Short Introductions to the World Religions - Christianity

| Newman, Paul W.

Short Introductions to the World Religions - Christianity

1. Jesus was a Jew, educated in his own tradition. The Hebrew scriptures consequently provided the foundation for the religious ideas of Christianity. Jesus, however, has influenced virtually every aspect of Christian belief.

2. Jesus called God

"Abba"/"Father". Such a God is obviously loving and is intimately acquainted with people and their joys and sorrows. The love of God is the essence of the good news or gospel that Christians believe and try to proclaim in word and deed.

3. Jesus himself reflected the qualities of God in his own attitudes and behaviour. He befriended social outcasts, eating and drinking with hated tax collectors and prostitutes, and he treated women and children with dignity and respect. Jesus emphasized the love God has for every creature. God, he said, sees the sparrow fall and knows the number of hairs on a person"s head. Since this loving God created the world it is believed to be basically good.

4. According to the Hebrew scriptures human beings are created in the image of God. To be the image of God suggests that people share some of the creative and loving characteristics of God and are

entrusted with some of the work of looking after the creation. Human beings are the image of God when they are in right relationship with God reflecting the glory of God or the Spirit of God in their lives. God"s Spirit gives the "fruits" of the Spirit, the greatest of which is love. The Spirit also gives "gifts" or talents that people can use in work and in worship.

5. The image of God is lost when people fail to have a right relationship with God and with their fellow creatures. Sin, in Christian belief, is whatever is "against the Spirit." It consists of serving something or someone rather than God. In this sense, social systems and corporate structures of various kinds can be sinful in as far as they fail to realize God"s purposes for them and are under the control of something that is alien to God.

6. Jesus proclaimed the promise of a better world under the Reign or Kingdom of God. He called for people to "return" and believe

in the good news of the Reigning of God. For Jesus, salvation consisted of individuals and social systems returning to an intimate relationship with God and a faithful reflection of God"s purposes. Most Christians believe that the intimacy with God does continue after death, but its chief purpose is to change life now and to make the world a better place, as God intends it to be.

7. Jesus himself represented humankind in the process of salvation. He was "full of the Spirit" and practised what he preached about the Reigning of God in his own person. His life was consistently a living sacrifice of love for God and for others, culminating in the supreme sacrifice at his death.

8. Christians believe that God raised Jesus from death, thereby vindicating his "way of the cross" and giving a sign of promise to all who follow in Jesus" way of salvation. By raising Jesus from death God showed that the ultimate victory does not belong to

the destructive powers who are against the Spirit.

9. In the centuries following Jesus" life, death and resurrection, the Christian church developed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity in order to try and express adequately the reality of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit who are three yet profoundly one.

10. The Christian church is the body of people who identify themselves by the name of Jesus Christ. The church was started when the early disciples received the Spirit of God which was also the Spirit of Jesus and thereafter believed and lived in the name or Spirit of Christ.

11. The sacrament of baptism is when a person receives the identity of Christian discipleship. The sacrament of Holy Communion or Eucharist is an act of remembrance of Jesus" sacrificial life and a thankful receiving again of his living Spirit as present in the ongoing community of his followers.

Copyright JCRelations

12. The Christian church believes itself called to proclaim the gospel that Jesus preached and lived, and to show people what Christ is like so that they may be convinced to follow him. To be sure, this evangelistic (from the word "evangel" meaning "good news") effort has not always been carried out wisely or in ways consistent with the message of love itself.

13. Christians believe that they are joined together by common bond of Christ and the Spirit. This communion of saints, as it is called, creates a sense of solidarity for Christians with other Christians from the past and present.

14. Christian hopes for the future vary much in detail but generally are for a just and peaceful world united by the Spirit of God, realizing the Reign or Kingdom of God in every aspect of the creation.

15. There are many variations in Christian beliefs as expressed by the doctrines and practices of different denominations. The

Copyright JCRelations

Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches represent the major differences in Christian tradition.

Paul W. Newman

Back to content
World Religions

Copyright JCRelations