

REDEMPTION

Five Fundamental Truths of the Christian Faith

By
Gerald E. Cumby

Christianity's roots are founded and grounded in the power of the cross. The cross has been the central focal point for the Christian and the foundational truth for every born-again believer. Although the cross serves as a constant reminder of the sufferings of Jesus, Our Savior, for our sins, it also is a rallying point for all who know that we are one in Christ Jesus. To the unbeliever, the preaching of the cross is foolishness; but, to we who understand what the cross means today and tomorrow (for eternity), it is the power of God unto salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18). It is relevant, therefore, to look at some basic truths that are essential to understand the life, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. **For the Believer there are five fundamental truths of the Christian faith, they are:**

1. **The virgin birth of our Lord Jesus,**
2. **The Deity of Christ,**
3. **The existence and acknowledgment of a Triune Godhead,**
4. **The substitutionary atonement for sin, and**
5. **The infallibility of Scripture.**

1. The Virgin Birth of Christ:

In the last 20 years or so, there has been a determined assault upon the truth of the Virgin birth of Christ. A great controversy broke out in Germany in 1892 when a pastor named Schrempf refused to use the Apostle's Creed in baptism because of disbelief in this article. Schrempf was deposed, and an agitation commenced against the doctrine of the Virgin Birth which has grown to the present day controversy in which churches are excluding and denying this essential truth. The attack is not confined to the article of the Virgin birth; it affects the whole supernatural estimate of Christ—His life, His claims, His sinlessness, His miracles, and His resurrection from the dead. However, because the Virgin birth is more easily excluded or

thought (in some religious circles) to be unnecessary to hold to Christian principles, it is removed from the written church guidelines or fundamental principles of faith in some denominations. The result of all this finds that the Virgin birth is openly treated as a fable. In some circles, churches included, belief in the Virgin birth is unworthy of the twenty first century intelligence. At least the church is spreading or casting doubt upon the fact....or at least regarding it as a non-essential part of Christian faith. This is more than a simple refusal of preachers to preach that Jesus, the Christ, was born of a virgin because it is controversial. It is an abomination and heresy of the Sacred Scriptures. Without the Virgin birth, where is the sinless Savior who has come to take away our sins? Without His Virgin birth, He would have been born in sin and He would have had to have had a Savior. No, this is more than a simple refusal to preach on a controversial subject, it is an attack on God, His Word, His Sovereignty, and the Redemption Plan of Jehovah God Himself.

Speaking of the Word, it is imperative that we look at the Word to make the case for Jesus', the Christ, Virgin birth and Incarnation. Therefore, as a person of faith, believing it is by grace I am saved because of what the Word has made known to me, we go to the Word for correct counsel on the subject of the Virgin birth. I live by the Word. Therefore, I take joy in knowing that I can depend on the Word for truth. No word written on paper by the greatest of all philosophers will be convincing enough to disprove the Gospel....the Good News of Christ.

The Old Testament predicts the Virgin Birth of Christ and the New Testament announces the Virgin Birth of Christ. In the first book of the Old Testament a prophecy is given concerning the virgin birth of the Redeemer. In the Garden of Eden the Lord God said to the serpent, "Because thou hast done this, (tempting Eve),.....I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:4, 15). Without question, biological facts prove that the seed emanates from the male, not the female. Therefore, when God declared that Satan's head should be bruised by the seed of the woman, He excluded the male element from the birth of this One who would come forth from the woman to defeat the devil. Our redeemer was to be virgin born.

Seven hundred or so years before the birth of Jesus, the Christ, Isaiah predicted (prophesied) that he would be born of a virgin and also affirmed the Deity of this child when he wrote, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah9:6). What a mighty God is He...What a mighty Redeemer is He! The Old Testament foretells the virgin birth of Christ and His Deity.

The New Testament records the genealogy of Jesus through Abraham and David. The “begats” are followed by the account of the annunciation to Mary of Christ’s birth “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise.” (Matthew 1:18). Matthew goes on to tell as to how the Angel Gabriel told Joseph, Mary’s fiancé, that she would give birth to a son, conceived through the miraculous implant of God’s Holy seed via the Holy Spirit of God. The gospel goes on to say that this Jesus would save His people from their sins and that this was a fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14.

The Gospel of Luke writes the annunciation by the angel Gabriel to Mary, in which he tells her of the coming birth of Jesus and, in answer to her puzzled query as to how could this be since she had known no man, says, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, that holy child which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). With this statement, the New Testament affirms the Old and the Old Testament confirms the New. Prophecy, fulfillment of God’s plan for redemption of man, and the simple truth with no fallacies or error are found in the Book of all Books which is the Word of God.

The narrative of the nativity in Matthew and Luke are undoubtedly genuine parts of their respective Gospels. They have been there ever since the Gospels themselves had an existence. The proof of this is convincing. The chapters in question are found in every manuscript and version of the Gospels known to exist. *There are hundreds of manuscripts, some them very old, belonging to different parts of the world, and many versions and languages (Latin, Syriac, Egyptian, etc.), but these narratives of the Virgin birth are found in all. We know, indeed, that a section of the early Jewish Christians—the Ebionites, as they are commonly called—possessed a*

*Gospel based on Matthew from which the chapters on the nativity were absent. But this was not the real Gospel of Matthew; it was at best a mutilated and corrupted form of it.*¹ The genuine Gospel, as the manuscripts attest, always had these chapters.

The conclusion is seen in the necessity of the Virgin Birth in the true Christian believer's faith-based doctrine. For if Jesus was not virgin-born...then He came into this world as other men and inherited a sinful nature....apart and separated from God. In a circumstance like this, there would be the necessity for He Himself to need a Savior. However, Jesus was absolutely sinless (no sin in Him at all). Also, in order for Him to be the Redeemer of mankind, it was necessary for Him to take on human form. Only as a man could He die for other men. He bled like other men, He experienced pain like other men, yet He was from God. Again, we need to understand His Deity. Our Lord was perfect in His humanity; He is also perfect in His Deity. Our Savior, Jesus Christ, had to be born supernaturally, and He was. Indeed He was.

In summary, the revealing of the Scriptures, the sinlessness and perfection of the person of Jesus Christ, and even logic itself...overwhelmingly declares that there can be *“no other explanation but that which was prophesied about Him, testified concerning Him, and demanded of Him is true: He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.”*²

2. The Deity of Christ

The Christian tradition/faith has claimed for almost two thousand years that God took on flesh becoming a man and walked on earth. The Bible proclaims in the Gospel of John that, “The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). Jesus was that God-man.

Jesus Christ was unique, for He was God from all eternity and yet joined Himself to sinful humanity in the incarnation. The God-man possessed all the attributes of deity (Philippians

¹ Website, <http://www.biblebelievers.net/Doctrine/kjcvirgn.htm>. The Fundamentals-The Virgin Birth of Christ, page 3 of 5.

² Website, <http://www.baptistpillar.com/bd0158.htm>, The Virgin Birth of Christ, page 1 of 1.

2:6) and the attributes common to humanity (apart from sin), and He will exist forever as the God-man in His glorious resurrected body (Acts 1:11; Revelation 5:6).³

An adequate Savior for sinful mankind could only be the God-man; for to be able to suffer and die, He must be human, and to make that death an effective payment (ransom) for sin, He must be God. Gnostic teaching proclaimed that pure deity could not be united with flesh because this was regarded as totally evil. Therefore when the writer of the Gospel of John makes the statement “the Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us” the Gnostics could not accept this Jesus as Deity. However, beholding Christ Jesus’ Glory (John 1:14) tells us that He is indeed Deity. *For in the Old Testament, glory expressed the splendor of divine manifestation and attested the divine presence.*⁴

In the book, *Christian Theology*, Millard Erickson states that Jesus Himself considered Himself equal in essence with God. It would have been highly inappropriate of Jesus to say that “both the angels and the kingdom are His” (Matthew 13:41) if Jesus was not God⁵ (the second person in the Trinity, yet co-equal in the Godhead). In other Scriptures, angels are called “the angels of God” (Luke 12:8, 9; 15:10). The phrase “Kingdom of God” is mentioned throughout the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Himself states, “The Son of man will send His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all causes of sin and evildoers” (Matthew 13:41).

What did Jesus’ followers say of Him? In the Gospel of John, a remarkable declaration of both Christ’s Deity and full humanity was given. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning” (John 1:1). As mentioned previously, later in the Gospel we find that “The Word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.” He (Jesus) co-existed with God in the beginning; predating time and creation. A more literal meaning of “the Word was with God” would be that He was “face to face with God” implying personality and relational coexistence.

³ Charles Ryrie, *The Ryrie Study Bible notes for John 1:14*, Moody Press, page 1600

⁴ *Ibid*, page 1600

⁵ Don Closson, Website, <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/deityofx.html>, *The Deity of Christ*, page 2 of 5.

The author of Hebrews says plainly of Christ's Deity. The first chapter states that, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being, sustaining all things by His powerful Word." Paul states in Colossians 1:15 that Jesus is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation and that, by Him all things were created..... Since Jesus is described as Creator of all things, the notion of supremacy seems evident.

In conclusion, the belief that Jesus Christ is of the same essence as God the Father started with Jesus Himself and was taught to His Apostles. The Apostles, in turn, handed down this truth to the early church Fathers and apologists. Yes, the fact that Jesus, the Christ, is Deity is the foundation in which our Christian faith rests.

3. The Existence and Acknowledgement of a Triune Godhead

The Christians took over the Jews uncompromising belief that: 'The Lord our God is one God.' But, they also soon come to the belief that Jesus is Lord. They therefore applied to Christ Old Testament passages referring to Yahweh, the Lord; they worshiped Christ as God. Both Jews and pagans accused Christians of having two gods. The issue of the Trinity then became an unavoidable problem.

Tertullian (about 155-230) introduced the term Trinity, as the Latin *trinitas*, to the Christian vocabulary and also probably of the formula "three Persons, one Substance."

The following Truths/Facts from the Holy Scriptures point to a "Three in One" Godhead:

- ***There is only one true God revealed through the Scriptures --Isaiah 43:10 and , Isaiah 44:6-8, (6 quoted), "Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: 'I am the first and the last, and there is no God besides Me.'"***
- ***The Unity of God is revealed through Scriptures. (Genesis 1:26, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over"***
- ***There are three distinct personages in the Bible revealed as being God of all creation (Genesis 1; Job 9:8; Psalm 104:30; John 1:1-3; Colossians 1:16-17, Isaiah 44:24. Also, Hebrews 2:10, 11-"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their***

salvation, through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.”

- **The Father is identified as God**, Jude 1:1; (Galatians 1:1), “Paul an apostle (not sent from men, nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead).”
- **Jesus is identified as God** (John 1:1-3; John 1:14-18; John 8:58, “Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am...’”; John 20:28, “and Thomas answered and said to Him, ‘My Lord and my God!’” 1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order, that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.”
- **The Holy Spirit is a distinct personage from the Father and the Son, and is identified as being God** (John 14:16-17; John 16:7-15; Acts 5:3-4; Acts 13:2; 1 Corinthians 12:4-18; Hebrews 9:14; Hebrews 10:15-18.) Just as Jesus Christ finished the work He came to do in the flesh, so the Holy Spirit (Spirit of God the Father and Son) will finish the work He came to do in the church.

Jesus said, “I and my Father are One” (John 10:30) and “He who has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The Trinity of God is revealed clearly in Matthew 3:16, “And after being baptized, Jesus went up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and He saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove, and coming upon Him, and behold, a voice out of the heavens saying, ‘This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.’”

Jesus’ Spirit is God’s Spirit...Romans 8:9, “However, you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.”

We believe that the Trinity is one God revealed in three (3) eternal personages as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

4. The Substitutionary Atonement for Sin

There have been various theories on the atonement of Christ throughout the history

of the Christian Church. Some (and there are many additional ones) of those theories are as follows:

- The Ransom theory holds that the price Jesus paid was to Satan. There is no Scriptural basis for it. Origen (185-254) held this view. The theory assumes that we are to be ransomed from Satan. No Scripture tells us that we owe Satan anything. The sacrifice was made to God, not Satan (Ephesians 5:2).
- *The Governmental theory states that God did not have to require a payment for sinners and that God could have forgiven people simply by choosing to do so, without any payment of penalty.*⁶ This is based on the fact that God is all-knowing and omniscient... and can do anything, even the impossible. However, God cannot look on sin and sin demands a sacrifice (Old and New Testament). The love of God was by grace, not merit. God did not have to do anything, but He loved us so much that He gave His only Begotten Son that through Him we might be saved. Sin's penalty is death (Romans 6:23a), but the gift that God gave us is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6:23b).
- The Moral Influence view states that God did not need a payment for breaking his law and that the death of Christ was an example of how much God loved us. This position was held by Peter Abelard (1079-1142). There are many verses that speak of Jesus paying for our sins by His death on the cross, but sin demands payment (Galatians 1:4; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Peter 3:18).
- The Example Theory simply denies the requirement of God for breaking His law and that Jesus' death was an example of why we should trust Him completely. They go so far to say that we should be willing to be the example and "trust to the point of death." Many of the above scriptures (i.e. Galatians 1:4 and 1 Peter 3:18) speak of Christ dying for sin.
- The Vicarious atonement is the one that is appropriate and Scriptural. "Vicarious" simply means "substitute." Christ was a substitute for others (you and me...and the world) in that He took our place and suffered our punishment. It was the legal act whereby Christ Jesus fulfilled the law and willfully paid the penalty of sin. The Old Testament confirms and testifies to the vicarious sacrifice for sin (as an offering for

⁶ Website, http://www.carm.org/doctrine/substitutionary_atonement.htm , *Substitutionary Atonement*, Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry, page 1.

sin...a ram in lieu of Abraham's son, Genesis 22:13). The ram offering was a "substitutionary sacrifice" in place of Isaac. We also see a prophecy in Isaiah 53:4-5 of the atoning work of Christ. The chastening and punishment of our sin was placed on Christ Jesus, who substituted for our sin. He literally took our place. There was a price to be paid and Christ Jesus paid it all. Jesus was a substitute and He was made sin on our behalf. Jesus did what we could not. He took our place and bore our sins in His body on the cross (1 Peter 2:24) and made propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2). Those saved by the grace of God simply have to love the word "propitiation." It means "*properly signifies the removal of wrath by the offering of a gift.*"⁷

Vicarious and Substitutionary—"Again the words considered are identical in meaning and refer to the suffering of one in the place of another, in the sense that by the suffering on the part of one the other is wholly relieved. Christ suffered and died that men might not be required to bear their burden of condemnation. To reject this truth is to reject the plainest doctrine of Scripture, to reject the gospel, and the only righteous ground on which God may exercise grace toward the lost."⁸

5. The Infallibility of Scripture.

The word "infallible" expresses the incapability of erring as well as the fact of inerrancy. The Scriptures are the infallible Word of God. There are three (3) basic reasons as grounds for coming to the conclusion that the Scriptures are without error (totally dependable and reliable).

- The Bible is a witness to the fact that it is infallible. There is no statement in the Bible that directly declares inerrancy and "without error" is implied throughout "all Scripture" as "God Breathed" (II Timothy 3:16, All Scripture is God Breathed.....). *God used Scripture sometimes interchangeably but is inspired to every "iota", dot and tittle*⁹.

Scripture cannot be annulled and man has not been able to disprove as fact any part of it. Everywhere there is the implication that Scripture is infallible, inerrant, and indefectible.

⁷ Ibid, page 2.

⁸ Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3 & 4*, Kregal Publications, Michigan, page 130.

⁹ Website; <http://home.regent.edu/rodmwil/script6.html> , Scripture: God's Written Word, Chapter 6; page 1 of article.

Man has desired to see Scripture proved to be fallible (worldview), but Scripture has stood the test of time and will be standing when time ceases according to Scripture.

- The attitude of Christ and the apostles regarding Scriptures is grounds for believing the infallibility of Scripture. Some of the statements of Christ (“Scripture cannot be broken,” John 10:35) states that Scripture cannot be annulled or set aside. Jesus also stated that “I have come not to abolish them (the law and the prophets) but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17). Note that he goes on to say that “I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of the pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.” *Scripture, the Law (representing all of Scripture) is absolutely unalterable.*¹⁰

The Apostle John, in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, records in chapter 22:18-19, that there is a “warning to everyone that hears the words of this prophecy of this book to not add to or take away from the word of the prophecy...for God will severely punish, even to taking away of the share in the tree of life and in the Holy City.” This would seem that the Word of God, the Scriptures are to be taken seriously and prayerfully for life and, the even the next life. All through Scripture it is apparent that Jesus’ and the apostles’ attitude was one of unhesitating and unwavering trust.

- The historic church tradition through the centuries has held the Scriptures to be God’s infallible Word. The early church Fathers affirmed such. Irenaeus claimed that “the Scripture are perfect, seeing that they are spoken by God’s Word and His Spirit.” Augustine’s conviction was displayed as he wrote, “Not one of the authors has erred in anything, in writing.” The Westminster Confession of Faith (1646) speaks of “the entire perfection of Scripture.” Not that we have to have man’s approval or even a council of men to approve or recognize the infallibility of Scripture, it is quite noteworthy to see that even sinful man, saved by the grace of God can recognize “God-breathed and God ordained” Scripture.

What God has put together let no man put asunder. It is good for marriage...and it certainly should be good for the Holy Scriptures.

¹⁰ Ibid: page 2 of article.

Bibliography

- Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology, Vol. 3 & 4*, Regal Publications, Michigan.
- Closson, Don, Website, <http://www.leaderu.com/orgs/probe/docs/deityofx.html> , *The Deity of Christ*
- Ryrie, Charles, *The Ryrie Study Bible notes for John 1:14*, Moody Press
- Website, <http://www.baptistpillar.com/bd0158.htm>, *The Virgin Birth of Christ*
- Website, <http://www.biblebelievers.net/Doctrine/kjcvirgn.htm>. *The Fundamentals-The Virgin Birth of Christ*
- Website, http://www.carm.org/doctrine/substitutionary_atonement.htm , *Substitution Atonement*, Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry
- Website; <http://home.regent.edu/rodmwil/script6.html> , *Scripture: God's Written Word*