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The God Who Likes His Name

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The citations from Elizabeth Achtemeier and Basil the Great found within my commentary, "[The God Who Names Himself](#)," are found in the book *Speaking the Christian God: The Holy Trinity and the Challenge of Feminism*, edited by Alvin F. Kimel, Jr. The book, published by Eerdmans in 1992, includes essays by several distinguished theologians and scholars. Kimel offers his own analysis in an essay entitled "The God Who Likes His Name: Holy Trinity, Feminism, and the Language of Faith." In his essay, Kimel points to the deeply personal language by which God has named himself—especially in naming himself Father.

Consider this paragraph:

Within Christian usage "Father" is not just one of many metaphors imported by fallen sinners onto the screen of eternity. It is a filial, denominating title of address revealed in the person of the eternal Son. "On the lips of Jesus," Wolfhart Pannenberg states, "'Father' became a proper name for God. It thus ceased to be simply one designation among others. It embraces every feature in the understanding of God which comes to light in the message of Jesus. It names the divine Other in terms of whom Jesus saw himself and to whom he referred His disciples and hearers." Jesus names the Holy God of Israel Abba, "Father," thereby expressing, and indeed effectuating, the intimate inner communion between them, a unique relationship of knowing and love. "No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son" (Matt. 11:27). By this historical address God is acknowledged as the hope, joy, ultimate source, and final authority in our Lord's life; by this address he is constituted as the Father. The dominical naming occurs within the being of the Godhead. It is an event of the divine biography, an eternal act of self-differentiation occurring in time. When uttered by the incarnate Word, "Father" (defined exclusively by Christ himself in the totality of his filial existence) is a created, performative word of eschatological power—alogous, on a different level, to God's speaking forth the universe in Genesis 1—which eternally calls into being the One who loves his Son beyond all imaginings, beyond all conditions and limits. The Father receives from Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, his hypostatic identity as Father.

This is an especially important insight in light of current controversies. We should note that, as revealed in the Scriptures, God is not merely described as *like* a father; He is identified *as* our Father.

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