

God and Father of All

Hosea Ballou (1771-1852)

"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:6).

If there is any point of doctrine that was absolutely new in the preaching of Jesus Christ, it is the truth which He was the first to bring out into the light, that God is our Father. How prominent a topic this is in His gospel.

First, it means a great deal more than that God is merely our friend. He is related to us as a parent to a child. There is something more than mere good will; there is a kindred tie that binds the two together. God feels for us a paternal affection that is as much stronger than any which we find in the family relation upon earth, and as much purer, too, as God is greater and more holy than man.

He sympathizes with us as the father of the prodigal, in the parable of old, sympathized with his erring son. In the New Testament, God is represented as calling upon us, although sinners still. He is represented as calling upon us to recognize Him in that peculiar and endearing relation, and to be assured of His paternal love – in all prayers to address Him as our Father in heaven and in all our service of Him to be His followers *"as dear children."*

I believe you will bear me witness, when I say that this is the distinguishing idea of the gospel, the one which Jesus Christ and His apostles always place first and foremost – I mean when speaking of the relation between our Creator and ourselves.

Second, you will also see that it is only carrying out this idea to its full extent to say, as Paul does in the words of our text, that God is the Father of all. He holds the same relation, in this respect, to the whole human race. His divine paternity is not of a partial nature, is not confined to a certain class of men, but universal, as all His other essential relations are.

Everybody would feel at once the absurdity of supposing that God was the "Sovereign" only of a certain class of men, or the "Judge" only of a few, or the "Creator" only of a part; and it would be equally absurd to restrict His paternal relation in this way. *"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."* If He is the Father of mankind, as the gospel asserts, the very nature of the case shows that He must be the Father of all. This is the doctrine of our text.

Third, we may contemplate this truth in its direct bearing upon the relation which God holds to all mankind, as their father – *“one God and Father of all.”*

It is a very significant fact, recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, that when man was brought into being, *“God created him in His Own image,”* that is, as His child, imparted to him His Own nature, as a parent does to his offspring; fixed that relationship in his very being at creation. Let us observe what this important truth amounts to.

Every person that lives, or that ever did live, in this world, every individual whom God has created, has a Father in heaven. He may be a sinner; he may be as guilty as the prodigal in the parable; he may be alienated from his Father, dead in trespasses and sins, but there still is this indestructible relation *“of Father and child”* existing between him and his Creator. This is what Paul means. On another occasion, he told the idolatrous Athenians that they, even they, were *“the offspring of God,”* although they were utterly estranged from Him.

Fourth, we do not forget that there is one sense in which God is not the Father of all. There are many who have not been regenerated, and who are not, in this spiritual sense, His children; that is, they do not resemble God in their character. Christ said to the Jews, for instance, *“If God were your Father, ye would love me.”* *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the works of your father ye will do.”* And so in several other passages of Scripture, God is spoken of as the Father only of those who believe; but in all these cases the meaning is too obvious to need illustration. We know they relate only to spiritual character, not to the persons themselves.

What we wish to say is that, underneath this spiritual relationship, there must be a natural relationship that binds all mankind to God. If God created them all in His own image, He is of course their Father in the natural sense. *“One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”*

Finally, we have already observed that there is another bearing in which the same general truth may be considered. As all mankind have one and the same Father in heaven, they have a common relationship with one another, as well as with Him. They are all brethren; they form but one family in the constitution fixed by their Creator.

It is a most important truth, that all the different classes of people, from the lowest to the highest, from the best to the worst, of all nations, colors, characters, and conditions, are bound together by an eternal blood-relationship, which they cannot sever, though they may sin against it. This is the doctrine of Paul, when he says, *“God hath made of one blood all nations of men, to dwell on all the face of the earth.”* Whether civilized or savage, black, or white, or red, freemen or bondmen, saints or sinners, all were created brethren, just as much as the children in your family were born in that affinity; and, in the sight of God and duty, they never can become other than brethren, let them disregard the fraternal obligation as much as they may.

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