

# CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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<b>Series:</b>	<b>The Heidelberg Catechism</b>		Pastor/Teacher
<b>Number:</b>	<b>15</b>		Gary L.W. Johnson
<b>Text:</b>	<b>I John 3:1-10; II Corinthians 1:3</b>		
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## God the Father Almighty

### 9. Lord's Day

**Question 26. What believest thou when thou sayest, "I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth"?**

**Answer:** That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (who of nothing made heaven and earth, with all that is in them; (a) who likewise upholds and governs the same by his eternal counsel and providence) (b) is for the sake of Christ his Son, my God and my Father; (c) on whom I rely so entirely, that I have no doubt, but he will provide me with all things necessary for soul and body (d) and further, that he will make whatever evils he sends upon me, in this valley of tears turn out to my advantage; (e) for he is able to do it, being Almighty God, (f) and willing, being a faithful Father. (g)

(a) Genesis 1 and 2. Exodus 20:11 For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it. Job 33:4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty hath given me life. Job 38 and 39. 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. Acts 4:24 And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Acts 14:15 And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Isa. 45:7 I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things. (b) Matt. 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Heb. 1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Ps. 104:27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. Ps. 104:28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Ps. 104:29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust. Ps. 104:30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth. Ps. 115:3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Matt. 10:29 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. Eph. 1:11 In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: (c) John 1:12 But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Rom. 8:15 For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Gal. 4:5 To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. Gal. 4:6 And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Gal. 4:7 Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. Eph. 1:5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus

Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, (d) Ps. 55:23 But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction: bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days; but I will trust in thee. Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Matt. 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Luke 12:22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. (e) Rom. 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. (f) Rom. 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. Luke 12:22 And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. Rom. 8:23 And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. Isa. 46:4 And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you. Rom. 10:12 For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. (g) Matt. 6:25 Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Matt. 6:26 Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Matt. 6:27 Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? Matt. 6:28 And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: Matt. 6:29 And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Matt. 6:30 Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Matt. 6:31 Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? Matt. 6:32 (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Matt. 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Matt. 6:34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof. Matt. 7:9 Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Matt. 7:10 Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? Matt. 7:11 If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Fatherhood is under attack, and not just in our social and cultural context, but especially in its theological dimension. Over the last couple of decades we have, as a society, been assaulted by the pervasive influence of feminism, and the ecclesiastical landscape has been drastically altered. One particular form of feminism aggressively seeks to eradicate any and all forms of maleness from the Bible's understanding of God.<sup>1</sup> On the social and cultural front, the concept of the father figure is equally confused and convoluted. Sigmund Freud, the guiding light to so much of modern psychology, has foisted on the Western world the Oedipus theory of the father figure.<sup>2</sup> Regrettably, many evangelicals have succumbed to the influence of radical feminism and the distorted theories of Freud.<sup>3</sup> You have probably heard from well-meaning Christians the often-made remark, "You can't really appreciate God as Father if you had a poor relationship with your human father."<sup>4</sup> What does Scripture mean when it refers to God the Father? In what sense can we call God our Father? Why does the Apostles' Creed refer to God as "the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth"?

## I. THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

The fatherhood of God is spoken of in Scripture in a threefold sense.

A. The Fatherhood of God with Relation to the Son. (I Corinthians 8:6; I John 1:3) There are many passages in the New Testament where the titles “the Son” and “the Father” appear in juxtaposition. In the Gospel records, we find Jesus using the term “Father” in a unique way (Matthew 11:27; Mark 12:6; 13:32; 14:41; Luke 2:44; 10:22; John 3:35; 5:20; 10:15; 14:9). Jesus called God *His own Father* (John 5:17-18). This means, as John Murray has noted, “That no other but the Father stood in this relation to Jesus the Son. Paul says *His own Son* (Romans 8:32), and this means that no other stands in this relation to the Father. God the Father has many sons by adoption, and He will bring them all to glory. They are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. But divine revelation permits no confusion to exist between the sonship of the only begotten and that of the adopted. No other but the eternal Son is the Father’s *own Son*. Here is an ineffable and incomparable sonship (cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16; I John 4:9).”<sup>5</sup>

B. The Fatherhood of God as the Creator. (Malachi 2:10; James 1:17) God is the Father of all things by creation (Isaiah 64:8 and especially Acts 17:24-28). “There is,” wrote the Puritan William Bates, “an indelible character of dignity engraven in the reasonable nature by the hand of God. But since man turned rebel to his Creator and Father, this endearing, obliging relation aggravates his rebellion, but gives him no interest in the paternal love of God, of which he has made a deadly forfeiture.”<sup>6</sup>

C. The Fatherhood of God with Relation to Believers in Christ. God is not, in the *redemptive* sense, the Father of all men, but only of believers. On the contrary, we are by *nature* not children of light, but of wrath (Ephesians 2:3). “When a penitent sinner trusts in the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ, then the triune God becomes his Father in the high and endearing signification of the term, and the man becomes a child of God in the same signification.”<sup>7</sup> (cf. Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:6-7; I John 3:9).

## II. THE ETERNAL FATHER AND HIS SON

In Hebrews 1:1-3, Jesus, the Son, is declared to be *the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being*. The Son is the only begotten of the Father (John 1:18). The Scriptures, from beginning to end, unite in declaring that God is an eternal Father with relation to the Son.

A. The Teachings of the Gospels. When we examine the gospel records, we find that our Lord took great care in how He expressed Himself when He instructed the disciples about the Father and His Fatherhood. Listen to the words of Abraham Kuyper: “He never confused the relations but spoke distinctly about ‘my Father’ and ‘your Father.’ Never did He draw human beings, even if they were His beloved friends, into that unique relationship between the Father and Himself. He never spoke about *our* God and *our* Father, but always clearly distinguished between ‘my’ and ‘your’ Father. Only once did He use the expression: ‘Our Father, Who art in Heaven.’ But we know that was to be the disciples’ prayer, not His own”<sup>8</sup> (cf. John 20:17; Matthew 27:46; Revelation 3:12). It is in John’s Gospel in particular that the Fatherhood of God is seen most clearly in relation to Jesus and His teachings (cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 4:22-26; 5:20, 36, 38; 7:29; 10:17; 11:42; 13:34; 14:31; 15:10; 17:1-24; et. al. Jesus uses the expression “My Father” nearly thirty times in John’s record).<sup>9</sup>

B. The Teaching of the Epistles. “The title ‘Father,’” writes Guthrie, “is sometimes qualified to give added richness to the concept. God is many times described as the Father of Jesus Christ, but He is also Father of glory (Ephesians 1:17), Father of spirits (Hebrews 12:9), Father of lights (James 1:17). All human fatherhood is seen to derive from the fatherhood of God (Ephesians 3:15, 15), which shows that God is not called Father on the basis of human analogy, as if human fatherhood was the nearest approximation to the

relationship between God and man. Fatherhood is seen rather to be inherent in the nature of God.”<sup>10</sup> In II Thessalonians 2:16-17, the Apostle Paul underscored the unique relationship that believers have with God through the Son. God is distinctively represented under the title of a father. “*God*,” wrote the Puritan Thomas Manton, “is a word of power; *Father* expresseth his goodwill. God standeth in both relations to us, as He did also to Christ: John 20:17, ‘I go to my God and your God, my Father and your Father.’ Both joined together signify His power and readiness to do good. He that is our Father is true God also, and He that is true God is also our Father; and therefore we may depend on Him. That which we are to open is the term Father, which speaketh both comfort and duty to us.”<sup>11</sup>

### III. THE ETERNAL FATHER AND WORSHIP

In the well-known exchange between Jesus and the woman at the well (John 4:4-26), our Lord gives us a direct and concise understanding of true worship (and thus true worshipers as contrasted with false worship and false worshipers).

A. Definition of True Worship. Note how this is connected with a right view of God, which is directly linked with a correct understanding of God (v. 22). True worship is directed to the Father and is done in *spirit and truth*. What does this mean? I believe D.A. Carson has accurately interpreted this. “This God who is spirit can be worshiped only *in spirit and truth*. Both in verse 23 and verse 24, the one preposition ‘in’ governs both nouns (a point obscured by the NIV of verse 24). There are not two separable characteristics of the worship that must be offered: it must be ‘in spirit and truth,’ i.e., essentially God-centered, made possible by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in personal knowledge of and conformity to God’s Word – made flesh, the one who is God’s ‘truth,’ the faithful exposition and fulfillment of God and His saving purposes.”<sup>12</sup> It needs to be said that Jesus says nothing here (or elsewhere) about the *style* of worship being celebrative, informal and spontaneous.

CONCLUSION: “I have often found,” says good old John Bunyan, “that when I can say but this word, *Father*, it doth me more good that if I called Him by any other Scripture name. It is worth your noting that to call God by this title was rare among the saints in the Old Testament times. Seldom do you find Him called by this name – no, sometimes not in three or four books; but now, in New Testament times, he is called by no name so often as this, both by the Lord Jesus Himself, and by the apostles afterwards. Indeed, the Lord Jesus was He that first made the name common among the saints, and that taught them, both in their discourse, their prayers, and their writings, so much to use it; it being more pleasing to God, and discovering more plainly our interest in God, than any other expression. For by this one name, we are made to understand that all our mercies are the offspring of God, and that we also that are called are His children by adoption.”<sup>13</sup> Our psychologized culture conditions us to view fatherhood exclusively in terms of our personal experiences with our human fathers – and, of course, if your father was a bad father figure, then you supposedly cannot relate to God as a Father. Worst of all, good Christians have bought into this dreadful notion! May God Himself give us wisdom and understanding that we may grasp the truth of God as our Father, the Father of all compassion and the God of all comfort (II Corinthians 1:3).

### ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> The widely publicized RE-Imagining Conference that was held in Minneapolis in November of 1993 openly avowed that it had “nothing in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Instead, they declared their god to be Sophia, “our maker, creator god, mother and guide” cf. “How the Feminist Establishment Hurts Women” by Katherine Kersten in *Christianity Today* (June 20, 1994, p. 24). Less extreme, but still a major departure from historical Christianity, is the stance taken by many mainline denominations. The United Church of Christ issued a statement declaring that Christians should “avoid use of masculine-biased language applied to the Trinity as in *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*” as well as

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the use of pronouns like *Him, He or His* when speaking of God. The United Methodist General Conference has followed suit by urging its members to begin to find new ways of referring to God, such as alternating male and female pronouns or using genderless terms. For additional documentation and analysis, see D.G. Bloesch, *The Battle for the Trinity: The Debate Over Inclusive God-Language* (Vine Books, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Oedipus, a tragic figure in Greek mythology, had incestuous longings for his mother Jocasta. He eventually killed his father and married Jocasta. Freud developed this theory as the basis for all religion and morals. He contended that this concept of the repressed father, whose figure each one of us internalizes (and thereby makes into a source for authority) is the actual power that drives humans in their religions beliefs. This thesis is advanced and defended by R. Hamerton-Kelly in his *God the Father: Theology and Patriarchy in the Teaching of Jesus* (Fortress Press, 1979).

<sup>3</sup> Martin and Deidre Bobgan have documented the Freudian nature of much that passes itself off as being “Christian” psychology. See their *Prophets of Psychoheresy* in two volumes (East Gate Publishers, 1989).

<sup>4</sup> David Powlison has analyzed this widespread mindset among Christians in an article entitled “What if Your Father Didn’t Love You?” in *The Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Vol. XII, No. 1, Fall 1993), pp. 2-7.

<sup>5</sup> *Collected Writings of John Murray III* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 215.

<sup>6</sup> *The Complete Works of William Bates IV* (rpt. Sprinkle, 1990), p. 298.

<sup>7</sup> W.G.T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man* (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 54.

<sup>8</sup> As cited by Herman Hoeksema, *The Triple Knowledge: An Exposition of the Heidelberg Catechism I* (Reformed Free, 1970), p. 372.

<sup>9</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (IVP, 1981), p. 313.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 82.

<sup>11</sup> *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton III* (rpt. Maranatha, N.D.), p. 141.

<sup>12</sup> D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Eerdmans, 1991), p. 225.

<sup>13</sup> *The Works of John Bunyan I* (rpt. Baker, 1977), p. 244.