

the continuity can be absolutely proved, and he admits that no links can be found to connect distinct classes, as the Mammals, Birds, Reptiles, and Amphibians, with each other. Intermediate forms seeming to connect these are found only in small and *diminishing* numbers as knowledge advances. Nor is the analogy perfect of the succession of animals in geological time with the stages of the development of the individual from the ovum to maturity. Thus, as I have pointed out in my work, *Relics of Primeval Life*, the evidence of transition from one group to another breaks down just where it is most desirable that it should be perfect, and room is left for the multitude of hypothetical phylogenies, subjective rather than objective in their character, with which enthusiastic evolutionists entertain us in speculating on the evolution of the animal kingdom, and which merely serve to show how each individual speculator would have carried on the development had it been left to him, but prove nothing as to how it actually proceeded, or could proceed, spontaneously, and with no plan whatever.

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(*To be continued.*)

THE FATHERHOOD OF GOD.

I.

It is one of the chief glories of the Christian Gospel that it has revealed God as the Father; and the revelation is so wonderful that we ought to take some trouble to learn how the revelation was made and what it contains. We ought not to be satisfied with hasty thoughts about it. Nor ought we, having discovered that Christ has taught us to call God "Our Father," to proceed at once to construct out of our own head a theory of the mutual relations between man and God which this title implies. Here are the Four

Gospels: they contain all that we can know about the earthly Life and Teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ through whom God's Fatherhood was revealed to our race; they are very short tracts; during the next fortnight or three weeks most of us could read them through five or six times, and by reading them we can learn for ourselves how God's Fatherhood was made known to men and what our Lord meant by it. After reading the Gospels with the definite purpose of discovering the truth on this subject, it would be well to read the Epistles in order to learn what the apostles have said about it.

I.

1. I have said that it is one of the chief glories of the Christian Gospel that it has revealed God as the Father. But this does not mean that the mere title of Father had never been attributed to God before Christ came, or that men had never thought of themselves as being in some sense God's children. The ancient Greeks called Zeus the Father of gods and men: he was so called because he was supposed to exercise the authority of a father, both among the gods on Olympus and among men on earth. But neither men nor gods were supposed to receive their life from him. He himself was descended from more ancient Powers. He had a sister whom he married, and brothers with whom he shared the sovereignty of the world. He was the supreme ruler; therefore he was the father.

Some of the ancient philosophers and philosophic poets had another and more impressive conception of the Divine Fatherhood. You remember the lofty words of Paul at Athens: "In Him"—that is in God—"we live, and move, and have our being; as certain even of your own poets have said, *For we are also His offspring*. Being then the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and device of

man.”¹ The quotation is from a curious poem by Aratus, a native of Cilicia, Paul’s own province, perhaps, of Tarsus, Paul’s own city, who lived about 300 years before Christ. The poem is a rendering into verse of an astronomical treatise by a still more ancient author. It opens with an invocation to Zeus :—

“ From Zeus begin : and never let us leave
 His name unloved. With Him, with Zeus, are filled
 All paths we tread and all the marts of men ;
 Filled, too, the sea and every creek and bay :
 And all, in all things, need we help of Zeus ;
 For we, too, are His offspring.”

Aratus seems to have held the philosophical doctrine that God is the soul of the world and that He lives in all things ; He lives in us ; we live in the power of His life ; or, rather, our life is one with His as the waves are one with the sea.

Another ancient poet, Cleanthes, who has a line almost identical with that of Aratus, which Paul quotes, appears to call men the offspring of Zeus because men have a certain intellectual kinship with the gods, as shown by the gift of rational speech.

In the hearts of heathen men there often moved a mysterious instinct which claimed kinship to a life higher than their own ; and this instinct found expression in such words as those which Paul quoted at Athens. But their relationship to this diviner life was a speculation, a beautiful fancy. It was not a force sustaining righteousness and giving consolation and peace in sorrow. At best it was a belief that men are sharers in the life which is the life of the world ; it was not a faith in a living, righteous, merciful God who has the love of a Father for the human race.

2. Among the Jewish people, as we might have expected, there was a nearer approach to the great Christian discovery. The Jewish nation, *as a nation*, is sometimes

¹ Acts xvii. 28, 29.

called God's son. Moses is represented as saying to Pharaoh: "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is My son, My first-born: and I have said unto thee, Let My son go that he may serve Me; and thou hast refused to let him go: behold I will slay thy son, thy firstborn."¹ Again, Moses, addressing the people, says: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is not He thy Father that hath bought thee? He hath made thee and established thee."² Isaiah, speaking in the name of the nation, says to God, "Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our potter: and we all are the work of Thy hand."³ There are a few other passages of the same kind.⁴ In all these passages, to quote the words of Professor Cheyne, the word "Father" is used "not in the wide, spiritual sense of the New Testament, but as the Founder and Preserver of the Israelitish nation which henceforth (carrying out primitive legal conceptions) is under the *patria potestas*. This is the constant meaning of the title "Father" as applied to Jehovah. The first example of the individualizing use of the term is in Sirach xxiii. 1 . . . "O Lord, Father and God of my life."⁵ Sirach, commonly known as Ecclesiasticus, is one of the books included in the Apocrypha, and is supposed to have been written two or three hundred years before Christ.

The conception of God as the Father of the Jewish nation—as a nation—because it owed its existence to His power, and He had been its Ruler and Protector, had disciplined it, blessed it, preserved it, contains some of the rudiments of the Christian idea of the Divine Fatherhood, but is very remote from it. There are faint premonitions in the Old Testament of the great revelation contained in

¹ Exod. iv. 23.

² Deut. xxxii. 6.

³ Isa. lxiv. 8.

⁴ *E.g.* Deut. xxxii. 18, 19; Isa. lxiii. 16; Hosea xi. 1; Mal. i. 6; ii. 10.

⁵ Cheyne: *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, Note on chap. lxiii. 16.

the New ; there is a grey twilight preceding the dawn ; but the coming of Christ is like a tropical sunrise,—the earth and heavens are flooded with a sudden glory.

II.

To give a complete account of the way in which our Lord revealed God as the Father, and of what the revelation contains, would require an exhaustive statement of all that Christ said and did and suffered, and of all the contents of His teaching. It would be necessary to tell the whole story of our Lord's Incarnation, His life, death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven : it would require a full account of all the doctrines of the Christian faith, of its wonderful promises, of its infinite hopes, of its characteristic morality, of its characteristic worship, of the varied forms of service which our Lord has destined His disciples to render to God and to mankind. Christ came to reveal God ; He came to reveal God as the Father : the revelation of the Divine Fatherhood is not, therefore, a single and separable element of the revelation, but the substance of the whole. All that I can do is to indicate briefly two or three lines of thought along which we may travel towards the understanding of this great subject.

1. I will remind you, first of all, of the contrast between the names by which God is commonly spoken of by Moses, by the prophets, and by the psalmists, and the one name by which He is most commonly spoken of by our Lord. The names of God in the Old Testament denote that He is a God of great power—a God whose power is sometimes exerted to break down all resistance—a God whose power creates fear :¹ they denote the Eternity of God, who in all the successive manifestations of Himself remains true to His own unchanging thought and life ;² they represent

¹ *El, Eloah, Elohim*, translated "God," and *El Shaddai*, translated "God Almighty."

² *Jehovah*, usually translated "the Lord."

Him as the Holy One, separated by the eternal law of His being from all impurity and imperfection, and as the Lord of the Hosts of Heaven. These are the meanings of the principal names of God in the Old Testament. In the four Gospels they give place to the name "Father." That is a wonderful change.

We are not, however, to suppose that the names by which God had been known to Jewish patriarchs, psalmists, and prophets were regarded by our Lord as recording false representations of the Divine nature and glory, or representations so inadequate that they might be forgotten now that He had revealed the Father. He did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfil them. The God from whom Christ came was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; He was the mighty God, the Eternal God, the God who had manifested Himself in wonderful ways and through many centuries to the Jewish race. The heresy which sprang up in the Church of the second century, and which maintained that the Creator of the world and the God of the Jews was not the Supreme God whom Christ revealed, but an inferior Power from whom Christ came to deliver us, is in violent contradiction to the teaching both of our Lord Himself and of His apostles. The knowledge of God which sustained the life and hope of Jewish saints was true as far as it went; Christ came to enrich and to complete it. God was still to be known under the names which for many generations had filled the hearts of good men with awe, with faith, with joy, with love; but He was also to be known under a new name—or a name which, if it had sometimes been attributed to Him before, was now to be charged with a new and more glorious meaning. We are to find in God all that the saints of earlier times had found in Him—and more. Christ revealed God as the Father.

2. But what does the title mean? Does it mean any-

thing more than was meant when Jupiter was called the father of gods and men, or anything more than was meant when God was called the Father of the Jewish nation? Our Lord did not merely teach men to call God Father; He revealed what God's Fatherhood means. It sometimes seems to be forgotten that, although very much has been said when we have called God "Father," very much remains unsaid. We know what we mean when we say that a man is the father of his child; but it is obvious that between the relations of a human father to his child and God's relations to us there are very grave differences. The human relationship may be the symbol of the Divine, but the two relationships are not identical. In what respects are the two relationships analogous? In what respects are they unlike?

Other questions arise. The relations between father and child have varied in different countries and in different ages. It was inevitable that, under certain elementary conditions of civilization, the father should have the power of life and death over his child; but the power survived among some races long after the original conditions which made it necessary had passed away. It seemed, I suppose, to be implied in the very conception of fatherhood. How much of truth was there in that conception? how much of error? In our own country and within our own times that conception has been passing through a very perceptible change. The State has assumed a power of interference between father and child which at first provoked general resentment as being destructive of the true and ideal relations between them; it has denied the right of a father to use the labour of his child during the years in which it ought to be receiving education; it is limiting a father's right to punish his child; and, on the other hand, it discharges duties to the child which formerly, if discharged at all, had to be discharged by the parent. Where are we to find that

conception of human fatherhood to which the Divine Fatherhood corresponds? In the fatherhood of modern times with its limited powers? Or in the fatherhood of ancient times with an authority that was almost unlimited? In the traditional fatherhood of a century ago with the reverence and respect which are exacted from children? Or in the fatherhood of our own times which claims affection rather than reverence? Malachi, speaking in the name of God, asks, "If then I be a Father, where is mine *honour*?"

When Christ speaks of God as the Father, does He claim for Him honour or trust and love? And if He claims all three, is it ever necessary to insist that the honour should not be forgotten in the love? Must the love be of a kind in which honour has a large place?

The revelation was largely made in His personal character and in His personal relations to God. When we consider our Lord's transcendent perfection, it becomes apparent that though He is really Man He stands apart from the race, apart and alone. He is here in this visible world, but He belongs to a diviner order. He is akin to ourselves; He is also akin to God. He shares the life of God as a son shares the life of his father. The glories of God's eternal perfections shine through Him.

When we consider, further, His trust and joy in God, His reverence for God's greatness, His obedience to God's authority, we discover that His relations to God are those of an ideal son to an ideal father. A man cannot reveal his fatherhood except in his relations to a child. Under other conditions we may know him as a master, a servant, a husband, a brother, or a friend, but until we see him with his children we cannot know what he is as a father. And it is by the actual relations which existed between God and our Lord Jesus Christ that we discover, on the one hand, the full glory of the Divine Fatherhood as, on the other, we discover the full glory of Divine Sonship. The Father had

an infinite love for Christ and an infinite joy in Him; Christ knew it, and this knowledge gave Him peace through all His agitations and sorrows. There was perfect freedom of intercourse between Christ and the Father, and perfect mutual confidence: "All things," He said, "have been delivered unto Me of My Father: and no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him."¹ "The Father loveth the Son and sheweth Him all things that Himself doeth."² The Father was always near Him; and it was the supreme and mysterious agony of His last sufferings that for a brief but awful time His consciousness of His Father's presence was lost. The ultimate root and explanation of Our Lord's Sonship is found in the glory which He had with the Father before the foundation of the world. When He became flesh this eternal relationship to God was not lost: it was revealed under human conditions and limitations—but it was revealed. Men are sons of God by sharing His Sonship: His Sonship is, therefore, the transcendent ideal of ours.

III.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ, as I have said, stands apart from the race, apart even from His disciples. God was His Father in a sense in which he was not theirs. Speaking to Mary Magdalene after His resurrection, He said: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God":³ and this distinction and contrast is maintained in all His intercourse even with those whom He loved best. Paul, writing to the Christian people of Rome, of Corinth, of Ephesus, of Colosse, of Philippi, and of Thessalonica, might say, "Grace be to you and peace from God *our*

¹ Matt. xi. 27.

² John v. 20.

³ John xx. 17.

Father";¹ but in addressing His disciples it was our Lord's habit to speak of "My Father" or of "your Father"; never once did He place Himself by their side by speaking of God as "*Our Father.*"

But God "foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace";² and one of the principal objects of our Lord's ministry was to assure His disciples that through Him—the Eternal Son of the Eternal—God was their Father, and to make clear to them the greatness, the blessedness and the security of being God's children.

"Your Father," "your Heavenly Father," "your Father in Heaven"—it was thus that He constantly spoke to His disciples of God. Nor was it only by such words as these, great as their power must have been over the heart and imagination of those who heard them for the first time, that He made God's Fatherhood known to them. Section after section of the Sermon on the Mount was intended to enable them to apprehend it. In the evil times which were coming, it was certain that they would have to endure great sufferings for His sake; but they were not to be "anxious" about what they should eat, or what they should drink, or wherewithal they should be clothed, "for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. Seek ye first His kingdom, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."³ They were to live the life of children; they were to be free from restless care; they were to trust perfectly in God's Fatherly love. In the whole conduct of life they were to remember this wonderful relationship between God and themselves. When they gave alms, when they prayed, when they fasted,

¹ Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 3; 2 Cor. i. 2; Eph. i. 2; Col. i. 2; Phil. i. 2; 2 Thess. i. 1.

² Eph. i. 5.

³ Matt. vi. 32, 33.

there was to be no display of their devoutness and their generosity in order to win the good opinion of men; they were to give alms and to pray and to fast in secret; and their Father who "seeth in secret" will recompense them.¹ They are to love their enemies and to pray for their persecutors—why? "That ye may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust."² God was their Father; but to be really His sons they must share the very life of God, and sharing His life they would reflect the glory of His perfection. They were to pray to God for whatever they needed, and were to feel sure that He would hear them; for "if ye being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"³ Christ assured them that because they loved Him and believed that He "came forth from the Father," the Father Himself loved them;⁴ they were in God's keeping and would never perish;⁵ their eternal home was to be in the house of His Father,⁶ and there they were to behold and to share His glory.⁷

This high relationship between God and those who received Christ was realized in the power of that great gift of life which holds so large a place in our Lord's discourses. He had come, He said, "that men may have life, and may have it more abundantly."⁸ He describes the gift in various terms. It is the "living water," a "well of water springing up unto eternal life."⁹ It is "the Bread of life"; "the living Bread which came down out of Heaven; if any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever."¹⁰ To Nicodemus He said, that "except a man be born anew

¹ Matt. vi. 1-18.⁴ John xvi. 27.⁷ John xiv. 21, 23.¹⁰ John vi. 25, 51.² Matt. v. 44, 45.⁵ John x. 28.⁸ John x. 10.³ Matt. vii. 11.⁶ John xiv. 2, 3.⁹ John iv. 10, 14.

he cannot see the kingdom of God";¹ a new life—a life which does not come to a man by his natural birth—is necessary if a man is actually to possess the perfection and blessedness of the Divine kingdom. It is by a union with Himself as real and as intimate as that between the Vine and the branches, a union by which the life becomes one, that we are to achieve righteousness;² and only then can we fulfil His precept and be "perfect" as our heavenly Father "is perfect."³

"Your Father," "your Father in Heaven," "your Heavenly Father"—this, I repeat, was how the Lord Jesus Christ was in the habit of speaking of God to His disciples; and both His precepts and His promises vividly illustrate the reality of God's Fatherhood.

IV.

This, I say, was how He was in the habit of speaking of God to His disciples, not to other men. In the Sermon on the Mount, as we have already seen, these phrases occur again and again. I must quote once more some of the passages that I have quoted already. "Behold the birds of the heaven, that they sow not, neither do they reap nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for *your heavenly Father* knoweth that ye have need of all these things. . . . If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall *your Father* who is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"⁴ All these great words were addressed to those who believed in Him. The discourse is introduced by the words: "And seeing the multitudes, He went up

¹ John iii. 3.

² John xv. 1-7.

³ Matt. v. 48.

⁴ Matt. vi. 26, 31, 32; vii. 11.

into the mountain : and when He had sat down, His disciples came unto Him : and He opened His mouth and taught them.”¹ The discourse was delivered in the presence and in the hearing of the “multitude,” but He was speaking to His disciples from first to last ; to those to whom He could say, “Ye are the salt of the earth . . . ye are the light of the world.”²

It was to His disciples, whom He was sending forth “as sheep among wolves,” and who for His sake were to be brought before “governors and kings,” that He said, “When they deliver you up, be not anxious how or what ye shall speak. . . . For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of *your Father* that speaketh in you.”³ It was to His disciples, who as yet were but a “little flock,” that He said, “Fear not . . . for it is *your Father’s* good pleasure to give you the kingdom.”⁴ It was after His disciples had asked Him, “Who then is greatest in the kingdom of Heaven?” and He had rebuked them by setting a little child before them, and saying, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven,” that He added “it is not the will of *your Father* who is in Heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”⁵

Look at the other passages in which our Lord uses any of these phrases, and you will find that in every instance He is speaking, not to a mixed multitude of men, but to His disciples. There is only a single case in which there can be even a momentary doubt. In Matthew xxiii. 1 we read : “Then spake Jesus to the multitudes, and to His disciples, saying”—and then follows a discourse in the early part of which there is a warning against religious ambition. “Be not ye called Rabbi : for one is your Teacher, and all ye are brethren. And call no man your

¹ Matt. v. 1, 2.² Matt. v. 13, 14.³ Matt. x. 19, 20.⁴ Luke xii. 32.⁵ Matt. xviii. 14.

father on the earth; for one is your Father, who is in heaven."¹ But it is clear that the passage in which these words occur was addressed to His disciples as distinguished from the rest of those who could hear Him. The greater part of the discourse was a vehement denunciation of the Pharisees. I repeat that it was in the discourses addressed to His disciples, and in these discourses alone, that our Lord used the phrases "your Father," "your Father in heaven," and "your heavenly Father," in order to describe God. In the discourses in the synagogues and by the seaside and wherever else He was speaking to the multitude, not specially to his disciples, there is not a single instance in which any one of these phrases is used. There is this difference between the manner in which He spoke of God to those who had believed in Him and the manner in which He spoke of Him to others is not occasional; it is habitual; it is constant.

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THE SOUL'S EMANCIPATION.

"Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"—*Rom.* vii. 24.

"The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath set me free from the law of sin and death."—*Rom.* viii. 2.

WHO is the "wretched man" of the seventh chapter of the Romans? Is he a man of God or a mere worldling? Is he still in the death of nature, or has he known that great change, rightly called Conversion, when the world of the senses becomes a secondary thing, while the higher world takes the higher place, and God dethrones the man himself in His affections?

As long as we suppose that any such distinction, any essential difference between one man and another, is the main point in the discussion, we shall find ourselves hopelessly perplexed and entangled. In marked contrast with

¹ *Matt.* xxiii. 8, 9.