

What do Christadelphians Believe About God?

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Many modern religious groups claim not only that they are Christian but also that they represent the restoration of original Christianity. Along with Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses and Christian Scientists, this is also true for the Christadelphians. For example, Christadelphian author Alan Haywood quotes skeptical philosopher Bertrand Russell, author of *Why I Am Not a Christian*, in alleged support of Christadelphian apostolic Christian claims: "The best representatives of the primitive [Christian] tradition in our time are the Christadelphians."¹ Other Christadelphians declare, "In short we are people of the Bible."² "First-century Christianity was thoroughly Bible based, and so we try to make our faith like that, too."³ "The Bible is our only authority, and we teach that it should be read prayerfully and with care at every opportunity."⁴

The truth is that Christadelphians oppose historic orthodoxy and view biblical Christianity as a pagan religion. This is why it is declared to be "paganized theology,"⁵ and even "meaningless."⁶ Christadelphians are told that the true church of Jesus "and modern Christianity are as different as night and day."⁷ "The creeds of Christendom are based on *false* doctrines, compounded of a little Bible teaching, but mostly composed of fables, based upon pagan mythology."⁸

In addition, Christadelphians see little difference between Protestants and Catholics, almost as if the Reformation had never occurred. In essence, Christadelphianism condemns Protestantism because it has many of the same doctrines of Rome:

The principal doctrines of the churches of Christendom are these same Romish doctrines. They are as follows: 1. The Trinity, 2. The pre-existence of Christ, 3. Christ the Creator, 4. The immortality of the soul, 5. Eternal torments, 6. Heaven-going. 7. A supernatural, fallen-angel Devil and Satan. 8. A substitutionary Christ.... The popular churches of Christendom teach some, if not all of these Romish doctrines. Therefore they come under the same condemnation as Rome.⁹

Of course, biblical teaching alone determines what is true and what is false doctrinally. Protestant Christianity can hardly be in error if the above doctrines are established as biblical teaching. Clearly, as we documented in *Protestants and Catholics* (Harvest House, 1995), Catholic doctrine is unbiblical at many important

points, especially the doctrine of salvation. Nevertheless, for Christadelphians, because Protestantism accepts *some* of the same doctrines as Catholics, it is declared to be just as “iniquitous” and “false” as Catholicism.¹⁰ But obviously, we could apply the same reasoning to Christadelphian beliefs. Our research reveals that Christadelphian teaching bears certain important doctrinal resemblances to traditional Armstrongism and the Jehovah’s Witnesses: rejection of the Trinity as Satanic; Christ’s atonement for past sins only; the necessity of good works for salvation; the impersonality of the Holy Spirit; a denial of eternal punishment and so on. Would Christadelphians consider it fair of Christians to conclude that Christadelphians were in error solely because of some similarity in doctrine to other religions?

Further, when Christadelphianism rejects Protestantism on the basis of similarity to Catholicism, it uses a double standard. Catholicism also believes in works-salvation, the authority of the Bible and other Christadelphian teachings. But Christadelphians will never classify their own church as “pagan” and “iniquitous” on this basis. So why argue it in such a manner with Protestantism?

Nevertheless, when Christadelphians maintain that “traditional church teachings do not reflect the truth of the Bible in a number of key areas,”¹¹ this is precisely what they have never established. Nor can they, since basic biblical doctrine is accepted as established by almost everyone but cultists. Still, as in Mormonism, the Christadelphian church claims that after 1,800 years of apostasy it alone has restored the true gospel. To emphasize this point to the faithful, again as with Mormonism, it attacks the Christian church uncharitably and undeservedly. John Thomas asserted that biblical preachers were the epitome of evil:

What base views must such men have of the God whose ministers they pretend to be! Their “consolations” are unmitigated blasphemy, and false from first to last.... It is the preachers that make men infidels by the preposterous absurdities they preach in the much-abused name of Christianity.... Their ministrations have no vitality in them, and leave their flocks in their own predicament, “dead in trespasses and in sins.” Therefore “come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean, and I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”¹²

Citing Galatians 1:8, the *Christadelphian Messenger* declares that the Gospel Christians teach will only curse those who preach it or accept it, “The conglomerate mixture of Christianity, paganism and assorted doctrines of men preached by the popular churches of Christendom is not the Gospel of salvation which Christ and the apostles preached, and it contains not enough salvation to save one human soul. It is error, and will accurse all who preach it, and all who accept it.”¹³ Christadelphians even argue that Christians are so deceived that they will, at the Second Coming, reject Jesus Himself as the Antichrist:

No one desires to be in the position where he or she might reject Jesus when he comes because of an incorrect understanding of the prophetic events related to his second coming. Yet the framework has already been laid throughout

Christianity for most Christians to do exactly that.... This false teaching is preparing millions of Christians throughout the earth to reject Jesus at his return because they will be convinced, by the things he will do, that he is “the Antichrist” and will oppose him.¹⁴

And Christians will die with a lie on their souls. “Neither Protestants nor Papists ‘believe in God.’ They have a system of faith which bears no affinity to the religion of God; and hence they hope for things which He has not promised; and consequently the most pious of them die with a lie.”¹⁵ Not surprisingly, John Thomas believed that Christian churches do not teach the Gospel:

Let the reader search the scriptures from beginning to end, and he will nowhere find such systems of faith and worship as those comprehended in the Papal and Protestant systems. The gospel of the Kingdom of God in the name of Jesus is not preached among them.... They are dead, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, and therefore the time is come to cut them off as a rotten branch from the good olive tree.... By remaining in them, a man partakes of their evil deeds, and subjects himself to their evil influences.¹⁶

For Thomas, the Christian churches represented a “thousand-headed monster” that was “devoted to mammon” and the commandments of men, wallowing in “its ignorance of the Scriptures.”¹⁷

God and the Trinity

Christadelphians believe that God is one Person only and thus maintain that belief in the “Trinity is unscriptural.”¹⁸

When Christadelphians evaluate the biblical doctrine of God, they are perhaps at their most superficial. As in Jehovah’s Witnesses and Oneness Pentecostalism, the doctrine of God is misrepresented and the arguments given are illogical and irrelevant. For example:

Most churches of Christendom teach that He is a triune God: others, such as the Christadelphians, teach that He is one, the Father.... This [trinity] doctrine is not drawn from the Bible (where the term Trinity never appears) but from what is known as the Athanasian Creed.... In short, to believe in what most churches teach concerning the Godhead is to believe an impossibility, a contradiction... [and] “God is not the author of confusion.” ... The Bible nowhere teaches that God is a triune Being or that the Lord Jesus Christ is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, but *the very opposite*. Actually, the word “Trinity” is not found in the Bible.... They cannot explain why one God should also be three Gods and vice versa; how God should have substance but no form: or how the Son of God is at the same time his own Father. The doctrine is one of confusion, because it is drawn not from the Bible, but from pagan mythology.¹⁹

First, the Trinity was never derived from pagan mythology, as we documented elsewhere.²⁰ Second, it is irrelevant whether the term “Trinity” appears in the Bible. The Trinity is merely the term used to describe biblical teachings about the “tri-unity” of God, just as the term “monotheism” (which is also absent from the Bible) is used to describe the biblical teaching of one God. No Christadelphian would argue that monotheism is unscriptural merely because the term is absent from the Bible. So

why single out the word “Trinity” this way?

Third, the doctrine is not impossible, confusing or contradictory. It is not entirely comprehensible, true, but this cannot be proof that it is wrong. Many things in life are incapable of being fully comprehended, but this does not mean that they are “impossible” or “irrational.” Are the Christadelphians saying that in order for them to believe in the Trinity they must first fully and logically understand how God can be everywhere present, infinite and eternal? Do they deny the reality of particle physics because they don’t fully grasp it or because it is paradoxical? So it is with the doctrine of the Trinity. If it is a biblical teaching, we should accept it. A Christadelphian publication admits: “Nor can we hope for a full comprehension of all that is implied in the statement that in Jesus Christ there ‘dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’”²¹ If they admit that, why reject the Trinity simply because it cannot be fully comprehended?

Fourth, Christians have never believed in “three Gods.” only one God who exists externally in three Persons. Nor have Christians confused the Persons in the Godhead, so that the Person of the Son is the Person of the Father. Such teachings were universally condemned by the early church. Christians have always taught there is only one God.

Fifth, the doctrine of the Trinity is clearly taught in the Bible. The Christian creeds merely stated in systematic doctrinal form what the Bible already taught and what the Church accepted from its beginning. To argue that the doctrines of Christianity were invented by church councils to distort the Bible is nonsense.

The Father creates but the Son creates also (John 1:3). The Son atones, and the Father is in the Son reconciling the world to Himself (2 Cor. 5:19). The Spirit sanctifies believers, and so does the Father and the Son (1 Thess. 5:23). The Holy Spirit indwells believers and so does Jesus and the Father (John 14:23). The Father raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 3:26), and so did Jesus (John 2:19-21), the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:11) and God (Acts 17:31). Only the doctrine of the Trinity can explain many scriptures like these.

If anyone has invented doctrines to distort the Bible, it is the Christadelphians. Christadelphians also publish E. J. Newman’s *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. Newman accurately points out that “Athanasius contended successfully against Arius for the view that Christ was of the same nature as God and not merely of like nature.”²² However, he goes on to declare that John’s gospel does not teach that “it is God Himself who comes into the world to redeem it.”²³ But John 1:1, 14 declares that “the Word was God” and that “the Word was made flesh” (v. 14) in Jesus. John 3:16-17 declares that Jesus (who John has already declared God) came into the world to save it “through him.”

Newman further contends that in the Gospel of John, Christ does “not proclaim himself as God.”²⁴ But Jesus clearly asserted His deity in both statement and action. He claimed equality with God (John 5:18), and this was the very meaning of His claim to be the Son of God (John 19:7). He exercised the prerogatives of deity throughout the Gospel (John 5:17, 21-24; 10:28-30, 33; 14:7-9; 15:23).

Notes

- ¹ Alan Hayward, *Great News for the World* (Great Britain: Christadelphians Worldwide, 1976), p. 82, cf. p. 87.
- ² Alfred Norris, *The Things We Stand For*, p. 6.
- ³ Hayward, *Great News*, p. 83.
- ⁴ "Answers to Your Questions About Christadelphians," pamphlet, p. 2.
- ⁵ R. Roberts, *Christendom Astray*, p. 55.
- ⁶ H. A. Twelves, *The Only Day of Salvation*, p. 8.
- ⁷ *Christadelphian Messenger*, No. 50, "The Church of the Living God," p. 4.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, No. 47, "Christendom's Creeds Not Christianity," p. 2.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.
- ¹¹ "God Cares What We Believe," p. 6.
- ¹² John Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, pp. 319-320.
- ¹³ *Christadelphian Messenger*, No. 11, "A Refuge from the Judgment Storm," p. 3.
- ¹⁴ *The Grand Delusion*, p. 6, cf. pp. 5-10, 30-31.
- ¹⁵ Thomas, *Elpis Israel*, p. 278.
- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 7-8.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 140.
- ¹⁸ *The Christadelphian Instructor*, p. 9.
- ¹⁹ *Who Do You Worship?* pp. 51-52 (Birmingham, England: Christadelphians), pamphlet.
- ²⁰ John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *Knowing the Truth About the Trinity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997); cf. John Ankerberg, John Weldon, *Ready With an Answer* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1997), pp. 119-129.
- ²¹ *God Whom We Worship*, p. 6.
- ²² *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, p. 7.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, p. 13.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.