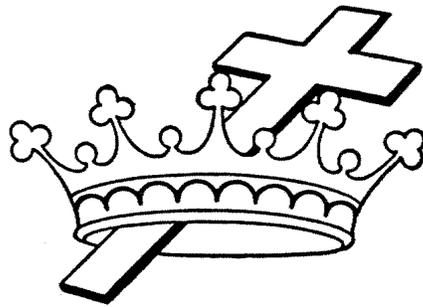


The Trinity



**CROWNRIDGE CHURCH
MINISTRIES**

WE BELIEVE: IN THE TRINITY:

**One God eternally existing in three persons;
namely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit**

THIS WE SURELY BELIEVE

1. The Bible is verbally inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
2. **In one God eternally existing in three persons; namely, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.**
3. The Deity of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father, conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. In His sinless life, miracles, His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood. That Jesus was crucified, buried and raised bodily from the dead; that He ascended to heaven and is today at the right hand of the Father as the Intercessor.
4. That all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and that repentance is commanded of God for all and necessary for forgiveness of sins.
5. The justification, regeneration, and the new birth are wrought by faith in the blood of Jesus Christ.
6. In sanctification subsequent to the new birth, through faith in the blood of Christ; through the Word and by the Holy Ghost.
7. The present ministry of the Holy Spirit by whose cleansing and indwelling the Christian is able to live a life of Holiness, which is to be God's standard of living for His people.
8. In the baptism of the Holy Ghost subsequent to a clean heart for the purpose of witnessing for Christ with power.
9. speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gives utterance, is scriptural. The gifts of the Spirit, should be sought for by all believers in prayer and should manifest in a Christians life as the Holy Spirit distributes them at His will.
10. In water baptism by immersion, and all who repent should be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.
11. Divine healing is provided for all in the atonement.
12. In the Lord's Supper
13. In the pre-millennial second coming of Jesus. First, to resurrect the righteous dead and to catch away the living saints to Him in the air. Second, to reign on the earth a thousand years.
14. In the bodily resurrection; eternal life for the righteous, and eternal punishment for the wicked.

WE BELIEVE: The Scriptures teach that God is One, and that beside Him there is no God. The question might arise, "How could God have any fellowship before finite creatures came into existence?" The answer is that the Divine Unity is a compound unity, and that in this unity there are really Three distinct Persons, every One of whom is the Godhead, and yet is supremely conscious of the other Two. So we see that there was an Eternal Fellowship before any finite creatures were created; therefore, God was never alone.

Not that there are three Gods, all of whom are independent and self-existing. The three co-operate with one mind and purpose, so that in the truest sense of the word they are "one." The Father creates; the Son redeems, and the Holy Spirit sanctifies; and yet in each Operation the Three are present. The Father is pre-eminently Creator, yet the Son and the Spirit are described as co-operating in that work. The Son is pre-eminently the Redeemer, yet God the Father and the Spirit are described as sending the Son to redeem. The Holy Spirit is the Sanctifier, yet the Father and the Son co-operate in that work.

The Trinity is an eternal fellowship, but the work of man's redemption called forth its historical manifestation. The Son entered the world in a new way when He took to Himself human nature, and He was given a new name, Jesus. The Holy Spirit entered the world in a new way, that is, as the Spirit of Christ, embodied in the church. And yet all three walked together. The Father testified of the Son (Matt. 3 :17); and the Son testified of the Father. John 5:19. The Son testified of the Spirit (John 14 :26), and later the Spirit testified of the Son. John 15 :26.

Does all this seem difficult of comprehension? How could it be otherwise, since we are attempting to describe the inner life of Almighty God! The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly a revealed doctrine, and not one conceived by the human reason. How else could we learn of the inner nature of the Godhead except by revelation? 1 Cor. 2 :16.

It is true that the word "Trinity" does not appear in the New Testament; it is a theological expression, invented during the second -century to describe the Godhead. But the planet Jupiter existed before it was so named; and the doctrine of the Trinity was in the Bible before it was technically called the Trinity. Did you know the word grandfather does not appear in the Bible? Yet when we read the genealogies we know they existed. Just because a word given by man to describe an event or truth that existed before the word was used to describe it does not void out the truth.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY DEFINED.

We can understand why the doctrine of the Trinity was sometimes misunderstood and misstated. It was very difficult to find human terms in which to express the unity of the God-head and at the same time the reality and distinctness of the Persons.

In laying stress upon the reality of Christ's Deity and the personality of the Holy Spirit some writers seemed to be in danger of falling into Tri-theism, or belief in three Gods. Other writers, laying stress on the unity of God, seemed in danger of forgetting the distinction of Persons. This last error is commonly known as Sabellianism, from Bishop Sabellius who taught that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are simply three aspects or manifestations of God. This error has appeared many times in the history of the church and is current even today.

The doctrine is clearly unscriptural and is excluded by the sharp distinctions drawn in Scripture between the Father, Son, and Spirit. The Father loves and sends the Son; the Son leaves and re-returns to the Father. The Father and the Son send the Spirit; the Spirit intercedes with the Father. If, then, the Father, Son and Spirit are only God under different aspects or names, then the New Testament is a mass of confusion. For example, a reading of the intercessory prayer (John ·17) with the thought in mind that Father, Son and Spirit are one Person, will reveal the absurdity of the doctrine: "As I have given myself power over all flesh, that I should give eternal life to as many as I have given myself ... I have glorified myself on earth; I have finished the work which I gave myself to do. And now I glorify myself with my own self with the glory which I had with me before the world was."

How was the doctrine of the Trinity preserved from becoming overbalanced either on the side of Unity (Sabellianism) or on the side of Tri-unity (Tritheism)? By the formulation of dogmas, that is, interpretations which define the doctrine and "fence" it against error. The following example of dogma is found in the Athanasian Creed, formulated during the fifth century.

"We worship one God in trinity, and trinity in unity.

Neither confounding the persons, nor separating the substance. For the person of the Father is one, of the Son another, and of the Holy Ghost another. But of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost there is one divinity, equal glory and coeternal majesty. What the Father is, the same is the Son, and the Holy Ghost. The Father is uncreated, the Son uncreated, the Holy Ghost uncreated. The Father is immense, the Son immense, the Holy Ghost immense. The Father is eternal, the Son eternal, the Holy Ghost eternal. And yet there are not three eternals, but one eternal. So there are not three (beings) uncreated, nor three immenses, but one uncreated, and one immense. In like manner the Father is omnipotent, the Son is omnipotent, the Holy Ghost is omnipotent. And yet there are not three omnipotents, but one omnipotent. Thus the Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God.

And yet there are not three Gods, but one God. Thus the Father is Lord, the Son is Lord, and the Holy Ghost is Lord. Yet there are not three Lords, but one Lord. Because we are thus compelled by Christian verity to confess each person severally to be God and Lord; so we are prohibited from saying that there are three Gods or Lords. The Father was made from none, nor created, nor begotten. The Son is from the Father alone, neither made, nor created, but begotten. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding. Therefore there is one Father, not three Fathers, one Son, not three Sons, one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts. And in this trinity there is nothing first or last; nothing greater or less. But all the three coeternal persons are coequal among themselves; so that through all, as is above said, both unity in trinity, and trinity in unity, is to be wor-shiped. “

This statement may appear dry, involved and hair-splitting to us, but in the early days, it proved an effective means of preserving the correct state-ment of truths that were precious and vital to the church.

THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY PROVEN.

Inasmuch as the doctrine of the Trinity concerns the inner nature of the Trinity, it could not be known except by revelation. That revelation is found in the Scriptures.

(a) The Old Testament.

The Old Testament does not plainly and directly teach the Trinity, and the reason is evident. In a world where the worship of many gods was common, it was necessary to impress upon Israel the truth that God was One, and that there was none beside Him. Had the Trinity been directly taught in the be-ginning, it might have been misunderstood and misinterpreted.

But though not explicitly mentioned, the germ of the doctrine may be detected in the Old Testament. Every time a Hebrew uttered the name of God (Elohim) he was really saying "Gods," for the word is in the plural, and is sometimes used in the Hebrew with a plural adjective (Josh. 24 :18, 19) and with a plural verb. Gen. 35:7.

Let us imagine a devout and enlightened Hebrew pondering the fact that Jehovah is One, and yet He is Elohim-Gods" He could conceivably be imagined as concluding that there was a plurality of persons within the one God. Paul the Apostle never ceased to believe in the unity of God as he had been taught it from his youth (1 Tim.

2:S; 1 Cor. 8:4); indeed, he insisted that he taught no other things but which were found in the Law and the Prophets. His God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Yet he preaches the Deity of Christ (Phil. 2 :6-8; 1 Tim. 3 :16) and the personality of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4 :30), and puts three Persons together in the apostolic benediction. 2 Cor. 13:14.

Each member of the Trinity is mentioned in the Old Testament:

(1) Father. Isa. 63 :16; Mal. 2 :10.

(2) The Son of Jehovah. Psalm 45 :6, 7; 2 :6, 7, 12; Provo 30 :4. The Messiah is described with Divine titles. J er. 23 :5, 6; Isa. 9 :6. Mention is made of the mysterious Angel of Jehovah who bears God's name and has power to either forgive or retain sins.
Ex. 23 :20, 21.

(3) The Holy Spirit Gen. 1:2; Isa. 11 :2, 3; 48 :16; 61:1; 63:10.

Foreshadowings of the Trinity have been seen in the triple benediction of Num. 6 :24-26 and the triple Doxology, Isa. 6 :3.

(b) The New Testament.

The early Christians held as a fundamental of their faith the fact of the unity of God. To both Jew and heathen they could testify, "We believe in one God." But at the same time they had the plain words of Jesus to prove that He claimed a position and an authority which it would have been blasphemy for Him to have claimed if He were not God, and the New Testament writers in referring to Jesus, used language which indicated that they recognized Jesus as "over all, God blessed for- ever." Rom. 9 :5. And the spiritual experience of Christians bore out and supported these claims. When they knew Jesus, they knew Him as God.

The same is true of God the Holy Ghost. The early Christians could not but believe that the Holy Ghost who dwelt in them, teaching them, guiding them, and inspiring them to newness of life, was no mere influence or feeling, but a Being whom they could know and between whom and their souls there could be real communion. And when they turned to the New Testament they found He was described as possessing the attributes of personality.

So the early church was confronted with two facts, that God is One, and that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God. And these two great facts concerning God constitute the doctrine of the Trinity. God the Father was a reality to them; the Son was a reality to them, and so was the Holy Spirit. And the only conclusion that could be reached from these facts was that in the Godhead there was a real but mysterious distinction of personality, which distinction became manifest in the Divine work for man's redemption.

Several New Testament passages mention the three Divine Persons. Compare Matt. 3 :16, 17; 28:19; John 14:16, 17,26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 2 :18; 2 Thess. 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:2; Eph. 1 :3, 13; Heb. 9 :14.

A comparison of texts taken from all parts of Scripture shows that:

(1) Each of the three Persons is Creator, although it is stated that there is but one Creator. (Job 33:4 and Isa. 44 :24).

(2) Each is called Jehovah (Deut. 6:4; Jer. 23 :6; Ezek. 8 :1,3), the Lord (Rom. 10 :12; Luke 2:11; 2 Cor. 3 :18), the God of Israel (Matt.15 :31; Luke 1:16, 17; 2 Sam. 23 :2, 3), the Lawgiver (Rom. 7 :25; Gal. 6:2; Rom. 8:2; James 4:12), omnipresent (Jer. 23 :24; Eph. 1 :22; Psalm 139 :7,8), and the Source of Life (Deut. 30 :20; Col. 3:4; Rom. 8: 10). Yet it is affirmed that there is only one Being who may be thus described.

(3) Each made mankind (Psalm 100:3; John 1:3 ; Job 33:4), quickens the dead (John 5 :21 ; 6:33), raised Christ (1 Cor. 6 :14; John 2:19; 1 Pet. 3:18), commissions the ministry (2 Cor. 3:5; 1 Tim. 1 :12; Acts 20 :28), sanctifies God's people (Jude 1; Heb. 2:11; Rom. 15 :16), and performs all spiritual operations (1 Cor. 12:6; Col. 3:11; 1 Cor. 12:11). Yet it is clear that but one God is capable of these things.

THE DOCTRINE ILLUSTRATED.

How can three Persons be one God? is a question which puzzles many people. We do not wonder at their perplexity, for in considering the inner nature of the eternal God we are dealing with a form of existence much different from our own. W rites Dr. Peter Green:

Let us suppose that there was a being, some kind of an angel, or visitor from the planet Mars, who had never seen anything alive. How difficult he would find it to understand the fact of growth. He would easily understand how a

thing can increase, so to speak, from outside, as a pile of stones becomes larger and larger as more stones are thrown on to it. But he would find it hard to understand how anything could grow, so to speak, from inside and by itself. The idea of growth would be to him a thing very hard to grasp. And if he were conceited, impatient, and un-teachable, he would almost certainly fail to understand it.

Now let us suppose that this same strange being, having learned something about life and growth, as displayed in trees and plants, were introduced to a new fact, namely, that of intelligence, as displayed in the higher animals. How difficult he would find it to understand what is meant by liking and disliking, choosing and refusing, knowing or being ignorant. If life is hard to understand, how much more difficult is mind. Here, too, he would need to be humble, patient and teachable if he were to grasp these ideas. But as soon as he began to understand what is meant by mind and how it works, he would have to try to understand something higher than mind, as we find it in human beings. Here, again, he would 'be confronted with something new, strange, and not to be explained by reference to anything with which he had hitherto met. He would have to be careful, humble...and teachable.

He then,.. our angel or visitor from Mars, will expect, and we too shall do well to expect, that when we pass from considering the nature of man to considering the nature of God we shall find something new.

But there is a method whereby truths far above human reason may yet, in a measure, be made intelligible to the reason. We refer to the use of illustration or analogy. But these should be used with caution, and not pressed too far. "Every comparison limps," said a wise man of ancient Greece. At best they are imperfect and inadequate. They may be compared to tiny flashlights that help us glimpse the reasonableness of truths too vast for perfect comprehension.

ILLUSTRATIONS MAY BE DRAWN FROM THREE SOURCES: Nature; human personality; human relations.

(a) Nature furnishes many analogies.

- (1) Water is one, yet it is known in three forms - water, ice, and steam.
- (2) There is one electricity, yet in an automobile it works as motion, light, and heat.
- (3) The sun is one, yet is manifest as light, heat, and fire.

- (4) When St. Patrick was evangelizing the Irish he explained the doctrine of the Trinity with a three-leafed shamrock.
- (5) It has been pointed out that every beam of light has three rays: first, the actinic, which is invisible; second, the luminiferous, which is visible; third, the calorific, which gives heat, and is felt but not seen. Where these three are, there is light; where there is light, we have these three. John the Apostle said, "God is light." God the Father is invisible: He became visible in His Son; and He is operative in the world through the Spirit, who is invisible yet effective.
- (6) Three candles in one room will give but one light.
- (7) A triangle has three sides and three angles; take away one side and it is no longer a triangle. Where there are three angles there is one triangle.

(b) Human Personality.

- (1) God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." Man is one, yet tripartite, consisting of spirit, soul, and body.
- (2) Human consciousness points to divisions in personality. Have we not at times become conscious of reasoning with ourselves and of ourselves listening to the conversation? I talk to myself, and I listen to myself talking to myself !

(c) Relationship.

- (1) God is love. He was eternally a Lover. But love requires an object of love; and being eternal He must have had an eternal object of love, namely His Son. The eternal Lover and the eternal Beloved! And the eternal Bond and out-flowing of that love is the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Our government is one, yet it has three branches: legislative, judicial, and executive.

NOTES

NOTES

Loving Jesus

With a Passion for

His People

His Presence

His Purpose

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