

ARTICLE V.

THE DIVINE FATHERHOOD.

BY THE REVEREND J. W. ROSS.

CAN there be a question of greater importance to man than that of his relation to his Creator, Preserver, and Sovereign Lord? Men's indifference to the fearful importance of this question, as it applies to each individual, is an indication of a moral and spiritual state that ought to excite our wonder. Men are often amazed at each other's mental abilities; and well they may be. But the disparity that is often seen between moral and intellectual greatness in the same person gives rise to most perplexing questions. Dissimilitude between men's mental and moral abilities, however, is too common to excite much surprise.

We usually divide the human family into two classes, and call them good or bad; but the exact separating line is so delicate that no finite being can judge his fellow with exact justice. Difficult and delicate as judging other people's state and relations to the Infinite Creator may be, it is still more difficult for us impartially to judge our own motives or actions, especially when near the line that divides between exact righteousness and unrighteousness.

The Scriptures, however, definitely inform us that God takes exact account of the hidden motives of all actions, and consigns to the side of absolute justice all his creatures, whether good or bad.

God's judgment of men was announced long ages ago, and has often been repeated in all our ears: "*All* have sinned, and

come short of the glory of God" (Rom. iii. 23). Though all have sinned and come short of glorifying their Maker, yet some have been made free from sin, and are bearing fruit unto holiness, and are enjoying a life that is, in its nature, everlasting (see Rom. vi. 18, 22).

THE OBJECT OF THIS PAPER

is not to give judgment on men, but rather to inquire after the Scripture teaching concerning the *relations* that exist between those who have not been made free from sin, and their Creator, Preserver, and absolute Sovereign.

In Genesis i. 27 we read these words: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." This account of the origin, primitive nature, and relation of man to his Creator is satisfactory to a hundred fold more wise and learned men than any other conception ever set forth for human consideration.

Then when we read: "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (ii. 16, 17); and then in chapter iii. 6: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat,"—we have here a history of the introduction of evil into this world that has stood peerless with the most intelligent men that have ever lived.

After this account of the introduction of sin by the first pair, we read in Genesis iv. 1: "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain." And at verse 8 we read,

that "Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him." This awful record that presents to view a being that was at first created in the image and likeness of God, and that St. Luke tells us "was the son of God" (iii. 38), and then tells us that, after disobedience, this man becomes the father of a murder, furnishes material for awful reflection!

By consulting Genesis v. 3, we obtain important light upon this dark account. It reads: "And Adam lived a hundred and fifty years, and *begat a son in his own likeness, after his image.*" In other words, man who fell from the Divine image to that of a criminal, "begat a son in his *own* likeness, after his image," and that son became the murderer of his righteous younger brother.

The first seven chapters of Genesis are wonderful, when viewed either as history or as literature. They give the beginning of a world and its tragic ending by a retributive deluge.

In the beginning of the sixth chapter of Genesis we have a condensed account of the steps that led the old world to its destruction. In substance it is this: "And it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth," "that the sons of God [good men] saw the daughters of men [mere men, sons of *men only*, not sons of God as well] that they were fair [beautiful to look upon]; and they took them wives of all which they chose." The outcome of those alliances of godly men with ungodly women because of their beauty, was, in the course of time, a Divine abandonment. A few of the particulars are given us by this record: "And the Lord said, My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh [hopelessly sensual]. . . . And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination

of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis vi. 3, 5). That an infinitely holy Creator should determine to destroy a world peopled with a race of such beings is not strange. That one man was found in a world so hopelessly corrupt, and that he was a preacher of righteousness for more than a century under the influences that surrounded him, is strange.

The definite line of moral demarcation intimated as ruling in the antediluvian world between sons of God and the sons of men may be easily traced from Noah to Christ; but for present use it may be enough if we investigate this question under the light shed upon the subject by Jesus and his apostles.

When Christ began his ministry, he definitely dealt with two classes of people. To each class he gave characteristic titles. One class he called, "disciples," "friends," "children of the kingdom," "children of light," "children of the Highest," and "children of God." The other class he called, "the world" (probably because they form a large majority of the human family, and are devoted to the interests of perishable things), "children of the wicked one," and "children of the devil." Of this second class, he warns his disciples to beware: and while the life-work given them was to do good to such, their kindness, he tells them, would be repaid with persecution and death; and that he himself would "be betrayed into the hands of MEN, and that they would kill him."

Our question, therefore, is this:

ARE BAD MEN CHILDREN OF GOD?

That many have become such cannot be doubted by any one who is only a theoretical Christian believer; but that *all* men are truly God's children is utterly irreconcilable with the revelation given us of the Divine character.

It has been said by many that all men are children of God by creation, by preservation, by redemption, by adoption; and possibly this imaginary list might be extended indefinitely by those of fanciful minds. No theory, however, is worth considering that is not clearly taught in the Holy Scriptures.

That God created all things is definitely taught in the revealed word; but millions of his creatures are not to be counted as his children. Neither birds nor beasts, rocks nor hills, are *children* of God.

St. Luke says, "*Adam* was the son of God"; and Genesis tells us that "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. ii. 7). Here we have a wonderful fact revealed, but it is like all other facts in nature or grace, it excites more curiosity than it gratifies. Jesus Christ said, "*God is a Spirit*" (John iv. 24). No one knows what Spirit is.

No definition reveals its mystery. *Spirit* is a word that primarily means wind, air, or breath. To say that God is wind or sublimated air may be the best that can be done in setting forth by one word the invisible, everywhere present, incomprehensible Maker of the universe. If then we take the words of Jesus and read them into Genesis, we will have this kind of a conception communicated: And God formed man of the dust of the ground, and imparted to him his own nature. When to Nicodemus Jesus said: "That which is born of the flesh is flesh [only]; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, [spiritual, or godlike in moral nature]," he announced a great truth. The fundamental thought expressed in the Scriptures concerning man's origin, state, and relation to the Author of his being is uniform, and in harmony with observation and experience. All men are God's *creatures*, having sprung from his creative power, but none are his *children* without his per-

sonal recreative power upon each individual. The words of Jesus to the Jewish ruler, closely following his solemn declaration concerning the absolute necessity of a new birth, illustrate this fact. The words are: "He that believeth on him [the Son of God] is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John iii. 18, 19).

It is evident that the condemnation spoken of in these verses is in the present tense; the unbeliever is under condemnation to "perish," and this is the danger spoken of in verse 16. It is not said that men "perish" under the condemnation because they have sinned, but because they loved sin, "darkness," and hated him who is the light of the world. Verses 3, 5, and 7 tell us that none such can see the kingdom of God nor enter therein while in that state. But in what sense are they without the kingdom? Certainly not in an absolute sense; because no man can get beyond God's rightful dominion.

The kingdom of God, as spoken of by our Lord in this place, then, is practically synonymous with the *family* of God. A free translation of Christ's sermon to Nicodemus would be about this: Except men be born from above, as well as of men, they can have no just conception of God or of his family, or be admitted into fellowship with him or his children. We need not stumble at the mystery of this Divine doctrine, inasmuch as we have a fit illustration in the mysterious air we breathe, but cannot see, and yet its influences and powers are wonderful in their results. So it is with *every one* who is born of the Spirit: the influence and power may be felt and the results may be visible, but there are mysteries inexplicable.

In our search for a correct conclusion concerning the limits of the Divine Fatherhood, it will certainly be safest for us to trust implicitly to the

DIRECT TEACHINGS OF SCRIPTURE.

It is very probable that St. John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, was present when Nicodemus had his night interview with his Master, and had his exact words in mind, though not fully reported, when he wrote: "As many as received *him* [who was the source of life and light], to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John i. 12, 13, R. V.). How could Jesus give the *right* to those who were children of God to *become* what they already were? Why did John limit child relationship to believers, if all men are God's children? What authority had he for saying that being born of blood, or of the will of man, does not entitle to a claim of being sons of God?

In his first general epistle he still keeps constantly before the churches the necessity of a new birth, in order to membership in God's family. He evidently knew nothing of God's having children among men who had not been "*begotten*"—"*born of him*" (see 1 John ii. 29; iii. 9; iv. 7; v. 1). He says the difference between the sons of men and the sons of God is so great that they are unknown to those who are merely the sons of men (1 John iii. 1). He mentions several distinguishing characteristics of God's children: as, (1) they believe that "Jesus is the Christ" (v. 1); (2) they love God and love his children (iv. 7-11); (3) they do not commit sin (ii. 9). In this particular, he tells the churches, "the children of God are *manifest*, and the children of the devil" (iii. 10). How can these things be, if all men are the children of God?

SUPPOSED SCRIPTURE AUTHORITY FOR THE DOGMA THAT ALL
MEN ARE THE CHILDREN OF GOD.

Of course those who contend that all the human family are members of the Divine family, imagine the Scriptures teach that doctrine. It certainly ought to be readily conceded, that, if one plain, definite passage of Scripture can be found that evidently is intended to teach that doctrine, either assumptively or assertively, the question is settled: if, however, one or many passages might be found that *seem* to teach the doctrine, and yet the doctrine is found to be out of harmony with the wide sweep of biblical thought, some other interpretation must be given than that which is seeming.

In this article the design has been to make evident the fact that the Holy Scriptures are built, in every part, around the thought that man, as he came from the Creator, was the son of God; but that by a deliberate and voluntary act on his part he became an "alien," a "stranger," who "knew not God," nor approved of his revealed nature, character, will, or authority.

Notwithstanding all this, it is confidently contended by some, that the Scriptures definitely teach that all men are God's children! We need, therefore, to give a little time and thought to the consideration of those passages that may be thought to support that view.

The first Scriptures that may be supposed to support that doctrine can be found in Malachi ii. 10: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us?" This, like all Scripture, must be interpreted by the light of its context. Matthew Henry, a prince among commentators, who holds to the doctrine of the universal Fatherhood of God, says: "This question [of Malachi] seems to refer to the Jewish nation: 'Have we not all one father; Abraham or Jacob? . . . Has not one

God created us, formed us into a people, made us a nation by ourselves, and put a new life into us, distinct from that of other nations?" This passage, therefore, having reference only to the relation of the Jews to Abraham or Jacob, proves nothing for a universal Divine Fatherhood.

This is the only passage in the Old Testament that might be mistaken for a support to the doctrine.

The New Testament, however, is almost the sole dependence of the advocates for God's all-embracing Fatherhood.

The first New Testament passage deserving consideration may be found in Matthew vi. 9. In that verse we have instruction given concerning prayer. Our Lord Jesus says, "After this manner therefore pray ye: OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN." Therefore the conclusion is urged that all men are warranted in addressing God as their Father. In many other verses of this same discourse, God is spoken of as heavenly Father. But the first question to be settled is, Have impenitent sinners a right to pray? Who was Jesus addressing? By turning to the introductory words of the Sermon on the Mount, we are definitely told that Jesus "went up into a mountain: and when he was set, *his disciples* came unto him: and he opened his mouth and *taught them*, saying," etc. (Matthew v. 1, 2).

What authority has any one to say he was instructing *sinners* to pray? Have impenitent sinners any right to pray while impenitent? Do we not read: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me"? (Ps. lxxvi. 18.) "The Lord is far from the wicked: but he heareth the prayer of the righteous"? (Prov. xv. 29.) "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination"? (Prov. xxviii. 9.) When our Lord taught *his disciples* to pray to our Father in heaven, he was instructing those

whom he called "the salt of the earth," and "the light of the world," and not such as were unforgiving, or those who laid up no treasures in heaven; those who countenanced sin in their hearts, and refused to be his disciples.

Some have thought that St. Paul taught the universal Fatherhood of God when he quoted to the Athenians, with approval, the saying of one of their own poets, that all are "the offspring of God" (Acts xvii. 28). The word *γένος*, which is translated "offspring," was by the Greeks used in a wide sense; as, posterity, offspring, family, kindred, stock, nation, people, kind, sort.¹

The only way, therefore, to get the meaning St. Paul intended, will be to definitely settle what he was talking about. Was he speaking of men's spiritual, or of their natural, relations to God? It is very certain that the Athenians had only crude ideas of God as the Creator, Upholder, and Ruler over all things. This is apparent from the Apostle's words. They were especially disqualified for the apprehension of a relationship that is only possible to faith. Paul's preaching in the midst of the Areopagus was in the realm of natural theology; and as soon as he touched the vital point in distinctive Christian theology he was interrupted by murmurs and mocking. He was endured as long as he dwelt upon men's relations to God as his *creatures*, but they had no conception of a life of faith, such as Christianity reveals and makes actual.

The point reached by the Apostle in his discourse on that occasion, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, he tells the Corinthians at a later date, is indispensable in Christian theology. His words are: "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (1 Cor. xv. 17). "If after the manner of men I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advan-

¹ See Robinson.

together it me, if the dead rise not?" (Verse 32.) On another occasion he wrote to another church: "Jesus our Lord . . . was raised for our justification" (Rom. iv. 24, 25).

Those who imagine that St. Paul, in his discourse to the pagan philosophers of Greece, was referring, in his allusion to one of their poets who had spoken of all men being the "offspring of God," to the same blessed relation of which he speaks in a letter to Galatian converts, in which he says: "Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iii. 26), must possess a very extravagant fancy.

Ephesians iv. 6 may be supposed by some to favor the idea that God is the *Father*, as well as the Creator, of all men. The Apostle, in speaking to the church as "*one* body," "*one* spirit," called "in *one* hope of their calling," "*One* Lord, *one* faith, *one* baptism," adds, "ONE GOD and *Father of all*, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

The question here is, Who are included in the words, "One God and *Father of all*"? No objection can be urged, with good reason, against the interpretation of such an able expositor as Albert Barnes, himself a believer in God's universal Fatherhood, who says of this verse: "*One God and Father of all* WHO BELIEVE." This limitation cannot be other than well grounded, since any one may see that the letter was not addressed to all the Ephesians, but "*to the saints* which are at Ephesus, and to the *faithful in Christ Jesus*" (chap. i. 11). To such he could well afford to speak of "*one* God and *Father of all*, who is above all, and through all, and *in you all*," but not to those who worshiped at the shrines of Diana.

And now, fully believing that no passage in the Scriptures can be found that either directly or indirectly teaches that God is the Father of any man who wilfully rejects him and his authority, it is time for us to consider some of the more

DIRECT SCRIPTURE TEACHINGS

concerning God's Fatherhood.

1. When Jesus said: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt. v. 9), what is the inference regarding those who are strifemakers? Every linguist knows that an inference or an assumption may be a stronger mode of asseverating than by definite assertion.

A formal statement may be based wholly upon the knowledge and veracity of the one who asserts: an assumption is based upon the intelligence and definite knowledge of those who are addressed.

2. Jesus, when addressing "his disciples," commanded them to love their enemies, bless them, do them good, and pray for them, that they *might* "be the children" of their Father in heaven (Matt. v. 44, 45). Those persons he was then addressing, he acknowledged as his disciples, and also as God's children, on many occasions. His meaning, therefore, evidently refers to a continuance in their relation as children of God, and not to an initiation into the Divine family. It is as if he had said, Love your enemies, and do them good, in order that you may still *remain* the children of your heavenly Father.

3. The Jews were very jealous for their claim as children of God, and became highly incensed at our Lord because he would not honor their high profession. His definite and emphatic statement to them was: "If God were your Father, ye would love me" (John viii. 42). The assumptions of Jesus in these words are evident: They did not love Jesus, nor was God their Father. These two assumptions he followed with this strong declaration: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do" (ver. 44).

4. St. Paul was equally emphatic and definite when he

said, in one of his great letters: "They which are the children of the flesh [merely], these *are not the children of God*" (Rom. ix. 8). How can any one say, without flatly contradicting St. Paul, that every man that is born of woman is a child of God?

5. When he says, "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 14), is it not a very daring theological venture to supplement Paul's statement with the contention that all men are sons of God, whether led by his Spirit or not?

6. When St. Paul says, "The Spirit itself [himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. viii. 16, 17), is it not assuming an overweight of responsibility for us to contend that Herod, Pilate, Nero, and all their obsequious minions were the children of God, and needed no witnessing Spirit to make them sure of the fact; and also that they were God's *heirs*, and Christ's *joint heirs*?

7. When St. Paul says, "God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the *adoption of sons*" (Gal. iv. 4, 5), did he understand that there had never been a son of man that was not a son of God?

8. That God, by the offering of his only begotten Son, made it possible to *adopt* his own children unto the relation of sons, is a postulate that staggers all logical conceptions.

9. In the seventh verse of this same chapter, St. Paul, in speaking of the great privileges to which *adopted* sons are exalted, says: "And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

It is important that we take special notice of the "*if*" in the Apostle's hypothetical clause, "*If* a son, then an heir." That "*if*" makes it certain that St. Paul had not learned that all

men are children of God. Then, "heirs of God *through Christ*," makes it certain that no man is naturally a son of God. It must be that sonship and heirship are inseparable; and neither of them is the unconditioned inheritance of any man.

The plain teaching of the Scriptures may be summed up as follows :—

1. Man in his *primitive natural state* was a "son of God" (Luke iii. 38), being made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. i. 26; v. 1; ix. 6).

2. Man in his *present natural state* is a fallen being; he has "forsaken the right way, and gone astray": "There is none righteous, no, not one." (See Rom. iii. 10-12, 23.) Men in their *present natural state* are called "ungodly," "sinners," "enemies of God," "children of disobedience," "by nature children of wrath," "children of this world," "children of men," "children of the devil" (Matt. xiii. 38; John viii. 4; 1 John iii. 8, 10).

3. Men in their present natural state sustain the *relation to God*, not of children, but of "aliens," "strangers," "foreigners," "condemned already," but are offered pardon conditionally.

4. While we read that "God so loved the world [the whole human family], that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John iii. 16), it is evident that he does not love any willing transgressor with a love of approval, complacency, or acceptance, but with a love of *good will* only. It is also evident that the gift of Jesus did not save any of his persistent rejecters, but only those who believed in him. In other words, the gift of the only begotten Son was to make men's salvation from perishing *possible*, not *actual*.

The condemnation of which Jesus speaks in verses 17, 18, and 19 refers to the “*perish*” of which he speaks in verse 16. This condemnation rests upon all who “love darkness rather than light.” How then can criminals, condemned to “perish,” be “heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ”? And how can they be children without being heirs?

5. The only way to sonship and heirship known to the apostles, as seems evident, was thus expressed by St. Paul: “But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit of which he poured out upon us richly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: that, being justified by his grace, we *might be* MADE HEIRS according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus iii. 4–7. R. V.).

It is therefore evident that, according to St. Paul’s understanding, men are only “*made heirs*” of God “through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost” which God pours upon the subject richly, through Jesus Christ, being justified by his grace. What then of natural heirship?

St. John, in his letter written to the church at large, gives expression to wonder and adoring gratitude to God for a work done *for* those who keep his commandments and do them, and also for a work done *in* them, in these words: “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not” (1 John iii. 1).

Is it possible to give any fair interpretation to this verse that does not consider the human family as composed of two classes—those who are sons of God, and those who are not; and that those who are not are incapable of knowing those

who are? In the tenth verse of this same chapter, St. John says of those who live in sin and of those who avoid it: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God [how then can he be a child of God?], neither he that loveth not his brother."

CONCLUSION.

1. There are mysteries involved in all parentage that no human mind can fully comprehend, and hence we need not wonder if the Divine Fatherhood of men is found to be inexplicable. This much, however, is plainly taught us in the Scripture: God has made it possible for all men to become his children, and enjoy the unspeakable benefits of the relation, though they nowhere assert or assume that every human being is a child of God.

2. The assumption that every son of man is a son of God must carry with it the conclusion that the vilest men on earth are hourly begetting children to God, who themselves, according to Christ's definite statement, are not fit to be in his kingdom, or even to see it, or to be admitted as one of his pupils, or disciples.

3. When the human family is considered, as we see its members, are we ready to say that they are all children of a holy God, whether known as saints or fiends? Satan is a creature of God; is he his child? If so, is he not an heir of God? Does it honor God to say that the most of his children are bad, and millions of them are hopelessly so? Is it not high time for our theologians to draw a broad distinctive line between Creator and Father, and father only? Is it not time to discern a difference between being born of God and being born of men?

4. If all men are children of God because he is their Creator,
Vol. LXII. No. 248. 6

what does St. Paul mean by trying to prove that men become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus"? (Gal. iii. 26.)

5. If all men are children of God, then the sacrament of baptism seems meaningless or incongruous. We can easily see why those who have been designated in the word of God by a long list of fearful and disgraceful names that imply almost every form of evil, should, when "transformed," or "renewed in the spirit of their minds," and been made "partakers of the Divine nature," and "been washed . . . sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," should have provision made for new names, such as Jesus provided for, by ordaining a service in which the administrator is required to baptize the subject "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost" (R. V.). This all seems reasonable, on the hypothesis that the old names truly characterized the state, character, and *actual relations* that existed between God and those he calls "transgressors," "sinners," "children of men" (in contradistinction to children of God), "children of transgression," "children of this world," "children of Belial," "children of the wicked one," "children of wrath," children of the devil," "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,"—which means that they have no part in the well-being and blessed privileges of God's chosen people,—"strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world": but if all men are *children of God*, and were never anything else, these descriptive characterizations are inscrutable. The manifest design of baptism seems to be, in its confession, covenant, and ritual, to indicate a changed *relation* to God, and also to men. Baptism in its nature draws a distinctive line between the subject and all who are unwilling to assume like obligations. When St. Paul exhorts the baptized "not to be unequally

yoked together with unbelievers," but to "come out from among them and be separate," as a condition of God's receiving them, he certainly had no thought of advising God's children to separate themselves from others who were children of the same heavenly Father.

The fundamental idea of a visible church is to support a dividing line between the righteous and the unrighteous, the children of God and the children of men who are not children of God. Our word "church" is a translation of a Greek word that signifies *called out*, and means that its members have been called out from fellowship with—whom shall we say, if all men are children of God whether they love our Lord Jesus Christ or not? Shall we say that St. Paul acted the part of a Christian, or a Christian minister especially, when at Ephesus he separated the disciples from those who were hardened unbelievers, and spoke evil of the way before the multitude, if all are children of God? (Acts xix. 9.)

If the universal Fatherhood of God has Divine authority to support it, then the doctrine is healthy and safe, and must be useful when made prominent before the unsaved, by Christian teachers. But what do we find? This, with other facts: History has given us no man's name that has been supposed to be worthy of the title of a moral and spiritual Reformer, who made the doctrine of God's universal Fatherhood prominent in his teaching. The men that are honored with that distinctive title, without exception, whatever may have been their *theory* in regard to the Fatherhood of God, have done their work from the view point of the absolute necessity of every man's being "born of God," "born of the Spirit," "transformed by the renewing of the mind," "created in Christ Jesus unto good works," and of putting on "the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness," "renewed

in knowledge after the image of him that created him," in order to *become* children of God. The teaching, in spite of any illogical incidental *theory* to the contrary, has invariably been in this line.

This cognate fact is patent to all carefully observant minds: Every church organization in Christendom that makes fundamental and prominent the doctrine that all men are children of God, has done little for the world as a moral reformatory agency, to say nothing of its spiritual life. The only church organizations that have ever manifested power sufficient to lift society from degradation, have taught with earnest definiteness, not that the ungodly, or *ungodlike*, are children of God, but that they *may become* such by being "conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

St. Paul's idea evidently was, that God has planned for a vast family of children—"many brethren"—he himself being Father of all. To think of God's being the Father of ungodlike children is incredible; therefore he sent his only begotten Son, who "is the express image of his person," in order to carry out a plan by which men may "be conformed to the image of his Son," who is ever to be the pattern after which all God's children are to be modelled, "that he might be the first born" of all God's earthly family. If St. Paul, or any other apostle, had any thought of God's having children that are not like him, they certainly left the fact unrecorded. Not only so, but careful inquiry will show that such a presentation of God's relation to the ungodly has been demoralizing in its influence in proportion to the prominence given to that theory. There have been many very useful and worthy men who have believed that God is Father of all men, but that was in no case their *working theory*.