

The Fatherhood of God—The Base of the Pyramid.

As somewhat aside from, yet running parallel to the discussion in which I have lately been involved, permit me to show how, in my view, the Fatherhood of God constitutes not the "apex" but the base of the pyramid of revealed truth, and offers the broadest, deepest, surest foundation upon which a system of theology can be built.

Take first, the doctrine of the Godhead, or the Trinity. Is not the thought of Fatherhood essential and fundamental here? Of course we all recognize the impenetrable mystery which attaches to the three-ness of the divine being, yet so far as it can be stated in understandable terms it is the three-ness of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit has given us the Scriptures. Through the Scriptures we come to Christ. Through Christ we come to God the Father. If now, through the God thus reached we interpret our beliefs and organize them into a theology, is not the method reverent and true?

Secondly, look at the Fatherhood in its relation to Sovereignty.

There is nothing in the Fatherhood of God, correctly viewed, to blur the magnificent fact of God's Kingdom. "Jehovah reigns, let the earth rejoice!" The relation of God to men is a relation of fatherhood and of sovereignty, but the paternal relation is the primary and determining one. The paternal relation is the ground of the regal relation. God is sovereign because He is father. We are to interpret the sovereignty through the fatherhood, not the fatherhood through the sovereignty. That was Christ's method. Christ's Sermon on the Mount has been called "the manifesto of the King." It might with greater accuracy be termed "the unveiling of the Father;" for while the word "kingdom" occurs eight times in the discourse, the word "father" as applied to God occurs seventeen times. Take the model prayer,—"Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come." It is the kingdom of the Father for whose coming we are to pray. Take Luke's summary of the close of the sermon. "But your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. Howbeit seek ye his kingdom and these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Mark the words: not—it is the King's pleasure to introduce you to a fatherhood, but it is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom. Yes, God is sovereign, but it is a father's heart that moves the king's arm or there is no gospel under heaven. God sitteth on the throne and the bleeding "Lamb" is in the midst of the throne, dominating it, and all around the throne the "Emerald rainbow" spreads the radiance and glory of a father's love.

Thirdly, the Fatherhood in reference to Sin. Sin is lawlessness. Since the law-giver is the Heavenly Father, the tap-root of lawlessness is "the reign of unfilial feeling in the heart that was made for filial love." In the light of the Fatherhood of God, as I have affirmed before, sin is not minimized or palliated, but on the contrary it is magnified and shown to be exceeding sinful. There is no sin so disgraceful or so distressing to the convicted soul as sin against love. A knowledge of sin comes by the law, a deeper and more affecting knowledge comes by the gospel. It is not at Sinai but at Calvary that the arrows of conviction sink deepest into the soul. Rebellion against a sovereign can never awaken such a poignant sense of guilt, or burden the soul with such crushing remorse as unfilial conduct toward a father. Absalom's rebellion against David writes a darker chapter in history than the treason of Benedict Arnold, for the king against whom Absalom rebelled was his own father. There is more to break a sinner's heart in the presentation of a father wounded and grieved by the sin of his child, than in that of a king roused to action by the defection of a subject or the aggressions of an alien. When Jesus showed the father, He revealed and rebuked the sin of the world in more severe and awful fashion than had ever been known before.

Moreover, there is something more terrible in the attitude of a father to sin than in that of a sovereign toward transgression. For, while the sovereign sees in the rebel a menace to his realm, the father sees in addition to that, the ruin of his child. He is therefore the supreme enemy of sin. He cannot admit the sinner to place and heritage in the family until sin has been renounced. Repentance is more strenuously demanded by the fatherhood than by the sovereignty of God.

Fourthly, the Fatherhood in relation to the Atonement. This glorious doctrine shines and sparkles like a diamond in a ring, when given its true setting in the fatherhood of God. For, mark you, the ends aimed at in the Atonement are the ends of fatherhood; the means employed in the atonement are means instituted by fatherhood; the motives prompting to the atonement are motives which spring out of the nature of fatherhood.

What are the ends aimed at in the atonement? Are they not these—That God may recover sinners from their enmity and alienation into a loving, lasting, blessed fellowship with himself, and that he may

do this consistently with the demands of holiness? Surely these are ends dictated by the divine fatherhood. A king seeks the pacification of his troubled realm; but the regal father seeks in addition to that the companionship of his erring children. A monarch may grant an amnesty to rebels in the general interests of the kingdom, even though ideal justice may not be done. Sovereignty is an office, but fatherhood is a nature, and it must be consistent with itself even apart from the considerations of the children's interests, I hold, in common with brethren whose orthodoxy is supposed to be unimpeachable, that the vicarious sacrifice of Christ is necessary that God may be just in the justifying of the believer. There is an ethical element in the nature of God which demands the adequate punishment of sin, and that ethical element, in my thought of it, inheres in the fatherhood. In a word the sacrifice which Christ offered unto God was a sacrifice to the fatherhood.

Again, the means employed in the atonement are means instituted by the fatherhood. The Father carried the cross in his heart from all eternity. Jesus said, "I lay down my life for the sheep. . . . Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again. No man taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father."

And if the ends and the means of the atonement are those of fatherhood, so also is the prompting motive. Love cradled the Christ in Bethlehem. Love built the cross. God does not love men because Christ died for them. Christ died for them because God loved them. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son."

Fifthly, The Fatherhood and Regeneration. That vast change, without which no man can see the kingdom or experience the salvation of God, is best described in terms derived from fatherhood.

The agent in Regeneration is the Holy Spirit. He is the gift and promise of the Father. That which is imparted in regeneration is the filial spirit. In describing the new birth Paul writes: "For ye received not the spirit of bondage again unto fear; but ye received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Put this statement of the apostle down beside the parable of the prodigal son. They supplement each other perfectly. The parable is the argument in picture. The argument is the parable done into distinct doctrinal statement.

In conclusion permit me to say, that the denial of the fatherhood of God, when put forward in defence of the great doctrines of grace, seems to me to singularly fail of its purpose. That denial is but a fence of straw and when the torch is applied to it, the fire goes near to burn the house it was built to defend. J. D. FREEMAN.

The Primary Class.

BY KATE ALLISON LEWIS.

"Little children, little children,
Who love their Redeemer,
Are the jewels, precious jewels,
His loved and His own."

The voices rang out so brightly and cheerily on the clear, Sabbath air, that many a face, sober and careworn, looked brighter and happier as they caught the childish strain.

I thought as I heard those sweet voices, what a blessing to our Sabbath School is our Primary department, and how necessary to its complete success is its careful management. For in reality the Primary Class is the foundation of the school.

Young children as they come to Sabbath School receive their training in this department, and their conduct in other classes as they are promoted, largely depends on the training they receive here.

Then our boys and girls may be kept in Sunday School by making them love it when they are young. If we make the lesson hour so pleasant and happy that they will love their class and teacher and School, they will grow up in it and when older they will not want to break their pleasant associations. They will always have in their heart very tender memories of their Sabbath School days, and no teacher knows what may be the result of some little seed prayerfully sown.

But the question to the primary teacher is,—"How can I make the lesson hour a happy and instructive hour to the very little boys and girls?"

First of all, Sunday must be made very different and very much better than other days. For this reason devices that are used in some Kindergarten classes as sewing texts on cards or any manual work seems to be out of place. We want the children to learn reverence for the Sabbath, and anything approaching work would destroy this feeling. Where there is a separate classroom for the primary class all texts and lessons may be taught in much better and more interesting ways.

Blackboard work is one of the best means used in teaching lessons; but this part of the work has been written and talked about so much, that only a few words need be said concerning it. For Primary Classes this work can never be very elaborate when used as a means of teaching. While the lesson story is being told, and

questions asked, rapid sketches are made on the board and words written. The children will all watch very closely, for they are so interested in seeing the story grow under the hands of the teacher. This will do more good in impressing the lesson on their minds than if the lesson had been put carefully on the board before Sabbath School. There might be danger, however, that the children, becoming so interested in watching the pictures grow, will forget the part of the lesson that the teacher had intended to bring out for each little heart. But a careful teacher will so conduct the blackboard work as to avoid all such danger.

The teacher's work is not to entertain, but to teach and train the children so they will make noble Christian men and women. For this reason stories are never told to pass the time away or entertain, but are carefully selected, and each will have some bearing on the lesson story. Each story should have some definite purpose, as correcting some childish faults the teacher has noticed, or teaching the wonderful love of Jesus, thus creating Christian character. No stories will do this as well as Bible stories. Childish faults can be corrected by telling stories, of which the Bible is so full, about some of the mistakes of those grand old characters, and how God looked at the sins and dealt with them. The child can see himself as in a spiritual mirror, and know how God regards his sins. Stories can help create Christian character, by fixing an ideal for the child, as some noble life or deed, and, told in an attractive manner, will fill the childish mind with great ambitions to bring his life up to this ideal. In either case it is best to choose stories of good men, who, if they had sinned, repented and were forgiven. All stories of hardened, wicked men should be avoided for young children.

Pictures are used in nearly all schools with great success. Everyone knows how delighted the child is to get his "Sunday card." Many of the Sabbath School subjects may be found among the Perry Pictures. These, beside illustrating the lesson, have the advantage of being copies of good pictures by famous artists, which is quite an important thing to consider when bringing pictures before young children.

Before the lesson, after the lesson, and sometimes during the lesson songs may be sung. Children love music and poetry, and songs learned in childhood will long be remembered. If we must be careful in our choice of pictures, we must also be careful in our choice of songs. None but the very best should be taught. We need not take any nursery jungles about the Bible for the sake of coming within range of the childish intellect. When the best hymns are taught the children like the melody, and if they do not understand the words now, they will all be made plain in after years. One thing they must be taught, and that is, they are worshipping God with their songs and so must sing their very best for Him.

All pictures, stories, songs, will do no good, however, if love is absent. The children like to go where they feel they are loved and welcome. A little boy was once asked why he chose a certain Sabbath School. His reply was, "Because they love a fellow over there." So the teacher needs an abundant fund of love, first for her Master and then for her work and pupils. She should make prayerful preparation for teaching, then go to her class from her knees, remembering that the Master whom she is serving is watching, and some day, if faithful, she will hear the "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Home Thoughts.

It is a fact of which too little notice is taken that the extraordinary advantages of education which have been given to the children of these last two generations have shown so little fruit intellectually. We have had astonishing mechanical inventions, discovery of forces, marvels of applied power; we have made great strides in surgery, medicine, hygiene, and in all the life-conserving departments of human existence, but, with few exceptions, these have reached us through men who had been obliged to stay their feet at the threshold of the temple of learning.

And in the field of letters we have had many of whom we have been proud, but not one, born in the last fifty years, who has yet been able to attain the first rank or sit with the immortals. From our own children, those who have been taught, morning, noon and night, who have never been left to think out anything, but who have had a brimming cup of some predigested mental nutriment incessantly proffered to them, what have we to show?

Electrical toys for today, automatic toys for tomorrow; prearranged games under fixed rules and within fixed limits, wants presupplied—inventiveness never awakened, the imagination quenched by realities too beautiful and absorbing to give it room to live; this is the story of American children in the homes of well-to-do and wealthy parents. The joy of "making believe" is denied them; is there any one who will read these words who is old enough to understand what a loss that is?

Children are never alone; never find it necessary to devise playthings or imagine circumstances which give the