

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	14		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	II Corinthians 13:14		
Date:	November 16, 2014 a.m.		

The Triune God

8. Lord's Day

Question 25. Since there is but one only divine essence, (a) why speakest thou of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost?

Answer: Because God has so revealed himself in his word, (b) that these three distinct persons are the one only true and eternal God.

(a) Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: Eph. 4:6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. Isa. 44:6 Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God. Isa. 45:5 I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me: 1 Cor. 8:4 As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one. 1 Cor. 8:6 But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him. (b) Isa. 61:1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; Luke 4:18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised. Gen. 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. Gen. 1:3 And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. Ps. 33:6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. Isa. 48:16 Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that I was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me. Ps. 110:1 <<A Psalm of David>> The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. Matt. 3:16 And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: Matt. 3:17 and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Matt. 28:19 God ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 1 John 5:7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. Isa. 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Isa. 6:3 And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. John 14:26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. John 15:26 But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: 2 Cor. 13:13 All the saints salute you. Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent

forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Eph. 2:18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Tit. 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Tit. 3:6 Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

“It is one of the defining marks of Our Time,” writes David F. Wells, “that God is now weightless. I do not mean by this that he is ethereal but rather that he has become unimportant. He rests upon the world so inconsequentially as not to be noticeable. He has lost his saliency for human life. Those who assure the pollsters of their belief in God’s existence may nonetheless consider him less interesting than television, his commands less authoritative than their appetites for affluence and influence, his judgments no more awe-inspiring than the evening news, and his truth less compelling than the advertiser’s sweet fog of flattery and lies. That is weightlessness. It is a condition we have assigned him after having nudged him out to the periphery of our secularized life. His truth is no longer welcome in our public discourse. The engine of modernity rumbles on, and he is but a speck in its path.”¹ Do you think about God often? How do you think about Him? Naturally, if you pray on a daily basis, you will have certain thoughts about God. But this is no guarantee that your prayers (and thoughts about Him) will be honoring to His name. Remember God’s name is holy and is so closely identified with His being as to be virtually equivalent to God Himself.² God’s name, as expressed by Jesus in Matthew 28:19, is distinctively Trinitarian. Any conception of God that is not Trinitarian is idolatrous (cf. I Thessalonians 1:9; Galatians 4:8).³

Review: We looked at three passages in the Gospels that expressly teach the Trinity, particularly the text in Matthew 28:19.⁴ Today we turn our attention to the writings of the Apostle Paul.

I. THE EPISTLES OF PAUL

The major theme in all of Paul’s epistles is redemption – and the Apostle consistently refers to this as the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. We cannot fail to recognize this trinitarian structure in Paul’s prayers, nor miss this same emphasis in the manner that the Apostle opens his epistles “grace and peace... from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (cf. Romans 1:7; I Corinthians 1:3; II Corinthians 1:2; Galatians 1:3; Ephesians 1:2; Philippians 1:2; I Thessalonians 1:2; II Thessalonians 1:2; I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon, verse 3).⁵

A. Paul’s Monotheism. The unity of God was Paul’s first premise (cf. Romans 3:30; I Corinthians 8:4; Galatians 3:20; Ephesians 4:6; I Timothy 2:5). Although Paul frequently uses the word *God* to refer to the Father, the Father was no more God than the Lord Jesus Christ or the Holy Spirit. “It should be observed,” as Bavinck has written, “that Scripture nowhere maintains that the *Father only* is the true God, but it does maintain that the Father is *the only true God*, a fact which is fully recognized in the doctrine of the church. Then also, it should be noted that the passages cited do not establish an antithesis between the Father on the one hand and the Son and the Spirit on the other hand; but between the Father, as the only true God, on the one hand, and the gods of heathendom on the other. Moreover, to conclude from passages in which the Father is called the only true God, who only hath wisdom, immortality, etc., that the Son and the Spirit do not partake of the same divine essence, wisdom, immortality, etc., would be just as illogical as it would be to conclude from I Corinthians 8:6 that God is not our Lord, through whom are all things and we unto him, but that this distinction pertains only to Christ. Finally, to describe the Father as only wise, good, etc., is proper because all things are of *him*; he is ‘Fountain of Deity,’ whereas the Son and the Spirit have the same being and the same attributes by communication.”⁶

- B. Specific Texts. In I Corinthians 12:4-6 Paul's language clearly suggests a *threefold* causality behind every manifestation of grace. Likewise, in II Corinthians 13:14 the Apostle brings together the three highest redemptive blessings and distributes them equally to the three persons--Father, Son and Holy Spirit (cf. Also Ephesians 2:18; 3:2-5,14,17; 4:4-6; 5:18-20).

NOTE: It is sometimes asked – why is the terminology of Paul and the rest of the writers of the New Testament (cf. I Peter 1:2; Jude 20, 21; Revelation 1:5) not precisely identical with that of our Lord as recorded in the Gospels? For example, the Apostle Paul did not speak of “The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” as much as “God, the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit.” This difference in terminology is due in large measure to the different relationships in which the individuals stand to the Trinity. Jesus was the Son, and He speaks as such, but He is Paul's Lord, and the Apostle naturally speaks of Him as such.

CONCLUSION: “The relevance of a right doctrine of God for an approach to NT theology may be illustrated as follows. A God who cares for his creatures is the God who acts to redeem them. A true understanding of the incarnation and therefore of the person of Christ is impossible if a wrong notion of God is maintained.”⁷ Long ago the noted Puritan Thomas Manton accented this same refrain. “Where can you have more comfortable representations of God than in the christian religion? And where can you have a purer representation of the christian religion than in the churches of the Protestants? All else is as unstable as water. Here God is represented as holy, yet gracious; and here you may meet with a strict rule of duty, and yet best for your choice.”⁸

ENDNOTES

¹D.F. Wells, *God in the Wasteland: The Reality of Truth in a World of Fading Dreams* (Eerdmans, 1994), p. 88. He later adds: “Moreover, when God becomes weightless, as I believe he is so often today, we lose the doctrinal signals that might otherwise warn us that some profound change has taken place – the sorts of signals that once warned of the threat of heresy. Too often in Our Time, there is only peace and quiet. The traditional doctrine of God remains entirely intact while its saliency vanishes. The doctrine is believed, defended, affirmed liturgically, and in every other way held to be inviolable--but it no longer has the power to shape and to summon that it has had in previous ages. Among those claiming to be born-again Christians today, for example, only 25 percent could be said to be committed Christians by even modest tests, such as regularity in church attendance and at personal prayer. Presumably most of the remaining 75 percent would not contest the validity of doctrinal beliefs, but neither do they seem to accord these beliefs any power to affect their behavior. Some might dispute their claim to be born again on these grounds, but I don't think that this fully explains the case” (p. 89).

²The name of God, as revealed to Moses (Exodus 3:13-16; 15:2-3), was a manifestation of God's character, not merely as a title or label, but of God's entire being. For a fuller treatment of the subject, see the article “The Divine Name” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* IV, ed. J. Orr, (rpt. Eerdmans, 1956), p. 2112.

³“I fear,” wrote John Owen, “that the failing of some men's profession begins with their relinquishment of this foundation. It is now evident unto all that here hath been the fatal miscarriage of those poor deluded souls amongst us whom they call Quakers; and it is altogether in vain to deal with them about other particulars, whilst they are carried away with infidelity from this foundation. Convince any of them of the doctrine of the Trinity, and all the rest of their imaginations vanish into smoke. And I wish it were so with them only. There are others, and those not a few, who either reject the doctrine of it as false, or despise it as unintelligible, or neglect it as useless, or of no great importance. I know this ulcer lies hid in the minds of many, and cannot but expect when it will break out, and cover the whole body with its defilements whereof they are members.” *The Works of John Owen* III (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1976), p. 66.

⁴The close linking of Father, Son and Spirit in these passages, as well as in others like Galatians 4:4-6; Romans 8:1ff; Titus 3:4-6, cannot be regarded as being purely accidental; cf. the excellent discussion by Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (IVP, 1981), p. 113f.

⁵“It is significant,” notes Guthrie, “that the often repeated expression *Grace...from God* emphasizes that the greeting was to be understood theologically.” *Op.cit.*, p. 106.

⁶Herman Bavinck, *The Doctrine of God*, trans. W. Hendriksen (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1977), p. 106.

⁷Guthrie, *op.cit.*, p. 115.

⁸*The Works of Thomas Manton* X (rpt. Maranatha Publications, N.D.), p. 161.

