



## Church Doctrine Lecture Notes based on a workshop given by Bishop David Edwards

The following is a summary of the taped video presentation given by Bishop David during the Bishop's Day with Layreaders May 2016. The video is 2 hours and 23 minutes long and contains the following content:

- What do you understand Anglican doctrine to be?
- Church doctrine is the container in which Christianity is held.
- Why do we need doctrine - why do we need the 'container'?
- Five basic doctrines as defined by Matt Stick.
- CORE and Adiaphra doctrine
- Doctrine further defined within the context of:
  - The Trinity
  - The Love of God
  - Repentance
  - Christianity
  - Creation
  - Summation of doctrine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition

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### **What do you understand Anglican doctrine to be?**

- It is scriptural
- It can be open to interpretation
- You should never build a doctrine on one verse of scripture
- The creeds spell out doctrine describing what Christianity is and isn't (The Apostle's Creed; The Nicene Creed; The Athanasian Creed). The creeds came out of times of controversy, build upon each other and help us understand what the church believes. The creeds help us define what Christianity is and what it isn't.
- The Book of Common Prayer forms us as Anglicans. There is a distinction between different denominations. Some doctrine is Anglican. Others are Christian.
- Richard Hooker was an English priest in the Church of England and an influential theologian who brought broad concepts together into a central theological method which combined the claims of revelation, reason and tradition. He was one of the most important English theologians of the sixteenth century and helped frame doctrine.
- As Anglicans we are not doctrinally known as a confessional church and we don't have 'membership' as such. Anglican doctrine is broad but it is hard to define - thus

allowing us to be who we are as individuals within a larger communion. Anglicanism is both protestant and catholic - it is "the middle way". Faith defines doctrine in the same way. Core doctrine – 'Salvation' occurs by faith not by works. We are saved by grace through faith.

### **Church Doctrine is the Container in which Christianity is Held**

Doctrine is a container in which we hold our Christian faith and set limits around what it is and what is isn't. Within that core concept we accept God as 3 in 1 and 1 in 3 and that Christ is both human and divine.

### **Why do we need Doctrine - why do we need the 'Container'?**

- We need it for both structure and unity.
- It keeps us on a certain path and helps us define who we are as Anglicans and Christians.
- It allows us to discuss ideas and validate our beliefs.

Most of us have a 'core of belief' that we rarely vary from however we often have 'around the edges' discussion (and disagreement) about how we describe the Trinity; Divinity; or the humanity of Jesus. That is often why there are so many different Christian denominations (approximately 10,000 in North America).

There is a reality of 'progressive revelation' that occurs in the Bible where God progressively reveals himself. However, that doesn't mean that what was revealed in Scripture in the past was wrong in any way.

PLEASE NOTE: In the Bishop's video he shows a short segment where Matt Stick defines 5 basic doctrinal concepts that every Christian believes. The speaker's voice was not able to be recorded. Please go to the following website to watch the short 4 minute video clip

<http://www.pursuegod.org/basic-truths-every-christian-believes/>

Matt Stick's definition of the 5 basic doctrines that every Christian believes:

1. The Bible is God's Word (All 66 books)
2. God is Three-in-One (The Trinity)
3. Jesus is 'Fully God' (He was there from the beginning)
4. We are saved by faith (Salvation)
5. There is life after death (Eternity)

That said there are 2 types of doctrine:

1. CORE
2. Adiaphra

Generally CORE doctrine is the assertion that our beliefs (doctrine) are necessary for salvation.

Adiaphra is the understanding that some of our beliefs are not necessary for salvation. In Christianity, *adiaphra* means that something is debatable, spiritually neutral. There are essentials of the Christian faith such as the deity of Christ, monotheism, Christ's physical resurrection, etc. that are CORE. However there are also topics that deal with issues that are non-essentials. So in a general sense, adiaphra means those Christian teachings which are neutral, things that are neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture. An example of this might be what color of carpet to have in a church, or what time of the day a service should be held.

A problem arises with what lies on the 'edges of CORE' and what is adiaphra. The place between the two (the interface) leads to conflict. Anglicans often fall between the two - which causes controversy.

**Doctrine furthered defined within the context of the Trinity; the Love of God; Repentance; Christianity; Creation; and doctrine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition**

### **The Trinity**

The Trinity is CORE doctrine. It took the church 200 to 300 years to tease out the idea of the 'Trinity'. John 1:1 - 18 frames the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

#### ***John 1:1-18 New International Version (NIV) The Word Became Flesh***

*1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome<sup>[a]</sup> it.*

*6 There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.*

*9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—<sup>13</sup> children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

*14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*15 (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") 16 Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18 No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and [is] in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

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The two doctrines this passage touches on are 1) the doctrine of the Trinity and 2) the doctrine of the humanity of Christ. The passage sits at the 'Heart of Christianity'. The 'Word' was God and was present from the beginning as seen in Genesis 1:1-3:

***Genesis 1:1-3 New International Version (NIV) The Beginning***

*1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.*

So right at the beginning of Scripture we have this realization of the nature of God - of the three (Father, Word [Son] and Spirit) working together as one and that is where the doctrine of the Trinity has its beginning.

There is no analogy of the Trinity that is perfect. Some in the early church felt that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were different at different times. Much later this became known as 'modalism'. However the early church came to the eventual conclusion that modalism was inaccurate as was a hierarchal system of viewing the Trinity. Some people define the Trinity as somewhat like water - it remains the same but is different. Below zero temperatures it is ice; from 0 to 100 C it is liquid and over 100 C it is steam. This is an essentially modalist approach, although the basis of the element remains the same H2O, it is different things at different times.

There are fundamental questions regarding the Trinity that we need to consider: "How do we see God functioning in the life of the church? How do we experience God in the life of the church?"

A more accurate description of Trinity is found in the description of 'Perichoresis'. 'Peri' meaning perimeter and 'choresis' meaning choreography. Perichoresis is a Greek term used to describe the triune relationship between each person of the Godhead. It can be defined as co-indwelling, co-inhering, and mutual interpenetration. Alister McGrath writes that it "allows the individuality of the persons to be maintained, while insisting that each person shares in the life of



the other two. An image often used to express this idea is that of a 'community of being,' in which each person, while maintaining its distinctive identity, penetrates the others and is penetrated by them."<sup>1</sup>

The image is similar to 3 persons dancing together within a boundary but moving so fast that you can't tell where one movement starts and one stops. It's dynamic - always moving together but differently. Each knows what the other is doing but they are doing different things. Jesus was part of the discussion with respect to his death. They acted in concert together and agreed by having different roles - not acting separately but in concert as noted in Philippians 2: 1-11.

### **Philippians 2: 1-11 Imitating Christ's Humility (NIV)**

*Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,<sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,<sup>4</sup> not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

*<sup>5</sup> In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:*

*<sup>6</sup> Who, being in very nature<sup>[a]</sup> God,  
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;*

*<sup>7</sup> rather, he made himself nothing  
by taking the very nature<sup>[b]</sup> of a servant,  
being made in human likeness.*

*<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man,  
he humbled himself  
by becoming obedient to death—  
even death on a cross!*

*<sup>9</sup> Therefore God exalted him to the highest place  
and gave him the name that is above every name,*

*<sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,  
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,*

*<sup>11</sup> and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,  
to the glory of God the Father.*

Jesus steps onto the earth for 33 years to take on a human existence - but he is still God. He chose to empty himself (kenosis), but this did not affect his identity within the Godhead. He took on the nature of the servant as should we - the church. We need to set aside our 'stuff' as a church for God's 'stuff' as a servant (Kenotic action means to empty yourself). Jesus does this so the broken and damaged people are healed.

**Andrei Rublev's (1370-1430) Icon of the Hospitality of Abraham** (The following information has been included in addition to the information provided by Bishop Edwards. Reference notes can be found at [http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library\\_en/lord\\_trinity\\_rublev.html](http://www.holy-transfiguration.org/library_en/lord_trinity_rublev.html))



The story commonly known as the hospitality of Abraham is found in Genesis 18:1-15 and is aptly portrayed in Andrei Rublev's famous painting of the same name. In this story, three angels appear to Abraham and Sarah. They treat their three visitors with great reverence, and prepare a meal for them. You have probably seen an icon of these three angels seated at the table, but you may not have known that this icon is a "type" of the Holy Trinity. A type is a figure or a representation. The guests are described simply as three men, but when Abraham talks to them, they respond as one ("they said"). The Lord appeared to Abraham, but when he looks to see who is there, he sees three men. Three men speaking as one; the one God in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. At other times, only one of the angels speaks to Abraham and he is referred to as "Lord."

In Andrei Rublev's icon, the persons of the Holy Trinity are shown in the order in which they are confessed in the Credo. The first angel is the first person of the Trinity - God the Father; the second, middle angel is God the Son; the third angel is God the Holy Spirit. All three angels are blessing the chalice, in which lies a sacrificed calf, prepared for eating. The sacrifice of the calf signifies the Saviour's death on the cross, while its preparation as food symbolizes the sacrament of the Eucharist. All three angels have staffs in their hand as a symbol of their divine power.

The first angel, shown at left, is vested in a blue undergarment which depicts his divine celestial nature, and a light gold/purple outer garment which attests to the unfathomable nature and the royal dignity of this angel. Behind him and above his head towers a house, the abode of Abraham, and a sacrificial altar in front of the house. This image of the abode has a symbolic meaning: the house signifies God's master plan for creation, while the fact that the house towers above the first angel shows him to be the head (or Father) of this creation. The same fatherly authority is seen in his entire appearance. His head is not bowed and he is looking at the other two angels. His whole demeanor - the expression on his face, the placement of his hands, the way he is sitting - all speaks of his fatherly dignity. The other two angels have their heads inclined and eyes turned toward the first angel with great attention, as though conversing with him about the salvation of mankind.

The second angel is placed in the middle of the icon. This placement is determined by the position held by the second Person within the Trinity Itself. Above his head extend the branches of an oak tree. The vestments of the second angel correspond to those in which the Saviour is usually depicted. The undergarment is a dark crimson color which symbolizes the incarnation, while the blue outer robe signifies the divinity and the celestial nature of this angel. The second angel is inclined towards the first angel, as though deep in conversation. The tree behind him serves as a reminder of the tree of life that was standing in Eden, and of the cross.

The angel on the right is the third Person of the Trinity - the Holy Spirit. His light blue undergarment and smoky-green outer garment represent heaven and earth, and signify the life-giving force of the Holy Spirit (Baptism), which animates everything that exists. "By the Holy Spirit every soul lives and is elevated in purity" - sings the Church. This elevation in purity is represented in the icon by a mountain above the third angel. We fit in the front space and are invited to also share in the meal.

### **The Doctrine of the 'Love of God'**

The church enters into the life of God at the invitation of God. The Trinity is 'dynamic God' inviting people (the church) into a 'dynamic relationship'. God is 'love'. Unconditional, eternal, perfect, guaranteed, agape (the highest form of love'; the love of God for man and of man for God). The nature of God's love is always seeking the other person over and over again. God is constantly putting himself in front of us....calling us back when we stray.

### **The Doctrine of Repentance (Metanoia)**

Turning back toward God as he constantly puts himself in front of us is repentance or metanoia - a transformational change of heart or way of being.

### **The Doctrine of Christ**

Mark 1: 1-45 identifies the characteristics of God and is extremely powerful. This passage frames the doctrine of Christ. God the Father identifies Jesus as the Son whom he loves and is well pleased. The Holy Spirit is a messenger working through John the Baptist, who descends like a dove in Baptism. Jesus as the Son is sent and spends considerable time in lonely places. He is tempted in the wilderness, proclaims the good news and begins his ministry, calls his disciples to be fishers of men, teaches, prays, preaches, drives out demons and evil spirits, heals Simon's mother in law and cleanses a leper. The message is all powerful.

Mark's Gospel indicates that Jesus was present from the 'beginning' and spends 8 chapters demonstrating why. It provides a 'formula' that frames the doctrine of Christ by outlining the categories of the nature of God in Christ the Messiah and in the Spirit. It also links Psalm 2 in the Old Testament. Psalm 2 is known as the 'coronation psalm' - God's promise to David that there will always be a King in the line of David. The psalm was traditionally read when a King of Israel was enthroned. Jesus fits perfectly in the doctrine of the Old Testament - as Messiah and his kingship.

### **The Doctrine of Creation**

Christology is the doctrine about Jesus. Theology is talking about God. The Godhead (the Trinity) was there in the beginning, in perfect creation. The relationship was then damaged and creation had to be made imperfect. When Jesus heals he is demonstrating his power

over the fallen creation - that He has the power to bring it back and that ultimately that happens through the cross.

### **Summation of Doctrine in the Judeo-Christian Tradition**

Doctrine is about 3 gardens. The first is the Garden of Eden which was perfection and God loved. Humans existed and the perfection was to spread. Everything becomes imperfect through human sin. All through the Old Testament God is working at restoration. That restoration continues through Jesus in the New Testament.

The second garden is the Garden of Gethsemane where the battle to get to the cross was won. The cup in the Old Testament is the wrath of God. Jesus asks if there is any way to take it away..... " Thy will be done" .

The third is the Garden of Paradise - the new heaven and new earth which is 'restored creation' with the coming of Christ and the revelation of the sons and daughters of God totally renewed and restored.

### **God's Purpose as defined through Doctrine**

Doctrine is a 'container of beliefs ' in which is contained our faith, not to restrict us but to help us understand the nature of God and His function in the world so we can be imitators of Christ.