

1911

The doctrine of the fatherhood of God

<https://hdl.handle.net/2144/48583>

Downloaded from DSpace Repository, DSpace Institution's institutional repository

May 16, 1911

John Leonard Cole

The Doctrine of the FATHERHOOD
OF GOD:

Its Meaning and Value

One of the earliest conceptions that our child mind forms of God is that of a Father; and the most precious that that we entertain thruout life and cling to down to old age, is that embodied in the familiar phrase, "Our Father, who art in Heaven". Young and old, wise and simple--men of every class and creed love to look up with child-like trust to a God who is also a Father and has revealed Himself in that form more clearly and intimately than in any other. The Fatherhood is the very heart and core of our religion; about the Fatherhood centers the providence of God, the incarnation, the atonement and all the basal tenets of our Christianity.

Yet, fundamental to all theological that as the doctrine is, there is not absolute unanimity among Christian writers as to the meaning of the Fatherhood. Each writer gives to the subject a peculiar turn, a different scope, so that the seeker after the truth is left bewildered rather than helped by much of the theological discussion on the Fatherhood of God. By reviewing the Biblical history of the doctrine, and examining some of the ideas held now, we may reach some definite settled personal view on the matter. Briefly, we shall review the Old Testament teaching upon "Fatherhood", tracing the development of the idea and its gradual elevation and spiritualization. There will we discover the oldest and crudest ideas about Jehovah and Israel's filial relation to Him. We say "Israel's filial relation" because from the birth of the doctrine, persisting down thru many centuries of the history of

2.

the proud sons of Abraham, God was that of as Father only of the Hebrew people. By birth and Esraelitish birth alone did one receive the privilege of calling himself a son of the Most High God.

Accepting the book of Hosea as the earliest Old Testament literature which contains pertinent references, we find that the land or nation as a whole stands in the relation to God of a wife to a husband, (Hosea, Chap. 1 and 3), and the children of this faithful wife are known as the children of God. As long as she is in right relation with her husband (J"), the offspring are "sons of the living God". Ezekial (23:37, 16:21)) presents a similar notion of the members of a nation or community, in covenant relations with God, being rightly known as his sons.

There is another, and, we might say, higher view of the sonship of Israelites in Hosea 11, the first four verses, beginning, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." This and succeeding verses introduces more of the fatherly care and guidance into Jehovah's relation to Israel. But it is still only the people of Israel who are known as his children.

The next step upward in growth of the doctrine is indicated in the entreaties to Israel in the prophecy of Jeremiah, (Chap. 3). Along with the conjugal relation still persisting in 3:14, 4, there is a conception devoid of physical origin where sonship is based on divine pardon, protection and inheritance: "But I, said How will I put thee among the children and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of the nations! and I said Ye shall call me My Father, and shall not turn away from following me---Return, ye backsliding children, I will heal your backslidings".

In Deuteronomy the national, or birth condition as

3.

claim on God's Fatherhood, seems to be transcended and the ground of sonship is holiness. "Ye are the children of Jehovah your God: ye shall not cut yourselves nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead. For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah, thy God, and Jehovah hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all the peoples that are upon the face of the earth". (Deu. 14:1,2). In the Song of Moses (Chap. 32) the title of sons and daughters is withdrawn from those who "dealt corruptly with him". Here in several verses (5,9,20, 21, 43) a moral element is introduced which is to be more strongly emphasized later. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence; and his children shall have a place of refuge" exclaims the writer of Proverbs (14:26). But in the prophecy of Isaiah, or Deutero-Isaiah, the moral element is so predominant that sonship belongs even to Gentiles, and Hebrews are excluded if unfaithful to Jehovah. "For thou art our Father, though Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us: thou, O Jehovah, art our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is thy name" (Is. 63:16). Chapter 64:8, 65:1, 66:19-21 still further implies that others than Israelites are to be blessed with sonship, based not on birth, but spiritual redemption. Malachi asks (2:10) "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?" And in 3:17 Jehovah promises that those who feared Him should be spared, and "I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him".

In this cursory resume we have seen in the Old Testament a gradual development in ^{the} meaning of God's Fatherhood, and sonship of man. J. S. Candlish has thus exhibited these stages, "(1) From the first it appears to be raised above a physical notion by the conception it as origin from the people that is married to J". Then (2), it is conceived as being members of the people

4.

that Jehovah has created as His son, (3) as being taught and trained by Jehovah as a father, and (4) as not constituted by mere natural descent, but by the fear of the Lord, and so, possible for those who are not by birth members of the people of Israel". (H.B.D. Vol. II, p. 217).

In turning to the New Testament the Fatherhood of God looms instantly into a more prominent place. It is clarified, and amplified and given a more definite theological cast. Beginning with Jesus who made that the very foundation of His message, and the principal point of His revelation to men, the writers in the New Testament gave it the particular coloring which their nature and training prompted. The fountain-head of all the references and discussion, of course, was the teaching of Jesus, the Unique Son, upon the sonship of men, and how it was obtained. So, before we examine what the followers of Jesus said about God, the Father, and men as His children, we should study carefully what He said about the Fatherhood and its significance.

x Christ doesn't explicitly say anywhere that sonship is the prerogative of Gentiles as well as Jews; but he does not, on the other hand, make it depend on birth in the seed of Abraham. And he does most emphatically make sonship to depend on kindness, peaceableness, generous dealing men as brothers, in short on the possession of those qualities which are in the Holy Father Himself. God is the Father of all in the "Kingdom", and entrance to that Kingdom, Christ teaches, is open to all men. By inference, therefore, Christ does teach that God is the Father of Gentile or Jew, barbarian, bond or free--anyone who is eligible to enter the "Kingdom of Heaven". And that leaves no doubt that all men are

5.

included in the fatherly care and protection of God. In Mathew 8:11 He said, "And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven". This and his saying (Mt. 9:12, 13) "I came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" imply more clearly that God is the universal Father, i.e., his paternity is not limited to believers. The parable of the Prodigal Son even more than these seems to imply that the filial relation of the unregenerate and rebellious is not destroyed, but that men even in sin, are God's children.

As a matter of fact, Christ lays more stress on the correlative truth that man's relation does depend upon his belief and his manner of life; that ^{the} mere fact of being born, or "created" does not make one a true son of God, but it is thru Him and His life in us that the benefits of sonship--at least, the highest benefits--reach to us. No one, he declares, can know the Father but the Son and he to whomsoever the Son reveals him (Mt. 11:27). The blessedness of the Kingdom and of being His brothers and sisters, (so, sons of God) belongs not to those who say "Lord, Lord", but to those who do the will of His Father in Heaven (Mt. 7:21). "For whosoever shall do the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother and sister and mother". (Mt. 12:50). It is interesting to note, further, that in speaking of men, Jesus always uses the term "sons", $\nu\iota\omicron\iota$ rather than "children", $\tau\epsilon\chi\upsilon\alpha$, The former, some believe, directs attention to the relationship and privilege, a word expressive of more maturity, perhaps, than the other. is preferred by John and emphasizes origin rather than a relation. Paul employs $\nu\iota\omicron\iota$, and, as we have said, Jesus always uses it.

6.

It suggests that the sons are in a relation of peculiar trust and confidence; and may ^{also} ~~be~~, imply a personal element in the sonship. It is not a general or universal prerogative, but a personal and individual matter depending upon the disposition of each person.

Flowing from this revelation, which Jesus gives, there run thru the New Testament two currents of teaching, tho not of equal volume or force. One teaches the "universal" fatherhood: all men are sons of God. The other, and the more prominent, "limited" Fatherhood--only regenerate are sons of God. Some writers stand for one phase, others for the other; yet in nearly all, ~~the~~ both views are more or less mingled. Paul, with his strong legal training and emphasis on "adoption" stands the most staunch exponent of limited sense of the Fatherhood--true sons are created only by the work of grace of Jesus Christ. Yet in Paul's writings are utterances looking toward the other view. In his speech at Athens (Acts 17:28,29) he speaks of all men as the offspring of God, because he has made us that we should know him and live, move and have our being in him. In Col. (1:15-17) he further declares all things to be in and thru the onlybegotten Son, Christ. And in Cor. 8:6 the universality of God's Fatherhood is emphatically taught: "There is one God, the Father, of whom are all things and we unto him; and one Lord Jesus Christ thru whom are all things and we through him". The writer of Hebrews, who uses the name "children" rather than "sons". inclines toward the sonship of all created spirits when he says (12:6), -"---shall we not much more be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live ". James as clearly as any of the N.T. writers represents God as absolute, universal Father, (1:27) "pure religion beofre our God andFather--"; (3:9)"therewith curse we men who are made after the likeness of God". In this sense of

being made in His likeness and subject to his care, all men, believers or not, are represented as children of God.

These few represent about the sum of New Testament verses which lean toward the side of a universal Fatherhood. Scripturally, the doctrine ~~is~~ of absolute and universal Fatherhood is not strongly supported. In a book designed to lead men to repentance and the highest relations with God, it is to be expected that the emphasis should rest upon the fatherhood that comes thru Christ and the regenerate life, and that the blessedness of sonship thru acquired likeness to God, should be held out as the great desideratum. The purpose of the New Testament writers seems to be to combat entirely the notion that God accepts men as children because they happen to be born in a Jewish home, and to set up instead a harder criterion, yet a broader and fairer one, based on doing the will of God, thru the strength imparted by Jesus Christ.

Thus, Paul labors thru the most of his Epistle to the Galatians to show them that before Christ came they Jews, children of Abraham, were kept in tutelage, were but wards, or servants, learning the "rudiments of the world", together with the Gentiles. Christ's coming brot full sonship to those who were in ward, and freedom to those who were slaves. "But now that faith is come, we are no longer under a tutor, For ye are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:25, 26); "---but when the fulness of time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons". (Gal. 4:4,5). Here it is clear that Paul does not view all created beings as sons, but only those who, thru faith have "put on" Christ Jesus, been buried with him and raised to newness of life. (Rom. 6:4). As above mentioned

8.

James makes one reference which points to a universal Fatherhood, but in chapter 1, verse 18, the weight of meaning is on the other side: "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures". Peter is more pronounced in the necessity of a new birth for sons of God, one of the references being similar to the one just quoted from James. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again from the dead". Taking this with the statement in 1:23 ("Having been begotten again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible through the word of God which liveth and abideth") the conclusion is unavoidable that Peter esteems the sonship of God as beginning in a marked change in heart and life comparable to the "new birth" of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus. Peter (1:17) more directly implies that all men are not to address God as "Father", but only those who by belief have been begotten again, "And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of person judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear". John's Gospel stands decidedly on the ground of a limited Fatherhood, or one which prevails over men only thru the work of Christ. It is allied closely to the Petrine teaching in that John prefers the word "children" and not "sons", and points thus to the origin of the paternity of God rather than the relation that exists between God and us. Corresponding accurately to Paul's idea of "adoption", thru Christ (without the technical language) is John's introductory statement (1:12, 13) "to as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, not of the will of man, but of God". The last half of the verse brings out the distinctive teaching of the Fourth Gospel--a new

9.

birth, not allied to natural generation, nor common bond of human brotherhood, not depending on natural instincts of man ("will of flesh"), nor on volition of human will ("will of man"), but coming solely thru the grace of Christ to those who believe on him.

Safeguarding against mere intellectual faith, however, he makes the true sonship depend also on a new life, actuated by love, and filled with righteousness: 1 John, 2:26, "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know also that everyone that doeth righteousness is begotten of him". John goes further in defining the condition of those who are without Christ than the other writers. They are "lying in the evil one" (1 John 5:19); they are the "children of the Devil" (2:10). Christ came as the propitiation for the sin of the whole world. 1 John 3:9, 10--"Whosoever is begotten of God doeth no sin, because his seed abideth in him; and he cannot sin because he is begotten of God. In this the children of God are manifest and the children of the devil; whosoever doeth no righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother". Christ came as propitiation for the sin of the whole world (3:3), but the general argument of the Fourth Gospel is against all men being considered God's children--Christ, a new birth, a life of righteousness, are first necessary.

John represents Jesus as flatly denying the claim of the Jews to have one Father, God, on the ground of lack of faith in him. "If God were your Father, ye would love me, for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me--ye are of your father, the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (John 8:42-44). From this exam

From this examination of the Bible testimony, we must agree, whatever our personal views may have been, that the bulk of Scriptural authority is opposed to universal Fatherhood--if we take

10.

universal Fatherhood as expressing similar paternal relations, and similar filial privileges for all men, regardless of their individual attitude toward the Christ. While "universal" in the sense of not bounded by national lines is certainly taught, "universal" in the sense of obliterating moral division is contradicted by weight of Scripture. Altho mere numbers of references taken independent of context may not be conclusive argument, one way or another, it is significant that in a collocation of Scripture dealing with Fatherhood (Naves' Topical Bible) there were over twice as many references which taught, directly or indirectly, a Fatherhood of believers as those which taught Fatherhood of all men. There were in fact as many references which pointed towards a Father for Jews only as for a universal Father: nine of each, and twenty-four which regarded God as the Father of faithful and believing.

With so much in the Scripture on the side of a restricted Fatherhood, there is still a large amount of argument, based on philosophic and rational considerations in favor of a universal Fatherhood. D.F. Maurice, F. W. Robertson, and such writers, have maintained the position that all men are children of God. A. M. Fairbairn in "Christ in Modern Theology", strongly supports the same point. ^{Tho} It is not the view most clearly set forth in the Bible it seems to be the one that appeals most strongly to the mind and heart of minds and hearts of men generally. It is what we like to believe, and what the average man, if questioned, will declare to be his conviction, that God is Father of every created human being, - No matter how far from Divine likeness they may have departed, - regardless of how they have proved disobedient children. If the "will to believe" is to be trusted as an indicator of moral truth, we will have to allow a universal breadth to the paternity of God.

Dr. Fairbairn,

In supporting this point on philosophical grounds, (The Place of Christ in Modern Theology, pp. 343-4), makes the sonship of all men depend upon the ethical end or motive of God in creating men. With Dr. Candlish he rejects a definition of Fatherhood which refers only to the physical creation--one given by Dr. Crawford in his "Reply" to Dr. Candlish: "Fatherhood implies the origination by one intelligent person by another intelligent, like in nature to himself, and the continued support, protection, and nourishment of the person thus originated by him to whom he owes his being". With Dr. Candlish, Fairbairn refuses to dispute such a universal fatherhood. "For all that we have is a figurative and euphonious way of describing the creation and providence. But our discussions have throughout preceded upon this principle:-Fatherhood cannot here be stated in physical terms of creation or procreation, which represents an instrumental or secondary cause, but only in terms of ethical motive, relation and end. It is not the physical act, as physical, that is constitutive of paternity, but the act is ethically conditioned and determined. Man is God's son, not simply because God's creature and Godlike; but because of the God and the ends of the God whose creature he is. Fatherhood does not come through creation, but rather, creation came because of fatherhood. The essential love out of which creation issues determined the standing of the created before the Creator, and the relation of the Creator to the created. When love is causal it is paternal; where it creates a fellow with whom it can have fellowship, the relation of the created is filial. Spiritual and personal relations, which have their ends in spiritual and personal needs, cannot be stated in terms of physical creation, or political institution, but only in those of the heart and the life. And the aboriginal rela-

tion of man and God is the universal and permanent; within it all later possibilities are contained. It is the emptiest nominalism to speak of the adoption of a man who never was a son, for the term can denote nothing real. The legal fiction has a use only when it represents, or pretends to represent something in the world of fact; but to speak of the "adoption" of a creature who is no respect a son, is to use the term which is here without the saving virtue of sense. The sonship must be real to start with if adoption is ever to be real, and its reality depends on the reality of the paternity. If the motive and ends of God in the creation of men were paternal, then man's filial relation follows, and it stands, however ^{unworthy} a son he may prove himself to be".

This, it appears to us, is plainly taught in Christ's parable of the Prodigal Son. The son who wandered was no less a son than the one who stayed at home; the paternal attributes were prevalent ~~do~~ less in the father's relation to the Prodigal than to the faithful. When the erring boy was sunk to lowest shame, when he had squandered all of his inheritance, the father's love went out to him with undying intensity. Tho the boy erred, the father's instinct and affection could and did not err. Viewed thus, from the standpoint of the paternity in God's end or object and the immutability of His character, we must grant a Fatherhood extending to every being, or else admit the inconsistency ~~that~~ ^{that} position that some people have gotten into the world without the loving will of God being exerted toward them; ^{that} There are some men toward whom it is not true that "God is love". If God is love, if God is causal in the creation of all men, then the irresistible conclusion is, God is paternal toward all--a universal Father.

The apparent inconsistency of this rational and natural view, with what we found taught in the Bible is only apparent.

13.

There is no real contradiction between our conception of God's relation to men as it is gained from total view presented in the Scripture and ^{the one natural to our} our consciousness, ~~and that which is taught in specific references.~~ We need only to realize that Fatherhood and sonship are used in a double sense; ~~if~~ the one referring to the general paternal relation which extends to all men, a objects of God's love and Fatherhood; the other to the peculiar, intimate communion granted to those who are "sons" thru Christ. It is not wrenching the sense of the name, or the unity of the Father, to divide fatherhood into two phases, and sons into two classes corresponding: fatherhood of generation, by which is meant more than the physical acts of creation,--the love, providence, readiness on his part to receive into most intimate relations, is included; and fatherhood of regeneration, expressive of the relation of those who have come into justifying and regenerating relations with God. And accordingly sons of God are of two sorts: sons by creation; to whom God's heart yearns, for whom he sent Christ as propitiation for the sin "of the whole world"; and sons by recreation, as those who have been made anew by faith in Christ, "born again" of the spirit. The one condition we might express by the Prodigal ~~in~~ the midst of his excesses--a son, truly loved and longed for; the other, the Prodigal after repentance and humble return to the Father's house. Fatherhood was not lost for a moment, not the sonship, but both were glorified and enhanced by the change in the son's heart, and the son was admitted to higher and choicer' privileges as a regenerate son than before. There is a place in this satisfying view for the universal Father--the "Father of spirits", and the Father of believers who have been "adopted" or become sons and heirs, not "wards"; while the fatherhood in the sense of God's love and providence is unchanged there is recognized a higher

position, a happier state for those who have received Him and been given the right to become sons of God. This is the view advocated by A. J. Crawford in his "The Fatherhood of God". Also by Dr. Lloyd W. Tompkinson in "Addresses on the Gospel of St. John", commenting on the passage in the prologue of John, (verses 12 and 13), he says "Hence you see what a growth there is in our relationship to God. I am God's child because he has made me. I am God's child because he has re-made me thru Jesus Christ, and yet, you notice how the truth enters, we are all God's children by creation, but only those who believe in Him have received the power to become his sons by recreation---When you turn to the 'sons of God' interpreted by 'recreation' how much more wonderful it is to be God's son; to be admitted to His fellowship because I trust Him and love Him; and being His beloved son, to be admitted more and more as I am able to bear it into the mysteries of His truth, to be made more and more the object of His confidence, to be made more and more acquainted with the powerful purposes through which He works; to be more and more in my own being after His image--converted into His likeness-- and at last to be admitted into His presence where shall be revealed the very acme of glory". This quotation sets forth clearly the difference in the sonships to which we refer--not difference of kind, but of degree; God the Father alike immutable, but revealing more of Himself to those who are sons born of "incorruptible seed."

While Paul emphasizes more the sonship by regeneration, (or "adoption", to use his phraseology) this compromise view is not at all contradictory to his. Is it not just the distinction which he draws between men (Jews and Gentiles) in tutelage, under the "rudiments" (but still they were sons), and men under grace

14.

in Christ. "Adoption" in our own view is but the advancement from sonship by creation to sonship by recreation--but, as Fairbairn pointed out, "sons" all the time. ~~of~~ This Fatherhood conforms, too, with the declaration of Harnack in "What is Christianity?" (p.70), that the whole of Jesus' message may be reduced to two heads: "God as the father, and the human soul so ennobled that it can and does unite with him". Thus Harnack implies that there is no change in the Fatherhood; that is the eternal fundamental in Christian theology; but as the soul of man is ennobled, there is an elevating of the relation of the son with father. Thru benefits of the Onlybegotten, the son in a unique sense, (which are ^{open} ~~open~~ to all sons) some advance to the stage of sons by regeneration; and the Fatherhood is then that which we have called the Fatherhood of regeneration. Only let us bear in mind in use of this two-fold fatherhood, that the paternity of God does not change; He is the one in whom in this respect, as in every other, "there is no variableness, neither shadow that is cast by turning". His love is so broad as to make him yearn for the wayward son, even more than for the obedient, so we may interpret the parable of the lost sheep, the prodigal son. The only thing that changes is the condition of the child of God by indifference to or responsiveness to the invitation of Christ, who came for the express purpose of calling sinners, winning the ~~lost~~ sheep, or in the terms of our exposition, making all of the sons by creation, sons by regeneration. That is why the weight of Bible testimony seems to be against the broader Fatherhood of God--it is a book which ~~vo~~ voices the call of God to men, to enter a better relation with Him, and so there sounds thru it continually, the call to higher holier sonship, to respond to the love of a Father, realize his sonship and show in mind and life a likeness to Him.

This leads us naturally to mention briefly some of the benefits of this double view of the Fatherhood. 1. It links all men with God by the tenderest tie in human experience, the love of a father for son, and unites all men with one another in the bond of brotherhood. It destroys all ^{spirit} ~~spirit~~ of exclusiveness and pride such as prompted the Jews to conceive that the seed of Abraham alone were the sons of God and entitled to His special care. It brings God close to all men, and does ~~away~~ with that blind groping after God "if haply they might feel after him and find him" which marked--and marred--Greek philosophy, and even, Greek theology. It is only on such a view as ours that Paul could declare to the "religious" Athenians "he is not far from each one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being". (Acts 17:27). The error of even Greek Christian theology was in ever-emphasizing the Sonship of Christ until the sonship of men was impoverished. "Fatherhood is so confined to the first person of the Trinity, and Sonship to the second that God tends to lose the unity and reality of his moral relations to man, and man the unity and reality of his moral being before God". Men who are taught that Christ's sonship alone is real--that theirs is virtually a figure of speech--He alone the son by nature, they only by adoption, begin soon to feel isolated from God by a great space. Fatherhood and sonship are on the way to extinction as far as they concern God and men in their relations. Anything that impairs the filial consciousness in men, or tends to separate God from humanity, is contrary to the supreme purpose of God for mankind, and defeats the very mission of Christ to the world.

2. The broad view of God's paternity affords greatest incentive to missionary and evangelistic endeavor. To feel that the unbeliever really belongs to God, is properly a child of God,

and that, as a sinner, he is, for the time being, abnormal, is the greatest spur to the zeal of one who would bring all men to God. He understands the purpose of Christ in the parable of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the wandering son; he appreciates why Christ died and apostles labored--that men might be re-claimed. Enmity with God is discord; union and trust is harmony. Sin and rebellion are abnormal, obedience is normal. So, the evangelist or missionary is enthused with the thought that he is not working against the natural; he is simply trying to restore the natural relation, and awaken, in a lethargic soul, consciousness of its greater possibility and privilege. He is not trying to drag someone into the family who is by nature without, or striving to "adopt" one who is not by right a son; he is simply leading back a son who had broken from the family hearth, and been lost in the wilderness of sin.

3. The double sense of the fatherhood avoids the deadening effect of pantheism and universalism by providing a place for the essential doctrine of faith in Christ, salvation and sanctification thru Him. By recognizing that sonship by nature is not sufficient to save, the cross of Christ is not made of none effect. The life of "son by regeneration" is high, far above the life of "son by creation", as the man is above the child, or freedman nobler than the slave. While the love of God is broadened in this view, the way of life is still straight and narrow; for the superstructure of a true Christian life, we have still no other foundation than that which is laid which is Christ Jesus. The sinner has the love of a real father inviting him back to the joys of a home full of good things, and the returned son has an ideal sufficiently high to elicit his deepest trust and greatest endeavor--the Only-begotten Son of God. Things of spirit are not placed on the same

level with the things of the flesh; there is still ample room for the highest endeavor of the Spirit-filled saint; growth into the life of a regenerate son demands all the striving of the most aspiring Christian, and all the strengthening of the guiding Spirit. In an instant, by process of birth, we become sons of the first class, but it is only thru a life founded on Christ, lived in close communion with the Father that we are sons in the higher sense. This progressive sonship John dwells upon from the Prologue of his Gospel, to the Epistles. After years of holy labor for Christ he writes to the mature Christians, "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that if it be manifested, we shall be like him---" (I Jno. 3:2). The Saint of Patmos evidently believed that there was plenty of room for development upward for those who knew the Fatherhood of God even in the most intimate aspect.

4. Another value of this interpretation of the doctrine is expressed by Fairbairn in speaking of Jesus' use of the Fatherhood. "He makes the Fatherhood the basis of all the duties which man owes God. Supreme love to God is possible only because God is love. On the ground of mere sovereignty, or judicial and autocratic authority, the first commandment could never be enjoined. We cannot love simply because we will or wish or are commanded, only because we are loved. Supreme affection is possible only through the Sovereign Fatherhood. And what is true of this first, is true of all our other duties. Worship is to be in spirit and truth because it is worship of the Father. Prayer is to be constant, simple and sincere, because it is offered to the Father. We are to give alms in simplicity and without ostentation, because the Father see in secret. We are to be forgiving, because the Father forgives. Obedience is imitation of God, a being perfect as our

Father in heaven is perfect. In a word, duty is but the habit of filial spirit, and it possible and incumbent on all men, because all are sons".

The worth of the doctrine, from a theological standpoint, is set forth fairly in these points above. Yet, the real value of the Fatherhood of God to human hearts is as impossible of adequate expression as the setting a price upon our earthly father or mother. Conceive the emptiness of our Bible with the teaching of God, our Father, taken out of it! Remove those passages which centre around the Father in Heaven, and the most consoling, the most sublime and inspiring passages in the whole book are gone. Imagine the barrenness of religious life among the children of men, if the consciousness of being, likewise, children of God were blotted out--if burdened hearts could not feel that "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him"--if the sinner could not find relief and justification in the thought of a love of a Father so intense as to give an Only-begotten son that every child of His might be a son like unto the Christ--if the soul hungry for spiritual and temporal blessing could not know that more glad than earthly parents to give good things to their children, is God to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him! If we could conceive the Bible without the doctrine; human life without the blessings that flow therefrom, we would be able to approach a fair valuation of the Fatherhood. When we come to estimate the worth of the fact of Fatherhood to men, we shall have to know how to measure the value of those souls which have been saved from sin and death by feeling that God loved them like a Father, the worth of the new strength and self-respect that has surged into exhausted souls and bodies with the thought of relationship to God Almighty, the value of the solace and peace that has settled upon human hearts

19.

to repeat
since men learned, from the one Perfect Son of God, those words,
precious beyond price, "Our Father who art in Heaven, Hallowed be
thy name".