
Life means nothing without relationships and love is at the heart of relationships. Love that shows affection, or gives commitment, or makes sacrifices for others, is essential to making life worthwhile. Without relationships, without love, we are missing the point of being alive.

So it should be no surprise that the Christian faith, at its heart, is first and foremost about relationship. Centuries ago, St Augustine had identified this fact and, in a prayer, expressed it something like this: ‘You have made us for yourself, O God, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you’. We are made for relationship – and, in a special way – relationship with God.

The gospel itself is about relationship. In 2 Corinthians 5:19, we are told ‘that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ...’ When John speaks in his Gospel of Jesus coming to earth, he speaks in terms of relationship (1:11, 12). When Jesus announced the Kingdom of God he announced it in terms of himself (Luke 11:20). He presented himself as the Saviour (John 3:17). He called people to follow him (Mark 1:17), not a set of rules. He declared himself to be the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). This was followed by the promise that all who come to the Father do so through him. It is relationship from start to finish...

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he invited them to address God as Father (Luke 11:2). He could have chosen any number of names – Almighty, Jehovah, Sovereign, Lord – but he didn’t, he chose Father. He went further than merely saying that God could be referred to as Father; he told them they could call him Father – personally, and in their own everyday language. In so doing, he brought a new and intimate approach to relationship with God. He also brought all mankind together as one family, under one Father.

It is this unity, this sense of family, of relationship and of mutual support that we embrace – not just with those closest to us, but with all who serve with us in the Father’s name.’

(The last paragraph of this chapter can also be studied with the next section, God the Father.)

CHAPTER 2 pp 11-12 ‘Love and Relationships’ – from Love – Right at the Heart.

Sam and Joe – from the ‘Love and Relationships’ chapter.

After the meeting
Sam: Why hadn’t I thought of that before?
Joe: Thought of what?
Sam: That everything is about relationships.
Joe: Even the greatest commandment?
Sam: Especially the greatest commandment!
Joe: It makes being a Christian...well, personal, doesn’t it?
Sam: It can’t be anything else, can it? It’s about God loving us – and showing that he loves us. Then it’s about us loving God in return – and showing that we love him.
Joe: By the way we live.
Sam: By the way we behave – especially towards other people.
Joe: It’s not easy to love some people, though. I mean...some of them are so annoying – or just plain rude.
Sam: Perhaps that’s what God might think about us.
Joe: Annoying or rude? I suppose he could.
Sam: But he still loves us. Do you think we disappoint him, Joe?
Joe: More than we realise, I should imagine. Christian relationships should be good though, and – how shall I put it? – enriching.
Sam: They often are.
Joe: I know, but they should be supportive, caring – and forgiving.
Sam: They often are, Joe.
Joe: But are they as good as God wants them to be?
Sam: I doubt it – and he seems to want a personal relationship with us even more than we do.
Joe: That’s true – he went to great lengths to let us know.
Sam: Like being crucified?
Joe: Strange, isn’t it? God himself is ready to help each of us through life...
Sam: ...and so often we keep him at a distance. I’m not sure what we are afraid of.
Joe: Is it love?


Doctrine 3: 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.

Here we are in the presence of mystery, but it would be folly to repudiate the idea expressed in this statement because of that fact. It is good to remember that there are mysteries in other realms. T.H. Huxley, the great agnostic of the last century, once declared: ‘The mysteries of the Church are child’s play compared with the mysteries of nature – the Trinity is not more puzzling than the contradictions of natural science’.

Life would be a poor thing if everything was as plain and lucid as the multiplication table, for there is a mystery that does not annul meaning, but enriches it. Salvationists believe that the Christian doctrine of the Trinity is a mystery of light, not of darkness...

It is important to observe that this doctrine is not a piece of gratuitous speculation which theologians have tacked on to the gospel. It grew up out of sheer historic necessity.

First of all there was the monotheism that was the living heart of Old Testament religion. ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one’ (Deuteronomy 6:4).

Secondly, the early disciples, monotheists in heart and practice, found themselves worshipping Jesus as God.

Thirdly, in the Early Church there was an overwhelming sense of the Holy Spirit’s presence, making Jesus real. The revelation of Christ had become a creative, continuous, life-giving experience for all believers.

The Christian Church, confronted with these three facts, and seeing the need to guard the essentials of its faith, formulated the doctrine of the Trinity. The doctrine flowed out of history and experience, and is intended to preserve the right to offer worship to Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit as divine, while retaining unimpaired the belief that there is only one God’. 