

“Don’t Call Me Father”

Not every man wearing a clerical collar wants to be given the title, “father,” in the spiritual sense although he may very well have a family at home.

You may say, “Well, the most convenient remedy for that is simply for him not to wear clerical garb.” Expediency, however, is not always the wisest choice, for while it provides a solution it may also create greater difficulties.

A waiter in a crowded restaurant, a doorman at a hotel, a policeman on a congested street corner, or a conductor on a train or trolley can easily be identified and called upon for the services he renders.

No service is in greater demand than that performed by the servants of Almighty God. Those who serve God and direct people in seeking God’s help have a responsibility to be clearly identified for the services they render.

One of the reasons that are regularly given for not wearing such clothing is, “I’m mistaken for a priest in the Roman Catholic Church. Someone always calls me, ‘father.’”

There is no one more embarrassed than a Roman Catholic discovering that the one he thought to be a priest is in reality a Protestant minister who had perhaps said, “I’m not a priest, I’m a minister. I’m not referred to as ‘father.’ My parishioners call me ‘pastor.’”

This is not simply a personal preference, for there is an entire area of theology that centers around this statement,

“Don’t call me father.” Its roots rest on Jesus’ statement recorded in Matthew’s Gospel (23:9) **“Call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”** Though this is taken from the King James Version of the Scriptures, other more modern versions have the same general translation. Jesus is speaking to the multitudes about the religious leaders of that day. He spoke of the Scribes and Pharisees and said, **“all their works they do to be seen of men.”** He spoke of them desiring to be called Rabbi and he said, **“but title is only for the Christ, don’t you be called by that name.”**

“Don’t be called master for the Christ is the Master and don’t call any man your father upon earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”

What he was saying is God alone is your Spiritual Father and He is in heaven. Don’t look upon any man as your Spiritual Father.

You may ask, “How can such direct words be ignored, there must be some reason.” No doubt there is, but the Scripture stands as the Word of God and no man or group of men have the liberty to supersede it with their own thoughts.

There are many teachings in the Bible that are in opposition to teachings that have arisen in the Church. The Bible, however, remains as the authority for it is God’s Word.

The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy (1 Tim. 2:5,6), **“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Him-**

self a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”

The system of theology that provides a priest or a spiritual father provides a mediator between God and man. The system appears to meet the needs of man and seems to be a beautiful arrangement until it is realized that God is still God and man is still man.

What has changed is the mediator. The man Christ Jesus has had the power taken from Him which is solely His. His right to it is through His victorious work for us at Calvary and He has offered it to no man.

The Apostle Peter said, **“there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).**

Jesus Himself declared, **“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).**

The writer of the Book of Hebrews said, **“every priest standeth daily ministering and offering often times the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; But this man (Jesus), after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool” (Heb.10:11-13).**

What he is saying is that this one mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, needed only to make one sacrifice. He, as the High Priest, offered Himself as the sacrifice at the altar, Calvary, and that sacri-

fice was complete and sufficient. After offering that complete and sufficient sacrifice he was welcomed into the presence of God in heaven where he continues to sit at God's right hand today.

You may say, "I believe everything you say and so do my friends, and so does my Church. We have an even better arrangement for we go beyond what Christ did and we make additional offerings and additional sacrifices."

If this is your thinking let me ask you this; do you believe that Christ's work was complete and sufficient? Do you have sufficient faith to believe you can enter into heaven without doing any work yourself? Do you have the faith that the thief on the cross had, who without works said, "remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" If you are attempting to add to Christ's work you are not looking upon it as "complete and sufficient."

Remember this, unless Christ has cleansed you of all sin, your works are as filthy rags before Almighty God. You can't obtain salvation through your own labors.

Paul, writing to the Ephesians (2:8, 9) said, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works lest any man should boast."

Entrance into heaven, or salvation, is not earned or worked for, it is God's gift. What labor could we possibly perform even at \$10.00 or \$20.00 an hour that would enable us to purchase our way into heaven? It's foolish to even think that way.

If there is, therefore, no additional sacrifice that can be offered, for Christ's Sacrifice was complete and sufficient, then there is no longer the need for a priest, an altar, or a sacrifice. It's an insult to God to say, "What you did was not enough, I want to do more." Who wants to be found insulting God and belittling the work of His Son?

For "heaven's sake" ask questions. Why the altar? Why the sacrifice? Why the priest? Why call your spiritual leader "father?" Perhaps your questions will aid your spiritual leaders to re-examine their own position. At least their answers should clarify whether or not you are resting your eternal future on Christ's Work at Calvary or whether you haven't had enough faith to completely trust in him.

If you need help, write to the address below; we'll be pleased to have the opportunity of assisting you, but "don't call me 'father'." We're Episcopal in government, liturgical in worship, and Biblical in our theology. We can lead you to greater truth while holding to what you appreciate in worship.

Redemption Church

A Traditional Reformed Episcopal Church

347 New Street

Quakertown, PA 18951

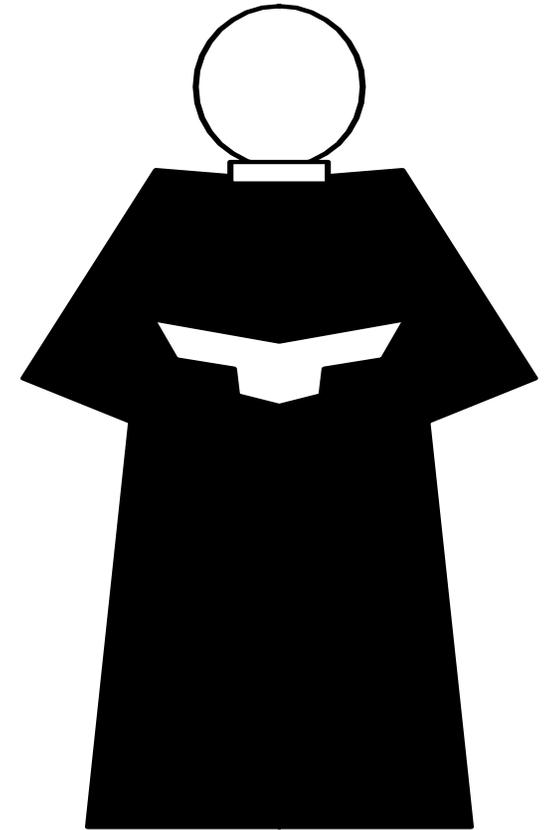
215-529-9460

RedemptionTREC.org

Written by:

Rev. Robert N. McIntyre

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*A Biblical Perspective on the
use of the term "father"*