

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

by

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The Fatherhood of God is a broad subject covering a large area of Scripture. Its greatest picture is in the Incarnation of Jesus Christ. This paper has the Incarnation in view throughout. It is the purpose of this author to show that the Fatherhood of God was in Christ's mind at every action of His on the earth.

The Fatherhood of God does have implications to all men, even those who are not believers. He is their Father in an originative sense. He is specifically the Father of believers in a way that shows that they have become His adopted sons.

Jesus Christ is the Son of God in a different way than believers are. He is a Son but He is not subordinate in essence. His subordination comes in His official actions on earth as man. That God is Father to man only approximates the concept of God's Fatherhood to Jesus.

The Fatherhood of God was taught by Jesus. He said that to see Him was to see the Father. He revealed the Father in a perfect way. This is analagous to the way in which believers should reflect Jesus to the world so that to see them is to see Jesus.

It is the conclusion of this author that God as all-wise revealed Himself as a Father in order to effectively relay the message of His relationship to Jesus and believers. No more beautiful picture can be contrived to demonstrate the concepts of love and dependency than the concept of the Fatherhood of God.

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INTRODUCTION

The Fatherhood of God is central to the understanding of the relationship of God to Christ and man. It is impossible to know God without a knowledge of His Fatherhood. When Jesus Christ came to earth, His every action was done in view of God's relationship to Him as Father. The term "Father" brings to mind a beautiful picture of love and authority which causes the believer to rejoice in the wisdom of such a wise God. Surprisingly, the Fatherhood of God has not been given adequate attention due its importance. It should be constantly in the mind of the believer as the governing relationship of man with God. It demands a love and respect which only the concept of Fatherhood can conjure up in the mind. Only as the Fatherhood is recognized can the believer come into a full knowledge of God.

CHAPTER I

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD

The Gospel of John uses the term πατήρ or a form thereof one hundred and twenty-two times with reference to God. Any term used this profusely is worthy of close scrutiny. The Fatherhood of God is a concept of great importance to the understanding of His relationship to the "only begotten Son" and mankind.

Abbott-Smith gives the meaning of πατήρ as a male parent, a forefather or ancestor, or an author or originator.¹ Arndt and Gingrich add that it can be used figuratively of spiritual fatherhood, a founder or prototype, or as the father of mankind.² The Greek language, just as the English, used the term "father" in a figurative, representative way. God being a spirit could never be a father in the literal, physical mode of a direct, male ancestor. It is precisely this figurative use of "father" in regard to God which must be examined more closely.

A. W. Tozer writes:

¹G. Abbott-Smith, A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1937), p. 349.

²William Arndt and Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 641.

The decline of the knowledge of the holy has brought on our troubles. A rediscovery of the majesty of God will go a long way toward curing them. It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is.¹

The Fatherhood of God is a cornerstone of that knowledge of which Tozer spoke. As such, it is the duty of every man to know more about God by knowing more about the father aspect. This "fatherhood" has been misunderstood and neglected for many years while it is indeed the cornerstone in understanding God's relation to the second person of the trinity as well as all of mankind.

In order to establish a presuppositional base it must be recognized that the concept of fatherhood is appropriate only where God is viewed as personal.² It is useless for one to seek to understand the fatherly relationships of an impersonal God who exists only in the thoughts of man. The idea of fatherhood is a most personal, intimate concept which is possible only as one recognizes the reality of God as a person capable of love and goodness.

There are those who seek to redefine fatherhood in order to make it more nearly fit their view of God. H. Paul Santmire sought to redefine "Our Father" in Jesus' words concerning prayer to God. Santmire said that God's

¹A. W. Tozer, The Knowledge of the Holy (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 7.

²Carl F. H. Henry, Notes on the Doctrine of God (Boston: W. A. Wilde Company, 1948), p. 94.

fatherhood was not the key image in Jesus' speech concerning God but rather Jesus referred to the majestic ruler of nature.¹ Santmire was thinking more of a good parent idea on the line of a father figure. Santmire's problem arises from his low concept of God and his failure to view Him as a personal entity. Few words are given in refutation of such a viewpoint. It is enough to assert that a belief in the Bible necessitates the belief in a real, personal God who has revealed Himself to man in an understandable way.

Through the course of such research this author has come to a state of extreme gratefulness to God for the fact that He has revealed Himself as the Father. The Fatherhood reveals God's personality.² Only a being with a true personality can rightfully be called "father." John 4:23 closely links God with spirit which is an essential part of personality: "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers" (Jn. 4:23). This verse also shows the desire on God the Father's part for the worship of man. This desire is indicative of personality which is seen in each member of the Godhead.

¹H. Paul Santmire, "Retranslating 'Our Father': The Urgency and the Possibility," Dialog 16 (Spring, 1977): 103.

²T. Rees, "God," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 1263.

The Fatherhood also reveals God's love.¹ Jesus Christ kept the Father's commandments and continued to abide in His love. Love is an emotion which exhibits personality. The concept brought to mind when one thinks of fatherhood includes the idea of love, shown in joy and in punishment. A father is one who does what is best for his son regardless of how it may appear in the eyes of the offspring. God is such a father for He does that which is good for all who may be His sons. This love constitutes the entire law of life because it imposes the very highest moral demands possible.² To live under this law of love means to measure one's actions against the extent of love exhibited. The most perfect love will be without limit in its desire to serve and please the Father.

Fatherhood in relation to God also reveals His righteousness and holiness. In His intercessory prayer Christ uses the term "Holy Father" when referring to God. "Holy" means entirely separated from all sin so that pure spirituality and heavenliness alone rule in Him.³ To rule as the divine Father requires a holiness which is characteristic of God. Old Testament believers viewed God as a ruler who is totally apart from sin and every aspect of it.

¹ Ibid. ² Ibid.

³ Wm. Milligan and Wm. Moulton, Commentary on the Gospel of John (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1898), p. 191.

As important as the fatherhood aspect is to the understanding of God, it is an error to say that the whole character of God is sufficiently expressed by the fatherhood.¹ It is misleading to say that God is essentially "the Father."² When considered as man views God in His relationship to humanity, the Fatherhood is not God's essence. In order for the Fatherhood to be His essence He would necessarily be dependent upon man to complete the relationship.³ God is not dependent on anything outside of Himself for to be so would make Him less than God. It is implied in the term "Fatherhood" that there be "sons," therefore to say that the Fatherhood is the essence of God is misleading for He cannot be dependent on the existence of "sons."

To say that the aspect of Fatherhood is not God's essence is not to say that it is not a necessary part of God's being. Everything that God is must be necessary and perfect. Therefore the Fatherhood of God is necessary to the revelation of God. In each revelation of Himself by His activity in the universe all of the qualities of

¹James Orr, "Father," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 1101.

²T. Rees, "Children of God," The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, ed. James Orr (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1946), p. 610.

³James Orr, The Christian View of God and the World (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1897), p. 275.

fatherhood are implied.¹ The qualities of fatherhood will be suggested throughout the development of this paper but as the Father, God possesses all the tenderness and wealth of love and grace embodied in this designation.² Everything done by God is done as a father whether it be blessing or punishment, because this is the means which God has chosen to reveal Himself to man.

So it has been seen that in the Gospel of John one must understand the use of the "Fatherhood" aspect in any determination to understand what God is like. The Greek language shows that the Fatherhood cannot be stated in terms of physical creation or procreation, but rather in terms of ethical relation between God and man.³ Once this is realized then it is seen that Fatherhood will become a determinative principle in any thought of God. It requires that God be a personal being, capable of all the actions brought to the mind by the use of "father." While not being the actual essence of the Godhead, the Fatherhood is a necessary part of God and His revelation. God's great wisdom is seen in the fact of His revelation as the Father for in it can be seen all the love and tender relations which accompany a person's concept of fatherhood.

¹A. M. Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1911), p. 440.

²Orr, "Father," p. 1100.

³Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 445.

The Common Fatherhood of God

The Fatherhood of God can be viewed in two basic ways: first, a very broad and general way and second, in a more specific way. There is a sense in which God is the Father of all men. Matthew 23:9 says, "One is your Father, He who is in Heaven." The context of this passage is found in verse one where it is seen that Jesus was speaking to the multitudes as well as the disciples. Jesus was speaking generally here of the fact of God's Fatherhood over all mankind. The issue must not be stated quite so simply because as has been seen fatherhood implies sonship. If God is the Father of all mankind then are all of mankind the sons of God? In what sense is God the Father of mankind? Some may say that this use of Fatherhood is illegitimate when referring to God because He is in no sense the Father of all men.

Illegitimate Use

A popular saying puts it this way, "The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man." This trite saying is full of theological error. It proposes the idea of universalism which allows for the salvation of all men because of a loving Father in heaven. The Bible is replete with passages proving the exclusiveness of salvation. John 3:16 says that only those who believe on Jesus will have eternal life. It is this exclusiveness and desire to separate from

universalism which has led some to the conclusion that God is not the Father of man and to use such a term for a description of God is illegitimate.

This view holds that before there is any type of spiritual relation constituted by salvation, God can only be sovereign but not Father.¹ The limits for the legitimacy of Fatherhood are that sons must be the elect ones by adoption which occurs with salvation.² This viewpoint holds that creation was an act of God's sovereign will and He did not create because of His Fatherhood.³ In other words God is only Sovereign before salvation at which time He becomes Father to men. The intentions behind such a viewpoint are very good. In fact the entire problem may be one of semantics because this view of God is no less lofty than another. But if one is to adhere to the absolutely infallible revelation of Himself in His Word he must accept God's terminology and semantics becomes very important. There is an answer to the dilemma which retains the Fatherhood aspect of God on behalf of all men while at the same time avoiding the universalist error.

Legitimate Use

"Father" is the name given to express relation to those who stand in moral dependence on Him and bear His

¹ Ibid., p. 432. ² Ibid.

³ James Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1913), p. 101.

image.¹ This is the meaning which Christ sought to convey in Matthew 23:9. God created man in His image and as such He was the Father of these men. Fatherhood is based upon creatorship and character, not on the situation of man.²

It may be stated that conscious Fatherhood is not based on the consciousness of worthiness on the part of sons. An image bearer may be lost and dead but in the sense of origin God remains as his Father. The truth of the Fatherhood of God must be found in the Godhead as its point of origin, not man.

There is another way in which God is the Father of all mankind in a general sense. He is the Father because all men stand in a moral relationship of kinship and especially dependence.³ Every man is dependent on God for his life and existence and in this way God is his Father. This factor is viewed from God's perspective because many men deny the existence of God not to mention His ultimate aspect of resource for all life. But even though man may fail to recognize God as the source of his life or even deny that He is such He remains as the Father in this sense.

In John 8:44 Jesus, in referring to the Pharisees and unbelieving Jews, said that they were of their father

¹James Orr, The Christian View of God and the World, p. 275.

²William Clarke, The Christian Doctrine of God (New York: Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 161.

³Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels, p. 101.

the devil. The Greek phrase used by John is ὑμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ πατρος τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστε. If they as humans were under the Fatherhood of God how could Satan also be their father? In this verse Jesus used the emphatic pronoun ὑμεῖς as He singled out these unbelieving Jews who had just accused Him of being illegitimate. In no way could the devil be acknowledged as the physical creator of these men but rather he was their father in another sense. The key is the καί phrase where Jesus said that they willed to do the lusts of their father. John writes καὶ τὰς ἐπιθυμίας τοῦ πατρος ὑμῶν θέλετε ποιεῖν. Their relation to the devil was such that their lusts and his lusts were identical. Satan's children are naturally enflamed with his lusts which they inherit through their spiritual descent.¹ It was evidently their will to do so as seen by the present tense of θέλετε and ποιεῖν which show that they continued in their open wish of doing these lusts. It was not a one time occurrence but a habit of choice. These men were in fact children of God by creation but they were continually choosing to follow the lusts of Satan and thereby became identified with him spiritually as he became their father.

In summary, viewing God as the Father of all men does not contradict what has been revealed concerning God.

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 649.

In fact it is the best solution when considered in its correct relationship. "Our use of the name Father since the Incarnation, avoids an erroneous notion of divine spiritual fatherhood only by awareness of its inappropriateness outside a redemption context."¹ God is not the Father of all men in the sense that all men will be saved; He is the Father in a creative, morally responsible sense. Man must still come to God through Jesus Christ and only through Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6). This is the legitimate use of the term "Father." It has been stated before that this concept must be examined starting with God not with man. This will lead to correct conclusions without humanistic biases. God's Fatherhood is never based on what He does, but rather what He does is based on the fact that He is the Father. This is true of any action of God. He acts because He is God as opposed to the idea that His acts prove that He is God. The Fatherhood aspect of God is evidenced in every work of His and reveals this aspect to mankind in a most unique and glorious way. This is the common Fatherhood of God but, as stated, there is also a specific Fatherhood of God which is a fuller revelation of God's personality in relation to man.

¹Henry, Notes on the Doctrine of God, p. 91.

The Specific Fatherhood of God

There is a group of people to whom God stands as Father in a special sense: this group consists of Christians. Those who believe on Jesus Christ have God as their Father in a way very unique from the general sense of all men. This technical use of Father regards the sonship of believers as resting on the nature of God as the source of life.¹ Jesus in John 20:17 spoke to Mary and in reference to the disciples called God "your Father." This was much more specific than His words to the multitudes in Matthew 23:9 for here He addressed Himself to the disciples in verse seventeen. God was their Father in a unique way which was experienced only through salvation. This Fatherhood was one of royal authority in which believers submitted themselves totally to God's rule.²

In John 8:44 it has been shown that Satan was the father of these unbelievers because they chose to do his lusts continually. They had become sons of the devil because of their spiritual relation to him. Fatherhood on God's part implies a spiritual relationship to Him which causes believers to wish to do His will. In this way He is specifically their Father. Through this specific Fatherhood God again shows His personality and love upon believers by doing everything for them in the manner of

¹Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels, p. 113.

²Ibid., p. 91.

a father. This association with God is not an institution called "Fatherhood"; it is rather a relationship.¹ In this relationship is the rest and guidance of an earthly father.²

This matter is more fully developed under the aspect of the sonship of believers. It is seen here that Jesus referred to God as the Father of believers in a special sense of a close, personal relationship. If Christians today would learn to think of God that way they would be more truly Christians. It is essential that believers recognize the actual relation which God has blessed them with. There is no more beautiful concept of rest, help and love than the Fatherhood of God.

Summary

In this chapter the Fatherhood of God has been presented and discussed with reference to His common Fatherhood and His specific Fatherhood. God's common Fatherhood is with respect to all mankind because of His creative act and His moral relationship with man. His specific Fatherhood shows that He is related to man as a believer in a very specific and unique way. This relationship rests on the nature of God as the source of eternal life and is accompanied by all of the blessings and privileges

¹Clarke, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 155.

²Ibid., p. 154.

surrounding Fatherhood. In every case the Fatherhood must be viewed from the starting point of a personal God rather than the perspective of man.

CHAPTER II

THE FATHERHOOD WITH RESPECT TO SONS

Fatherhood implies sonship. The book of John is full of the concept of the Father and since this is implicative of sonship it is necessary to investigate this aspect of the Fatherhood of God. The Father and son relationship is one of the most significant features of Johannean theology.¹ The form of God is not known entirely by nature but rather by revelation; this He did in the Father and Son relationship.² This is the most wise means as well as the most beautiful. To consider the fact that the almighty God would allow man to come into a relationship which allows them to call God Father as they are called son is an incomprehensible concept. It is not possible to know how God accomplished such a fact but it is possible to know the revelation of this fact.

It must be remembered that Fatherhood is not dependent on sonship. There are sons of God because there is a Father. "Fatherhood did not come through creation,

¹Mark L. Appold, The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel (Tubingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1976), p. 55.

²Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 392.

but rather creation came because of Fatherhood."¹ God through love created man and when He did so He created him with the filial relation. In all points and at all times the reality of the filial relation depends on the reality of the Father. God created sons as personal and spiritual and therefore capable of love; where such capability exists the relation is best termed as Father and son.²

The topic of sonship may be divided into two aspects: the Sonship of Jesus Christ and the sonship of the believer. In considering these two categories it must be asserted that the human concepts of father and son are at best inadequate pictures of the relation of the heavenly Father to His sons. Many of the same ideas are evident but not all. When speaking of deity on a human level one must use terms to make transcendent concepts understandable. The best that can be done is an approximation. The purpose for the use of "Fatherhood" and "sonship" is that these are the terms used by the Holy Spirit as He inspired the human account that God is infinitely wise and as God of all the earth He will do what is right. Therefore the use of this concept is the most wise decision of God as a means to reveal Himself to man.

¹ Ibid., p. 445.

² Ibid., p. 447.

The Sonship of Christ

The Fact of the Sonship

The dominant factor in the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ was the Father and Son relationship. It was even dominant and ever evident in His life and actions. The truth about Jesus is to be found only by relating Him to the Father.¹ It is impossible to truly know Jesus Christ or understand His life and ministry without being aware of His relation to the Father. The dignity of Christ is revealed in His relationship as a Son to the Father for He knew that His power was from God and that He lived and worked wholly in and for the Father.² The unity of Christ with the Father was very unique. As has been seen above, the form of God is not fully known by nature but rather by revelation. This revelation came through Jesus Christ. Everything He taught and did pointed to the Father and was for the Father's glory. The Fatherhood was the "key" to Jesus Christ's life.³

The functions of Christ are determined by the fact of His relationship to the Father.⁴ He is the Messiah

¹Jon Sobrino, Christology at the Crossroads, translated by John Drury (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1978), p. 331.

²Ibid., p. 332.

³Lindon Karo, "I Believe in God the Father Almighty," Moody Monthly, 77:5 (January, 1977), 39.

⁴Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels, p. 131.

because He is the Son of God; He is the Redeemer because He is the Son of God; He is the Intercessor because He is the Son of God. These functions cannot be reversed. For instance, He is not the Son because of His Messiahship, but rather the reverse. Jesus is first and foremost the Son of God. This relationship provides the basis for all of Christianity. It is the consciousness of the filial relation of Jesus to the Father which is fundamental not the Messiahship or Redeemership.

In Jesus Christ the Father is primary and ultimate because all He does is done for the purpose of revealing the Father. This is the reason that the Fatherhood is the determining principle in any thoughts about Jesus and His incarnation. As Fairbairn states it, "The New Testament interpretation of Christ is in its ultimate analysis an interpretation of the Father in terms of the Son."¹ The fact of the Sonship of Christ is that it reveals the Father in terms which mankind can grasp.

The Function of the Sonship

The visible Sonship of Jesus Christ began at the Incarnation when Jesus began to reveal the Father to men on earth. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt with us and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth (Jn. 1:14). This does

¹Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 392.

not, however, propose that Jesus ever became the Son or that this is some sort of metaphysical union with the Father. Rather John's use of Father and Son explains the revelational character of Jesus as well as His divine nature.¹ The function from the beginning of Christ's earthly ministry was to show men the glory of the Father. The term πατήρ is here anarthrous because the idea is quality. God was being revealed in regard to His quality of being the Father in heaven. Jesus was the only begotten in the sense that He from eternity existed as the Son. By His union with humanity, His humanity became a participant in this filial relationship by nature being the only Son of God.² In other words Jesus was always the Son of God and by now becoming human He was the only human who was by nature the Son of God. When believers are referred to as sons of God there seems to be a lack of distinction in this area. This lack is filled by the realization that Christ alone is the only Son of God by nature apart from adoption.³

Jesus came to earth to reveal the Father. He came as an obedient Son in complete submission to the will of the Father. A son may reveal a father in two ways: either

¹Appold, The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel, p. 58.

²Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 432.

³Everett F. Harrison, The Son of God Among the Sons of Men (Boston: W. A. Wilde Co., 1949), p. 25.

by being like him so entirely in his image as to be justified in saying, "He that hath seen me hath seen the father;" or by manifesting a constant reverential, loving trust and thus testifying that the father is worthy of such trust.

Jesus revealed the Father in both these ways.¹ This was Jesus' function and He performed it perfectly as He did everything else. He revealed the Father so perfectly that just to see Him was to see the Father at the same time.

Jesus taught that His Father was God and He also taught that God is the Father of believers. There is a distinction of essence for Jesus is God in the flesh. God is essentially Jesus' Father but He is essentially our God.² But this distinction was not His concern so much as the fact that God was His Father and He was sent to reveal Him. "In Him the Father is seen, so that faith in Him means faith in the Father."³

The Sonship of the Believer

Because of the specific Fatherhood of God, the believer is a son of God. He is not, however, a son in the same sense as Jesus Christ. He does not belong to deity

¹ Moffatt, The Theology of the Gospels, p. 109.

² David Brown, A Commentary on Matthew to John, Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1978), p. 486.

³ Eduard Schweizer, "υἱός," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VIII, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 374.

as Jesus does so God is his Father in a different sense. All men are sons of God in a general sense of origin as has been shown from Matthew 23:9. However, this sonship does not involve belief in Jesus as the Revealer of God. The problem is sin. Sin has been defined as "the reign of unfilial feelings in a heart made for filial love."¹ The lack of belief in God is a definitely unfilial feeling which results in the lost condition of the natural man.

The believer's sonship must therefore come by adoption by the power of God. John 1:12 says that He gave and continues to give the authority to become the sons of God. Belief on His name is the prerequisite for such adoption. Believers can never be sons by nature but they are sons by adoption. This then places the believer into a personal experience with God which is the most intimate union and communion. The believer can only call God Father as a creature; Jesus belongs to the Godhead and therefore calls God Father in essence.²

Man was created and designed for sonship but sin frustrated the fulfillment of this destiny and it could only be restored by the redemption on behalf of Christ. Once this redemption is applied, man becomes a son of God in the unique, specific sense. This allows man to achieve

¹Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 455.

²R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960), p. 226.

the possibility of perfection by being holy. As the son of God, the Fatherhood aspect underlies all of man's duty to God and demands his total love and devotion.

The point of similarity between the Sonship of Christ and the sonship of man is that both have their source of being in God.¹ This is the point of similarity on the substance of these respective sonships yet the other characteristics of the Fatherhood are very much similar. God is the authority for each party. He also exhibits Fatherly love and concern for each. The distinction remains, however, because of the deity of the only begotten Son of God. This distinction is evident in the unusual phrasing of John 20:17: "my Father and your Father; my God and your God." Jesus was aware of the difference and this made Him unique as the Revealer of God.

Summary

In this section the writer has shown the investigation of the implied and stated Sonship of Jesus and the sonship of the believer. Fatherhood is not dependent on sonship because God created by reason of His Fatherhood. It must be remembered that these terms only approximate the concepts of the actual Fatherhood and sonship but it is seen to be the result of an all wise God who has chosen to do so.

¹Marinus de Jonge, Jesus: Stranger From Heaven and Son of God, trans. by John E. Steely (Missoula, MT: Scholar's Press, 1977), p. 145.

The Sonship of Christ is the controlling factor in His earthly ministry because everything He did was controlled by the Father and for His glory. His function was to reveal God to such an extent that He could say that to see Him was the same as seeing the Father. The sonship of the believer is different due to the fact of his creatureliness but he can partake of sonship by adoption through the authority of God. This sonship allows man to fulfill his highest duty of bringing glory to his Father.

CHAPTER III

THE FATHERHOOD IN CHRIST'S TEACHING

It is probable that every human being has formulated some idea of what a father is. It is also probable that most of these ideas are unique to certain people. In the instance of the Fatherhood of God no one knew God as the Father quite like Jesus. God did not abandon humanity with their varying views of fatherhood to let them discover the answer on their own. On the contrary the full meaning of the Father is once and for all revealed in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son.¹ Since Jesus is the only begotten Son of God, the only way to know the Father is to know the Son.

The Fatherhood occupied every thought of Jesus for it was His purpose to reveal the Father and bring glory to Him. It also occupied His teaching ministry as He spoke to men and lived among them. In referring to God it was customary for Jesus to call Him Father. In doing so Jesus was not introducing some revolutionary concept of the fatherhood of a god. The ancient Greek concept of Zeus was that

¹J. I. Packer, Knowing God (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1973), p. 185.

of a father.¹ Zeus watched over them just as a father would in the position of the head of the house. So when Jesus called God Father, He was doing a natural thing with the concept of God current in His culture. However, Jesus' use of the term "Father" was much higher for He was good and perfect and God was His Father in a unique way.

During Jesus' public ministry, He taught by word of mouth the truths of the Fatherhood. But Jesus also taught by His actions. The words of a man are of no real content unless they are reinforced by the actions of the man. Jesus was the perfect example of living as He spoke. He represented the Father by His words and so lived His life that it could be said that to see Him was to see the Father. Both of these aspects of Christ's revelation of the Father are real and essential to the study of the Fatherhood of God. The primary source for the teachings of Christ concerning the Father is the Gospel of John. As was stated above, the book of John uses the term "Father" in relation to God one hundred and twenty-two times. It is a key concept and the governing relationship for the ministry of Jesus Christ.² Jesus' very life was lived in the strength

¹Gottlob Schrenk, "πατήρ," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 953.

²Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1964), p. 226.

of the Father because He and the Father were one. The study of Jesus' words is pertinent to a correct knowledge of this relationship.

The Fatherhood in the Words of Jesus

The Fatherhood connotated to Jesus very concrete concepts which are evident in His words recorded by John. Being impressed into the fibers of His everyday walk and talk, it is difficult to formulate a systematic approach to Jesus' teachings on the subject. From the study of various pertinent passages certain key categories may be deduced.

Fatherhood Means Authority

"The Father commands and disposes; the initiative which He calls His Son to exercise is the initiative of resolute obedience to His Father's will."¹ Jesus taught that everything He did was subject to the authority of God. "Jesus therefore answered and was saying to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner' (Jn. 5:19, NASB). In the original Greek John wrote Ἀπεκρίνατο δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτοῖς. This verse is introduced by the postpositive οὖν meaning "therefore." This is a responsive οὖν introducing the answer of Jesus to the Jews who were persecuting Jesus for healing

¹Packer, Knowing God, p. 185.

on the Sabbath day. For the legal minded Jews healing on the Sabbath was forbidden except when danger to life or the loss of an organ was involved.¹ The second accusation was that Jesus made Himself equal with God by calling God His own Father. Jesus answered them with this response to show His totally submissive attitude to the Father.

His answer was that the Son was not able to do anything of Himself, or οὐ δύναται ὁ υἱὸς ποιεῖν ἄφ' ἑαυτοῦ. οὐ δύναται does not mean a physical inability to act on His own.² Rather it is stating the fact that it is a moral impossibility to do anything apart from the Father. The absolute use of the term for "Son" carries with it the idea of His relationship with the Father which was one of representing God in the world.³ The preposition ἀπό is used to denote direction which gives the concept that the source of authority to act did not come from the direction of Himself. Jesus followed this negative phrase with a positive statement that the exception is that which He sees the Father doing. The γάρ clause, ἃ γάρ ἂν ἐκεῖνος ποιῇ, shuts off the thought that the Son merely can do

¹ Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (Mclean, VA: MacDonald Publishing Co., n.d.), p. 406.

² Marcus Dods, "The Gospel of John," in Vol. I of Expositor's Greek New Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1967), p. 739.

³ Schweizer, "υἱός," p. 373.

these things but states that He actually does the things which the Father does.¹ The Greek text does not literally say "Father" in the last phrase but actually reads ἐκεῖνος which is the far demonstrative pronoun in the nominative singular case. A good translation would be "that One." It is here used in a strongly emphatic way to refer specifically to God the Father as being the focal point of their immediate thoughts. Throughout the verse the tenses are present showing that these are principles which are continuative and habitual.

The principle that the Son can do nothing of Himself is true of every man but here it has a deeper sense because of the intimate relation between Him and the Father.² This passage has been used to make a distinction between Jesus and God with Jesus as an inferior being.³ On the contrary these words actually apply to Sonship rather than deity.⁴ Jesus continually pointed to the Father and here He asked them to look higher than Himself to God. He, Himself, was deity veiled in flesh for the purpose of revealing

¹R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), p. 380.

²A. T. Robertson, Word Pictures in the New Testament, Vol. V (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1932), p. 84.

³Victor Paul Wierwille, Jesus Christ is Not God (New Knoxville, OH: The American Christian Press, 1975), p. 141.

⁴John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, Vol. I, trans. by William Pringle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 198.

the Father. He was not inferior to the Father for He was equal to the Father but rather in His incarnation He pointed men to the Father as the source of authority.

Fatherhood Means Source of Life

"God did not choose to have life hidden and, as it were, buried within Himself, and therefore He poured it into His Son, that it might flow to us."¹ Jesus continued to refute the Jews for their disbelief in His deity by revealing that He had life in Himself. This ability to dispense eternal life was given to the Son by the Father. "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself" (Jn. 5:26). The original Greek says ὡπερ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, οὕτως καὶ τῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ. He started on a common ground with the accepted belief that God the Father had the power to bestow life on those whom He will. He used the explanatory γάρ to explain verse twenty-five where He said that those who hear the voice of the Son of God will live. It is because of the fact that God gave to Him the power.

God is referred to with the absolute term ὁ πατήρ which is used to emphasize the relation in an emphatic way yet in a way in which the Jews would still know He spoke of God. The tense of ἔδωκεν is aorist and it goes back to

¹ Ibid., p. 207.

before time with reference to the eternal relationship of Jesus the Son to God the Father. The most common terminology for this relationship has been "the eternal generation of the Son." This has come from John 1:14 where John writes that Jesus had glory which was the δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός. μονογενοῦς was translated "only begotten" not as an event of time but rather an unexplainable relationship of eternity past.¹ Moulton and Milligan,² Thayer,³ and Arndt and Gingrich⁴ all agree that μονογενής has the meaning of "one of a kind, single, unique, only." It has been stated above that Jesus is in no way inferior to the Father. Generation of any sort implies inferiority and essential dependency. This is not only unbiblical but also unnecessary. It may be better translated that Jesus was the unique One from the Father.

¹ Daniel A. White, "The Doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son: Is It Scriptural or Not?" Unpublished Master of Divinity thesis, Grace Theological Seminary, 1976, p. 2. The scope of this paper is to particularly deal with eternal generation. He goes into much greater depth than the present paper which is confined to the Fatherhood aspect.

² James Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1949), p. 416.

³ Joseph Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 417.

⁴ Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 529.

"Jesus is the uncreated, ungenerated, co-eternal, co-equal Son of God the Father."¹

Jesus recognized that life was in the Father and He revealed His complete dependence on the Father by recognizing that God the Father has life in Himself. Then He placed Himself on the same level with the Father by asserting that this life was given to Him in just the same way. "Thus Jesus sets before the Jews the answer to the question how He, being man, does, indeed, not only as the Son but equally as man, not only by one nature but by both indissolubly united in His person, bestow life eternal."²

Fatherhood Means Love

There was a love between the Father and the Son which could never be matched by any other. John fifteen speaks of the vine and the branches. Jesus Christ is the vine and the secret of the life of the believer is to abide in the Vine. Verse four commands the disciples to abide in Christ in order to bear fruit. *καθως ηγαπησέν με ο πατήρ, καγω υμᾶς ηγαπησα, μέννατε έν τῇ άγάπη τῇ έμῃ* which means "just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love; (Jn. 15:9). *καθως* is used to mean "to

¹Herbert Bess, "The Term 'Son of God' in the Light of Old Testament Idiom," Grace Journal, 6:2 (Spring, 1965), p. 23.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 394.

the degree that."¹ This degree is impossible to imagine for it encompasses the infinity of the attributes and self-knowledge of God.

The two verbs in the first phrase are aorist tense showing two past acts. They are also bound together by logic and their close proximity. Jesus speaks of the Father's love for Him as the incarnate Son, not of the ineffable love between the persons of the Godhead irrespective of the incarnation and the mission of Jesus.² The Father loves the Son for His dedication to the mission for which He was sent. The Son loves the disciples who were fulfilling the mission for which they were sent, namely, the bearing of fruit. Jesus says to remain in His love. The verb μένετε which is the figurative way to say that someone should not leave the realm or sphere in which he finds himself.³ The aorist tense of the imperative verb makes the timing indefinite. There is no limitation as far as time as to how long these are supposed to remain in His love. The knowledge of the Father's love was preeminent in the mind of Jesus and so it should be in the mind of the believer.

¹Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 392.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 1042.

³Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon, p. 505.

Fatherhood Means Unity

ἐγὼ καὶ ὁ πατὴρ ἓν ἐσμεν means "I and my Father are one" (Jn. 10:30). These are just a few words but the theological implications are very great. For anyone to equate himself with the Father is something quite exceptional. But Jesus was exceptional in every way and as the Messiah had a perfect right to proclaim oneness with the Father. "Father" is again ὁ πατήρ, the absolute form of the title referring specifically to Jesus Christ. In addition Jesus uses the emphatic personal pronoun with reference to Himself. This was not a slip of the tongue but rather a distinctly personal statement.

Only rarely is εἷς (or its neuter form ἓν) ever used as a digit in the New Testament. Its usual meaning is unitary, unanimous, or unique.¹ The statements of the context call for a very high, lofty understanding of this union of the Father and Son. It is understood that "one" means that Jesus and the Father were united in purpose and will.² This is true but there is more to it than that for the Jews recognized that Jesus made Himself equal with God. This oneness included equality in power. The ἓν is

¹Ethelbert Stauffer, "εἷς," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1972), p. 434.

²Homer Kent, Jr., Light in the Darkness (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1974), p. 144.

neuter and this takes away the thought that Jesus and the Father were one person which is what Arius attempted to expound. In order to say that the two are one person Jesus would have used the masculine $\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$. This verse therefore argues the agreement not the unity of substance.¹

The line of argument used by Jesus here is that He is the One who gives eternal life to the sheep. He has the power to keep them in His hand. Yet the Father gave Him the sheep and He is greater than all meaning that He also has the power to keep them in His hand. At this point Jesus says that they are one. It is obvious that He is speaking of the oneness of purpose accompanied by the oneness of power to keep the sheep in their hands. They are indeed two persons as the strongly emphatic personal pronoun $\acute{\epsilon}\gamma\omega$ used with the absolute $\delta\ \pi\alpha\tau\acute{\eta}\rho$ denotes.² They are not one in person but rather they are both of one essence with one power and purpose. An analogy may be used of an ambassador for a monarch. He may say that he and his monarch are one in purpose yet they are unique persons.³

The Jews understood perfectly the point Jesus was trying to make for they took up stones to kill him, accusing Him of making Himself equal with God. This He did but

¹Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, p. 417.

²Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 760.

³Dods, "The Gospel of John," p. 794.

never did He say that He and the Father were one person for this would demand a masculine $\epsilon\lambda\gamma$ as well as ruin the doctrine of the trinity.

The Fatherhood in the Actions of Jesus

Jesus taught by words of the importance of the Father and Son relationship in His life but He also showed the importance of this relationship in His life by His actions. No other man ever lived with the view of the Father continually before Him as Jesus did. Jesus evidenced repeatedly His dependence on the Father and His total submission to His will.

Public Actions

The first recorded public act of Jesus is in Luke two where, at the age of twelve, He talked with the learned men in the temple. When asked about this, His reply was that He was to be about His Father's business. This is indicative of the entire life of Jesus for it was lived with the thought of the Father's business constantly before Him. Each of His works evidence this relationship and also speak of His unity of purpose with the Father.

A quick perusal of the gospel records reveals that Jesus performed many miracles and good works as evidence of His Messiahship. These works were rejected and ignored as the Jews sought to maintain their positions and relieve themselves of the self-proclaimed Savior. Jesus said that

even if they did not believe Him, they should believe the works which He had done (Jn. 10:38). It was these works which were evidences of the relationship of Father to Son.

Earlier in John five and verse thirty-six He was doing the works which the Father had given Him to do. Everything done by Jesus was a work given by the Father. He did nothing on His own apart from the will of the Father. In fact it was these very works which bore witness that He was sent by the Father. His works were evidence of His divine authorization and revealed to men His relationship to His Father.

Private Actions

Jesus was followed by crowds and publicity almost everywhere He went so He knew the necessity and value of His private devotional life. His dependence on the Father is seen most vividly in His action of spending hours in prayer to God. He constantly lived in the light of the Father and recognized the importance of prayer in the area of being fully dependent on the Father.

John chapter seventeen is a record of one of Jesus' prayers to the Father. It is replete with references to their relationship as Father and Son. In this chapter Jesus says that He has fulfilled His duty as Revealer of the Father and now the Father must glorify the Son. This chapter also shows His pleading with the Father on behalf of His loved ones that they may never be lost. Jesus was

totally dependent on the Father for all things. It was the Father who sent Him as the Revealer (Jn. 17:25). Jesus had conscientiously maintained His sight of this relationship and thereby was worthy of the honor and glory He was to receive.

Summary

God did not leave man to guess about the relationship of the Father to the Son; He sent Jesus to reveal the Father. It was this Fatherhood that occupied the thoughts of Jesus and was the motive behind His every deed. He taught by words concerning the Father yet He also taught by His actions. Jesus showed a life of dependency on the Father and fulfilled His goal as the Revealer.

No one knew the Father as Jesus did for He lived in the strength of His Father and was actually one with the Father in the sense of purpose and power. He lived so deeply in the terms of the Fatherhood that it may truly be said that to see Jesus is to see the Father (Jn. 14:9).

CHAPTER IV

THE FATHERHOOD IN RESPECT TO THE TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is perhaps the most mysterious and difficult doctrine that is presented to man in the entire range of Scripture. It is not the purpose of this paper to give a full explanation of the intricacies of the Trinity. Rather, it is the purpose to show the relation of the Father and Son concept to the Trinity to see the affects and meanings. The doctrine of the Trinity is not a speculative thought, nor can it be achieved by reason. The Trinity is a fact of historical revelation.¹ The doctrine lies outside of natural reason and must be accepted by faith. "As well might we expect to confine the ocean in a teacup as to place a full explanation of the nature of God within the limits of our feeble human minds."²

Perhaps for the reason of the difficulty both in wording the doctrine and understanding it there has been much error in its regard. Error cropped up very early in

¹James Oliver Buswell, "Trinity," The Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, ed. by Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963), p. 871.

²Loraine Boettner, Studies in Theology (Philadelphia: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1976), p. 79.

the history of the church. Sabellianism proposed that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were one in essence and one in person.¹ This view saw the names of Father, Son and Holy Spirit as names for three different works of God as the Creator, Benefactor and Preserver respectively. The usual example is given of one man who is a father, son and brother-in-law all at one time.² In dealing with the aspect of the Father and Son in the Trinity this paper will show the fallacy of such an argument.

The Trinity may be viewed as the doctrine of distinctions within the Divine essence.³ There are three distinct persons in the Godhead yet their essence is the same. The distinctions must be maintained in order to maintain the deity of Christ and also His Sonship. If not, then all of His teachings concerning the Father and the Spirit are without reason and His use of human language is absurd. This paper is based on the presupposition of God and His perfect revelation of Himself in His Word. If one cannot accept Jesus' teachings as coming from God, as He claimed, one cannot have a right view of God.

"How many persons are there in the Godhead? There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, the

¹ Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1977), p. 459.

² Ralph Wardlaw, Systematic Theology, Vol. II (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1858), p. 15.

³ Orr, The Christian View of God and the World, p. 265.

Holy Ghost; and these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory."¹ The statement in the Westminster Shorter Catechism states the issue as well as can be stated in one sentence. This paper will now leave the explanation of the Trinity and seek to show the relation of the Father and Son within the Trinity.

The Father's Relation to the Trinity

The Father is God entirely and without division and because of the Trinity, the Father has a special relationship with the Son by reason of a shared essence. God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ recognizing that the Father and Son are personal distinctions within the divine nature.² God cannot be clearly known in this Father and Son relationship until the Incarnation. Jesus' task in the Incarnation was to reveal the Father more completely so that people could look at Jesus and see the Father.

The Father is neither created nor begotten. He is from eternity and exists as the first Person of the Godhead. He is the origin and principle not only of all created things but also of the divine Persons.³ The Father and Son

¹The Shorter Chatechism (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, n.d.), p. 2.

²Henry, Notes on the Doctrine of God, p. 117.

³Owen, Dogmatic Theology, p. 121.

relationship sets forth the features of emanation and the manifestation.¹ The Father is the source from which the Son receives life and power. Yet this is not to say that there is a sense in which the Son is not God. The Son is equal to the Father in every particular.

The Father and Son relationship is anthropomorphic in the sense that these terms are used to express to human understanding the eternal relationship.² The human understanding of the Father and Son concept is the means used to convey the relationship because it comes closest to the transcendent idea of God. No human terms could express it completely but the Father who is all-wise has chosen the Father and Son concept to reveal what He will of Himself.

God is to Jesus essentially the Father, and He is to Himself as essentially the Son. He would not be what He is without the Fatherhood, nor would God be what He is without the Sonship. Were the Sonship subtracted there would be no Fatherhood; were the Fatherhood denied, there would be no Son.³

There is a sense then that the Father is also dependent on the Son because self-existence is a property of the Trinity not of personality. Because they are both God in essence, they are dependent on each other for existence. Without one there would not be any.

¹ Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. I (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1947), p. 314.

² Ibid., p. 314.

³ Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 440.

The triune God, however, is a person existing with infinite relationships within Himself. All that is implied in the profound words "Father," "Son," and "Holy Spirit," all the infinite relationships suggested in the characteristics of love, holiness and wisdom, are readily conceivable within the being of such a God.¹

The term "Father" reveals the relationship of God to the second member of the Trinity. When viewed this way, it becomes the determinative principle of thought in understanding God.

The Son's Relation to the Trinity

This relationship is of primary importance for on it hangs the deity of Jesus Christ. Jesus was the only, unique Son of God (Jn. 3:16). This introduces the fact of the Incarnation. It is in the Incarnation that the Fatherhood of God and the Sonship of Christ is disclosed. This is not to say that the Incarnation adds to the relationship but rather it is because of the relationship.² The Father and Son had a perfect relationship from eternity and the Incarnation was for the purpose of teaching men to consider the Father and the Son in such close proximity that any reference to one brings to mind the other immediately. The Incarnation brought the meaning of Fatherhood and Sonship to a place where man could attain a conception of it to the highest possible degree.

¹Boettner, Studies in Theology, p. 112.

²Henry, Notes on the Doctrine of God, p. 105.

It has been shown that the Son and the Father are and have always been equal in essence. It has also been shown that there is an interdependency in the relationship which causes each to be in a position of reliance on each other. Yet the Incarnation brought about the combination of God with man. Jesus is as much man as He is God and He is one hundred percent of each in one. So in the Incarnation the Son became totally dependent on the Father as the source of authority, power and life. He could do nothing of Himself except what He could see the Father do (Jn, 5:19). This raises the question of the subordination of the Son to the Father.

For the purpose of redemption, Jesus assumed a distinctive subordination.¹ To use the term subordination with regard to the second person of the Godhead may seem foreign because of the great stress on His deity. Yet, as has been seen, the Son is dependent on the Father whom He reveals. The subordination is not, however, in His essence. He is totally God and always has been. There is a subordination in order, office and operation. In order for Jesus to operate effectively as the Son He had to place Himself under the authority of the Father in terms of His person. Their respective functions are subordinate in principle; the Son

¹ Ibid., p. 99.

² Emery H. Bancroft, Elemental Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1960), p. 100.

is the one Who is sent and the Father is the one Who sends the Son. Warfield even suggests that there may have been some sort of covenant by which a distinct function is assumed by each member.¹ They were never in a position of subordination in subsistence for this would remove the sharing of divine essence.

The concept of sending and being sent poses a problem for the human mind because it implies inferiority on behalf of the sent one. It denotes an agent, authorized and empowered, not the principle figure but a secondary one.² However, in essence Jesus is not inferior. Reciprocal statements such as in John 5:21 reveal that Jesus has the ability to give life to whom He wishes. This is a power which only God has. He also had the ability to lay down His own life in John 10:18. There is even a time when Jesus said that the Father points back to Him (Jn. 6:45). To hear from the Father means to come to the Son, Jesus.

Yet, in His humanity Jesus placed Himself in a state of dependence on the Father as a subordinate in office and operation. "In God the Father we have the source of deity, in Jesus its overflow."³ The Father is the source of all glory and it is Jesus who shows forth that glory to man. Subordination is only evident from the points of

¹Warfield, Biblical Foundations, p. 111.

²Appold, The Oneness Motif in the Fourth Gospel, p. 21.

³Bancroft, Elemental Theology, p. 99.

activity. It cannot be stressed too much that Jesus was not inferior to the Father. Subordination does not imply inferiority. Christ in His incarnation learned obedience, suffered, and died yet this was necessary for man in order to provide salvation. "Hence by its union with the deity the humanity is not superseded or diminished, but rather exercised, realized, and enlarged; and by its union with the humanity of Jesus the deity is not discharged or lessened, but rather actualized, personalized, made articulate."¹

The effect of the incarnation was to bring a view of the Father down to man that he might see and believe. Jesus was to reveal the Father to man so that God could reveal His love in salvation. It has been shown that Jesus referred to God as "My" Father. At one point He said that the Father is greater than all (Jn. 10:29). This has direct reference to His earthly state in which He acts as a delegate for God and also His dual nature of man and God, without derogation to His equality in nature.² His operation was that of a delegate and He fulfilled His office to such an extent that to see Him was the same as seeing the One Whom He represented.

As He revealed the Father, Jesus never referred to Him as "our Father" including Himself. The "Lord's Prayer"

¹Fairbairn, The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, p. 479.

²B. B. Warfield, The Lord of Glory (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing Co., 1977), p. 198.

was not a prayer of Jesus but rather a teaching aid for the disciples. To Jesus God was "My" Father. This denotes the recognition of a unique relationship between the two into which no other being could enter. God was by nature His Father and by grace mankind's.¹ The Jews knew what He meant by saying "My" Father for they set about to stone Him because He made Himself equal with God.

Even though it may seem incongruous to man for the union of Sonship and deity to exist, it nevertheless does. A higher ground must be assumed. These matters are above the reasoning capabilities of man and must be accepted by faith as found in the Word of God. It was a key concept in the life of Christ and was so revealed in Scripture.

Summary

The doctrine of the Trinity is a mysterious doctrine because of the higher level of reasoning needed. Only God can fully know it. This knowledge is communicated between the Father and the Son and for this reason the Son came to earth to represent the Father in human form. The Son is the second person of the divine Godhead and is equal in essence, power and glory.

The Father is the first person of the Godhead and as such His operation is to give authority to the Son and send Him. He is not created or begotten because He is the

¹ Lenski, The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel, p. 1362.

source of life. The Son reveals the Father in His incarnate form yet at all times He is equal to the Father in essence. He has willingly placed Himself in a position of dependence on the Father in order to carry out His will on earth. The relationship of Father to Son is an expression of the situation between the first and second members of the God-head.

CONCLUSION

The Fatherhood of God is an essential aspect of a complete knowledge of God. It is an aspect which is involved in every relationship of God as revealed in His Word. In relation to man there is a sense in which God is the Father of all men. This is due to the fact that He is the Origin of life and also men find themselves in moral dependency upon the Father. There is also a specific sense in which He is Father to the body of believers. This is only possible as one receives the revelation of Him and believes on His name.

In considering Fatherhood one must also consider the implied sonship. The most obvious Son is the Son of God Jesus Christ whose purpose and operation was to reveal the Father to man in such a way that to see Jesus was to see the Father. God is also the Father of believers as they come into the sonship relationship through faith in the Revealer of the Father. Jesus taught about this relationship; there is no need to wander in confusion concerning it. As the great Example, Jesus not only taught the Fatherhood but He also lived the Fatherhood.

In relation to the Trinity the Father is the first in order because of His office and operation. This is an order of personality not essence. Jesus is second in order.

He is fully God in essence but second in office. At the Incarnation Jesus willingly placed Himself in a totally dependent relationship to the Father, relying on Him for every work He did.

The idea of Fatherhood was used by an infinite all-wise God to effectively relay the message of His relationship to the Son and believers. No more beautiful picture can be contrived to demonstrate the concepts of love and dependency as the concept of the Fatherhood of God.

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