

Doctrine One

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God, and that they only constitute the Divine rule of Christian faith and practice.

This is the starting point for all the other doctrines. As an Evangelical movement, the Army is committed to Scripture as the primary source of authority. As such, the first doctrine establishes the Army's understanding of the Bible. Doctrine One is the foundation stone on which everything else is built.

Written by about 40 different authors and edited together over about 1500 years, the Bible is the story of God's people and how God has worked to bring about the salvation and restoration of the world.

- The Bible includes the Old and the New Testaments. They are both authoritative in our lives. The New Testament is not more important than the Old Testament. We must read the Old Testament through the eyes of the New Testament and understand the New Testament in light of the Old Testament.
- The Bible was inspired by God, which means we can trust what it says to have meaning for us. God inspired the authors to write the texts that make up the Bible, God inspired the editors who put the texts together, God inspired the theologians and councils who agreed on which texts should become the recognised canon of scripture, and God inspires us when we read the Bible through the work of the Holy Spirit.
- The texts that comprise the Bible are the only source of divine authority and rule for Christian life. A rule is a way of measuring things. Many books, sermons, and podcasts are available to help us be good disciples. But these must all be measured against Scripture because only the Bible has divine authority. Everything else is subordinate to the Bible.
- But the Bible means nothing if you don't read it. If you leave it on the shelf, it won't teach you anything. Equally, only listening to the snippets given on a Sunday won't get you where you need to go. We need to fall in love with the Bible. Let it confront us, teach us, motivate us, beguile us, and fill us with wonder. There is always more to learn, always more to find out.
- The Bible is essential to our faith. It's important that we engage with our Bible every day, whether that's a physical, mobile, or audio version. Take time this week to set a reminder to read the Bible every day. If you don't know where to start, begin with the Gospel of Luke and work through that.

Doctrine Two

We believe that there is only one God, who is infinitely perfect, the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things, and who is the only proper object of religious worship.

Doctrine Two grows out of Doctrine One. It teaches us all about God. This doctrine sets out the basics of who God is. It really is only the basics. We can never know God fully; God will always be beyond our capacity to know completely.

- We believe in only one God. This is very important. A mistake many people make is confusing the Trinity with three Gods. But Christianity is monotheistic. We believe in only one God. This means we also believe God is the God of the entire world. God is not 'our' God but is everybody's God. We do not own God. There are no other Gods in competition with God. There is only God.
- God is infinitely perfect. God is greater than even the greatest thing it is possible for us to imagine. To be infinite is not just to be really big. It's to be uncountable, uncontainable, and indescribable. God can never be held within our conceptions or ideas. Even our doctrines are only ever a step in the right direction. God is perfect. God cannot improve. God is complete as God's self, just as God is.
- God caused all things to be. We don't have to agree on how God did the job of creation, only that everything exists because God wants it to. God is the reason why there is something rather than nothing. God causes all things to remain in existence. God preserves creation. Things exist because God wants them to, and nothing would continue to exist without God. God is the ultimate authority over creation. This does not necessarily mean that everything happens because God wants it to, but it does mean that there is no authority other than God's.
- We should worship only God. Many competing things and ideas vie for our attention and worship, but only God deserves our worship. To worship something means to give it our heart and our devotion. If we give our heart and devotion, our worship, to anything that is not God, we engage in idolatry.
- This week, get a bit of paper and write on it everything you believe about God. All the words and names you use for God. All the ideas you have about God. Then, see if you can make them fit the words of this doctrine.

Doctrine Three

We believe that there are three persons in the Godhead – the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, undivided in essence and co-equal in power and glory.

The Trinity is perhaps one of the most confusing doctrines in Christianity. Theologians and writers have battered their heads up against it for centuries. But our way into the Trinity is not through reason but through prayer. We know God in love and prayerful response to who God shows Godself to be. Knowing God as the Trinity means knowing God as love. We begin to understand the trinity when we understand God as love.

- We believe in only God, but that there are three persons in God. God has revealed Godself as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This doesn't mean that God is three different Gods joined together. It also doesn't mean that God works in three different ways, and we say each way is one of the Trinity. God is one God but with three persons.
- When we seek to understand the Trinity, we start with what essence and person actually mean. They are technical terms from ancient Greek philosophy that the early Church used to try to explain how they understood God.
- Something's essence is the fundamental nature of what that thing is. What it means to be a chair, a tree, a human. The essence of a thing is the 'stuff' which makes the thing what it is. To quote from *Alice in Wonderland*, the essence of a thing is its 'muchness.' God is one. God does not have more than one essence, more than one nature, but is single and whole.
- Undivided in essence. The three persons of the Trinity are all united in one essence. But what does it mean to say that there are three persons in this one God?
- In ancient Greece, the word for a mask worn by an actor was their *persona*, which becomes a person when translated into English. Someone's *persona*, what it means for them to be a person, is what renders them unique from other people. It makes them who they are rather than any other human being.
- To say there are three persons in the Godhead means that there are three distinct actors who are known differently from each other.
- So, there are three distinct persons who are united by the 'stuff', by their 'Godness' who are equal in power and glory. There is no hierarchy in the Trinity; they are all equal, for they are all one.
- The trinity teaches us that God is inherently relational – God exists in a unity of love. How do we show that same kind of love to each other? Is there something we can do this week to show how we can love each other in fellowship and community?

Doctrine Four

We believe that in the person of Jesus Christ the Divine and human natures are united, so that He is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.

Doctrine four teaches us who Jesus is. This question vexed Christians for hundreds of years, as they tried to nail down exactly what they meant when they said Jesus was God. The doctrine we have today emerged from those debates.

- The language from Doctrine Three is important to help us understand what Doctrine Four means.
- In the trinity, there is one essence (nature) and three persons.
- In Jesus, there is one person and two natures (essences) united together. The essence of God, which is undivided in the Trinity, is united with the essence of humanity. Not just a single human, but what it means to be human.
- This is not 50/50 but 100% God and 100% man, so that Jesus is truly and properly God and truly and properly man.
- The unity of the two natures (essences) is bound together in the one person of Jesus. Jesus is not a split person; Jesus is one person who is simultaneously and equally God and Man.
- Jesus is not a demi-god; Jesus is not the highest of all created beings; Jesus was not born human and then had God-stuff added later. Jesus was, is, and always will be truly and properly God and truly and properly human. In his personhood, Jesus is an individual human. In his essence Jesus shares in what it means to be human, in humanity.
- What does this mean for us? It means that God knows what it's like to be human. But it also means that Jesus participates in who we are. This is why Jesus can be the second Adam: just as all humans were in Adam and have fallen in Adam, so now we are in Jesus and can live. This week, when you are tempted to get angry or annoyed with a person, remember that Jesus now participates in what it means for them to be human.

Doctrine Five

We believe that our first parents were created in a state of innocence, but by their disobedience they lost their purity and happiness, and that in consequence of their fall all men have become sinners, totally depraved, and as such are justly exposed to the wrath of God.

Why are things not perfect if God created everything? This doctrine explains why. We live in a world where humanity has fallen away from what we should have been. Our fall has affected all of creation. Everything humanity should have been, could have been, is lost to the fall and we wait in expectation of the final reconciliation that God will bring about.

- We believe that everything was created perfect and that humanity did not sin to begin with. We learn from the story in Genesis that sin is understood to be rebelling against what God has told us not to do. Until humans knew what God wanted of them, there was no sin. So, to be innocent did not mean to be without the possibility of sin, but rather without the knowledge of what sin was.
- At some point, humans become aware of who God is and what God requires of us. The image of the tree in Genesis teaches us that sin is wanting to be like God. The knowledge of good and evil replaces obedience to God. We want to decide what is good and evil for ourselves rather than depending on God, on having obedient faith.
- Humanity is 'fallen', which means that humanity now knows the difference between good and evil, which is normally understood to be our conscience. Their purity was their innocence, their complete and utter trust and obedience in God. Their happiness came from not being exposed to the moral dilemmas of choosing between good and evil.
- Just as Jesus participates in what it means to be human, so does every human person. That means we are not only individuals, we are part of humanity. Our sins affect each other. We are all sinners because we are all affected by and carry the weight of each other's sins. This is what is normally called original sin.
- To be totally depraved does not mean we are as bad as it is possible to be. It does not mean that babies are born evil or already sinners. It means that we are corrupted, impure, and fallen in all that we are. Every part of who we are, body, soul, and mind, is affected by the fall. We are prone to sin because sin means wanting to decide for ourselves the difference between good and evil rather than being obedient to God. This means we cannot choose to be saved. We cannot choose to obey God because our capacity to choose has been affected by sin. We are in need of the grace of God.
- We do not deserve salvation or grace because we are fallen and sinful. We are dependent on grace.
- Thankfully, we know this is not the end of the story. But what it means for you is that you can let go of your striving and your stress about being good enough for God. All too often we feel that we need to get it right, that we need to just pray more or do more good things in order to deserve God. But we know that we cannot earn salvation and so we must simply fall back onto the grace of Jesus and trust in God's love for us. This week, try to let go of the need to control. The need to try to please God and instead simply let yourself be loved.

Doctrine Six

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has by His suffering and death made an atonement for the whole world so that whosoever will may be saved.

Doctrine Six resolves the problems of Doctrine Five. We have all fallen short, we are all totally depraved, unable to save ourselves. But rather than that being the end of the story, we can celebrate because God redeems us. Christ makes an atonement, enabling us to be at one with God once again.

- Salvation has been brought about by Christ alone. It is only because of Jesus and what he has done for us that salvation and atonement has been made possible.
- It was Jesus' crucifixion, his suffering on behalf of humanity and his death which brought about the atonement. In his death, Jesus dies for sin, taking it onto himself and rendering it impotent. Death has trampled down death. Jesus destroys the power of death because he is resurrected.
- This was effective for the entire world. Jesus did not just die for some people and not others. Jesus died for everyone. This is an important point, as not every Christian believes it. However, it is a core part of the Army's beliefs and the heritage we inherited from Wesleyanism. We believe that Jesus died for everyone and the whole world.
- This means that everyone can be saved. No one is beyond the grace of Christ.

Doctrine Seven

We believe that repentance towards God, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and regeneration by the Holy Spirit, are necessary to salvation.

There are things which are necessary for salvation. Does this mean that God cannot or will not save a person unless they have done these things? Or does it mean that they are a necessary response to salvation? Or is it something a bit more complicated?

- Salvation is dependent upon grace. Because we are totally depraved, we cannot choose to be obedient to God or choose to have faith in God. But because Jesus was not just one human but took on what it meant to be human, his act of salvation has made it possible for all humans to choose God. This is called prevenient grace—grace that comes first.
- To believe in God, we have to believe that we need grace in the first place. As such, repentance is necessary. We have to know that we actually need to be saved, and once we do, we feel repentance for our sins.
- We cannot accept the grace that Christ has made available unless we have faith in Christ. Our faith in Christ is our obedience to Christ and our love for who Christ is. Faith is our response to our need for grace. It brings us into a relationship with Jesus.
- Regeneration means that we do not remain the same. Previously, when we were in our sin, our hearts were turned inwards. That's like being in a hall of mirrors so that wherever you look you can only see yourself. Regeneration means the heart is turned outwards so that we look not only to Jesus but also to our neighbours. Regeneration is not only about our relationship with God but our relationship with each other.
- Salvation comes through Christ as we accept it by faith in response to our awakening to our need for grace.
- What is your heart doing? Is it still focused on your own life, on your own problems and needs? Take this week to remind yourself to focus on others. Our faith does not lead inside ourselves but rather outwards towards our neighbours.

Doctrine Eight

We believe that we are justified by grace through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and that he that believeth hath the witness in himself.

Being justified by grace through faith is the central tenet of Protestant Christianity. Salvation is made possible through the grace of Christ, the freely given and undeserved gift of love, which is accepted by our faith in Jesus. When we have that faith and experience the gift of grace, we carry within ourselves the witness of what God can do for every person in the world.

- To be justified means to be made right, to be ruled to be in the right, to be deemed and judged to be right. Justification and sanctification are two sides of the same coin: salvation.
- We are justified by the grace of Christ. This means that Jesus has covered us with his righteousness so that even though we remain in our sin, God looks at us and regards us as if we were righteous because we now share Christ's righteousness.
- The grace of God is actualised in our lives through our faith. We believe in God and in who Jesus is, and as such, we accept our need for grace. In so doing, we participate in Christ's righteousness.
- Our experience of grace, of knowing the need for God's love, of being set free from our sins, gives us a witness to share with the world. Everyone can testify about God. You do not need to be special to talk about God. All you need is faith.
- Are you ready and willing to witness what God has done in your life? This week, take a few moments and write down what God has done for you. How would you explain it to someone else? This is what it means to have the witness in yourself. Being ready to say what God has done for you.

Doctrine Nine

We believe that continuance in a state of salvation depends upon continued obedient faith in Christ.

God's grace is not dependent on us, but our faith depends on our continued obedience to Jesus. Without faith, we stop knowing that we are dependent on grace. Without acknowledging the need for grace, we will stop participating in who Christ is.

- Salvation is not ours by rights but is a state we participate in by faith. When that faith ceases, we cease participating in that state of Salvation.
- Faith is obedience to Christ. It is not simply about having the right beliefs or agreeing with the right doctrines. Faith means trusting who Jesus is for us and then following where Jesus leads us.
- We don't always know what will happen or where we are meant to be going. But because of faith, we continue our journey, trusting in what Jesus commands. Namely, to love the neighbour.
- Maintaining our obedient faith is not a matter of striving or struggle but of continued acknowledging our dependence upon grace. Again and again, we come back to Jesus in need of grace.
- This week, take time to come back to Jesus. Are you following where Jesus is leading you, or are you trying to do it on your own? How much can you trust God, or do you keep on trying to justify yourself? Remember, we are always in need of grace.

Doctrine Ten

We believe that it is the privilege of all believers to be wholly sanctified, and that their whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the heart of Salvationism. Sanctification and justification are two halves of the coin of salvation. Justification covered us with the grace of Christ, so we are held under his righteousness. Sanctification breaks out of our inward-turned hearts and releases us from the ongoing effects of sin in our lives. The Salvation Army is a holiness movement. Without our belief in the possibility of sanctification in the believer's life, we would no longer be the Army.

- Sanctification is a privilege for all believers. It is not ours by right but is given to us by grace.
- Just as we are totally depraved in sin, so that every part of who we are has been affected by sin, so now we can be totally sanctified, so that every part of who we are is transformed by the Holy Spirit. Our whole being, body, mind and spirit, is regenerated through the Holy Spirit.
- In total depravity, we could not choose to follow Jesus. Now, in total sanctification, we can obey Christ and follow the commands of grace to love our neighbour.
- The most important part of sanctification is its role in preserving us in our justification. Even though we continue to fall short of what God requires of us, our sanctification preserves us in the justification which Christ has graciously granted to us.
- Not only preserved but preserved blameless. In sanctification, we are united with Christ when the Holy Spirit dwells in us. We share in who Christ is. Christ's perfection and sinlessness so that even though we continue to fall short, we are held by the Spirit in who Christ is and so can be regarded as sinless for as long as we remain obedient and faithful to Christ.
- This is the eschatological tip of justification's spear. It is the promise of future glory, of the kingdom that is to come. Sanctification preserves us for the coming of Jesus and for the world that is yet to be.
- Are you living a holy life? Are you paying attention to the needs of the neighbour? Are you serving God by loving each other and the people around you? Turn again to Jesus and ask for the Holy Spirit to come and dwell fully within you and transform your life so that you can give yourself through Christ to your neighbour.

Doctrine Eleven

We believe in the immortality of the soul; in the resurrection of the body; in the general judgment at the end of the world; in the eternal happiness of the righteous; and in the endless punishment of the wicked.

This is the doctrine that finishes off the previous ones. This is the goal that everything else is leading us towards. It is the promise that God has made for our future. It is the guarantee that evil will not win but that in the end Christ will be triumphant, and all things will be made new and will be set right. All shall be well, and all manner of things shall be well.

- We believe that who we are persists beyond death. The Bible teaches us that who we are is held and preserved in God, so that our immortality is not inherent to who we are but is conditional upon God preserving us.
- But we don't believe in a continual spiritual home where our soul will go when we die. We believe in the resurrection. At some point in the future, when Christ returns to judge the world, God will remake the heavens and the earth so they become the same place. When that happens, we will be resurrected. Resurrection is not just a name for going to heaven. Resurrection means physical resurrection, like how Jesus was able to eat and drink after his resurrection. We don't know what this will be like or what it means, but we believe that it will happen.
- We believe that Christ stands as judge over the world. All people will be answerable for how they have lived. But this judgement has also already taken place at the cross. It began on the cross when death was destroyed and will be completed in the new creation when Jesus sets everything right.
- We believe that there will be no more crying, pain, suffering, or death in the new creation. Everyone will dwell directly with God and everyone will be happy and joyful and all things will be well.
- We believe that those who are not righteous will receive the punishment that they are due. We don't know what this will be like, we don't know who (if anyone) will receive that punishment. We do know that God will make all things right.