

SURVEY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

Virgil Warren, PhD

BIBLE

Scripture is the complete word of God written and sufficiently accurate in origin and preservation to accomplish what God sent it to accomplish (Isaiah **55:11**). He sent it through chosen representatives endowed with the messages he revealed to them and with the ability to correctly express it to the ones he wanted to hear it. Consequently, non-canonical writings have the status, at best, of devotional writings (Apocrypha and tradition).

FAITH

Faith has two applications in its general interpersonal usage. (1) Belief/knowledge about information on matters that we do not personally experience. It is usually provided by another person (or perhaps the consistency of something that operates). (2) Trust in another person to produce results that our own actions do not produce, including renewed personal relationships with God (salvation) and other people (fellowship), as well as reward for service people have done performed.

GOD

God is a person rather than a force, thing, or idea; hence, he has purpose as well as the delight of his actions (his “pleasure”). He has power above what else exists and authority over what else is, because he originated the rest. He is eternal past and future and transcendent above other kinds of things, while imminent in relationship to the other realities, including us.

CREATION

Creation is what exists distinct from God as its personal creator, who decided to make it. So creation has beginning and can have end, and is secondary to the personal creator, who controls and gives predetermined destiny.

MANKIND

Mankind is made in the image and likeness of God, the image being the interpersonal capacity. People have responsibility for the creation in which God put them (Hebrews **1** < Psalm **8**). He created them male and female to form together one flesh in pairs (socio-physical unit). That interpersonal combination reflects the divine trinity—alike but different with overlapping roles in common purpose.

JESUS

Jesus is the Messiah the Old Testament predicted (Psalm **2**; Daniel (**2:13-14**; **7:13-14**;**24-27**), who is called the Son of God in that unique sense. He existed before the world and became one with us in human-divine form. That could happen because God created the human

form in the image and likeness of the divine (interpersonal capacity, *etc.*). That leads to incarnation via virgin birth. The Son did not have to give up anything in his own nature during incarnation except the free exercise of his prerogatives as deity (Philippians 2:5-11) while he took on the human distinctive: he became flesh. That human situation did not interfere with his divine characteristics except in the free exercise of his prerogatives as deity.

SALVATION

Salvation is interpersonal reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 2:16) from alienation caused by behavior contrary to personal relationship. The apostle Paul characterizes his calling as a “ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18). It involves repentance by the sinner and forgiveness by the one sinned against. Christ provided the basis for atonement by becoming in the human arena everything God intended humans to be. If we are willing to identify with Christ, that is, commit to his lordship, values, and purpose totally, permanently, and exclusively, the Father is willing to view us as righteous like him, which leads to renewed relationship with God, that is, salvation.

BAPTISM

Baptism is a formal act by which we identify with Christ. Based on that identity with him, the Father is willing to view us as like him, hence good and therefore able to be in relationship with a good God. As to meaning, it is first associated with salvation from alienation, which leads to being associated with the church as all those who share that identity with Christ. Likewise comes the gift of the Holy Spirit, which means personal divine presence in the person of the Spirit in guidance, empowerment, and intercession.

As to form, baptism pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ and represents of the death of our old person and resurrection to new one (Romans 6:4-7).

CHURCH

The church is people who share relationship with God through identity with Christ. It is persons before it is structure, and its organization is quite simple. Its role is to be a fellowshiping, worshiping, learning, witnessing entity in the world. It witnesses to the grace of God (influence) rather than being the channel of his grace in a legal sense (authority).

LORD’S SUPPER

The Lord’s Supper is an act of worship that for believers serves as a re-identification with Christ. The “elements” represent rather than are his body and blood. Observing the elements is an act of worship and commitment.

TRINITY

The Father-Son-Spirit is an interpersonal threeness-in-oneness. They are distinct enough from each other individually for the Son to pray to the Father to send another Comforter (John

14:16). They are close enough to have common purpose, unity of operation, and shared values in accomplishing the common purpose. They are of the same nature and unique in being so. They have the same identity—one spirit—comparable to husband-wife as being “one flesh.”

ESCHATOLOGY

God has revealed the future to us in the present to guarantee hope that good will triumph over evil—that God will fulfill his purpose. Items involved in that process include the intermediate state between death and the general resurrection, the personal universal observable second coming of Christ, the resurrection of the just and unjust, judgment to come, the eternal state, as well as less clear matters along the way like the millennium, the tribulation, and the rapture. The timetable, sequence, and exact nature depend on their fulfillment to bring clarification. Consequently, the future is destiny, not just eventuation.

INTERPERSONALISM

The characteristics of positive personal relationship establish the character of the Christian worldview. That derives from the fact that personal relationship with its characteristics is the most original, most universal, most central, most all-pervasive, most eternal, most ultimate, mightiest, and most complex reality there is. All the great summaries of functional truth reflect that conviction: God’s great love for the world (John 3:16), the First and Second Great Commandments (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18), the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12), and “*what God requires of us*” (Micah 6:8).