequently Dr. Thomas separated from his former associations, and engaged in a lecturing campaign to acquaint others concerning the truth of the Scriptures. Small groups came together as a result of his teaching, and provided the stimulus for each other as well as a necessary critical analysis of the Doctor's considerable expositions.

A key element in his Biblical exposition was the emphasis on Israel. He saw the promises of God centred in Christ who was the heir to the promises, which were Israelitish in character (Ephesians 2:12-13). He found that this meant the future Kingdom of God would be set up as a theocracy with all ruling power over the nations being vested in the hands of Jesus Christ and his immortalised faithful disciples. It will be based upon the divine constitution of the ancient Kingdom of Israel over which David and Solomon ruled. This is what Peter had meant by referring to the "restitution of *all things*" (Acts 3), and what Christ had promised his disciples, that they "would sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). For this reason, Paul submitted to chains, declaring that he was

“bound for the Hope of Israel” (Acts 28:20).

#### The Name *Christadelphian* Is Given

Initially these groups of believers simply called themselves “Brethren of Christ”, but when the American Civil War (1861) arose, believers in the northern States found that they were on opposite sides of the political fence from their brethren in the south. Their understanding of the Scriptures led them to stand apart from politics, and for the same reason, “as strangers and pilgrims on earth” (Hebrews 11:13), they also refused to fight to maintain human governments, which Christ would ultimately overturn, and replace with the Kingdom of God on earth. When they sought exemption from serving in the armed forces, the authorities required a name by which they be known. The name “Christadelphian” was chosen, derived from two Greek words, *Christos adelphos*, meaning simply “Brother of Christ”.

#### The Creator’s Instructions

What are our responsibilities if we wish to honor God? The claims of God’s revealed Word are clear, and leave no room for the theories of man. As Creator, God has a personal interest in His creation, and will yet call men and women to account for the privilege of their life on earth and the benefits He has provided (Acts 17:31).

Present distresses on earth exist because men and women fail to humbly submit to the wise counsel of their Creator. The sole remedy is to return to the way of divine guidance and direction which is to be found only in *The Bible*, and to operate according to the instructions found therein. But the pride and apathy of man usually prevent him from doing so, increasing his problems and difficulties.

No human can be truly fulfilled unless he lives in harmony with creation — that is, both the physical laws of our planet, and God’s spiritual code designed to govern our behavior. We can only fulfil the purpose of creation to glorify Almighty God, if we fashion our lives according to His ways.

Instead, the vast majority allow worldly ambition and trends to squeeze them into its mould. Thus, the “god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not” (2Corinthians 4:4).

God requires a change in our thinking, to pattern our lives

on the purpose for which He created us. On our part there needs to be a conscious effort to forsake the old ways of flesh that we might be renewed in motivation and outlook. Paul exhorts: "Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2).

When we have been baptised into Christ, in obedience to his commandment, we can enjoy a transformed "new" life (Galatians 3:27-29), and though we might be buffeted with the problems that affect our race, we can look beyond present difficulties to the time when we will be perfected both morally and physically, at the return of Jesus Christ to this earth, and be "fashioned like unto his glorious (*immortal*) body" (Philippians 3:21).

The whole creation "groans" for the change that is so needed. "The earnest expectation of creation waits for the manifestation of the sons of God" (Romans 8:19). When that time comes, God's faithful servants will have their strength renewed; they "shall run and not be weary, shall walk and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31) — and will be admitted into the presence of the glorious King, the Lord Jesus Christ, whose wise rule will benefit all mankind.

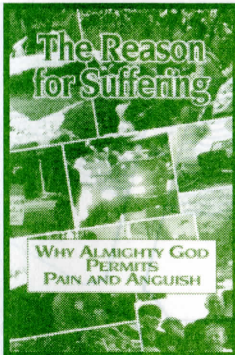
Meanwhile, to all who are affected by the universal church system, which destroys the righteous wisdom of Almighty God, comes the urgent exhortation and plea: "Come out of her, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). This done, it is important to fulfil the commandments of the Master: "He that believeth (*the one true gospel*) and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (*condemned*)" (Mark 16:15-16).

Your decision will determine your destiny!

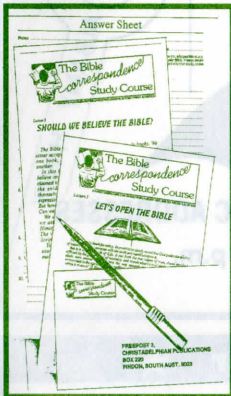
— B. Edwards.

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