

that the character of God thus appears in perfect light and love, casting out all darkness and fear, shining with the lustre of a perfect spiritual harmony. There is a Supreme Will above us. God is our Creator, our Ruler, our Judge. But primarily and essentially God is our Father in Christ. All his purposes with us—all His rule over us—all His judgment upon us—goes forth out of His love and because He desires our good. He afflicts not willingly. If He punishes, it is because He loves. This is the essential revelation of God in Christ—the central idea of the Divine from which all other ideas go forth. They are, if not subordinate to this—for *subordination* is not a proper aspect under which to regard the Divine attributes in relation to one another—yet executive of this, which is the supreme, essential, Divine fact revealed in Christ. And it requires only a slight knowledge of Heathenism and Judaism to know that neither Gentile nor Jew fully understood this fact before the Dayspring from on high visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." When the humble christian heart looks up to God, it not "face to face," yet heart to heart. The spirit of bondage—all sense of fear—dies out of him; the Spirit of adoption takes hold of him, and all his being goes forth in the cry, "Abba Father."

II. But God is not only a Father in Christ; He is our Father—the Father, that is to say, *not* of any class or sect or nation of men, but the Father of all: "He hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts xvii. 16). Not only so, but He exercises the same paternal relation to all who will only claim Him as a Father, and address Him in the language of our text, "Our Father which art in heaven." This is the simple, undiluted meaning of the text, and we must not let ourselves be robbed of its blessing and comfort by any theological glosses whatever. The relation of Divine Fatherhood in Christ is universal, and may be claimed by all who will honestly accept the position of Christ, and use His language. This is the simple solution; and there is no other solution, of all the

difficulties in which the subject has been involved.

This community of Fatherhood in the Divine was for the first time made manifest in Christ, and realised in Him towards all men. In no respect, perhaps, does the religion of the Gospels more brightly vindicate its Divine Original. All distinctions of humanity, diversities of race, of colour, of culture, disappear in Christ. In Him there is neither Greek nor Jew, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. Brahmin and Soudra, priest and beggar, master and Slave, are all alike before God. The Supreme stands in the same relation to all. Jewish jealousy, Greek or Roman aristocracy, Egyptian or Indian caste vanish before Him. There is no individual, no class of individuals, no family or race or sect—no tribe or nation—white, brown, or black, can claim any special relation to Him. There is no virtue in any that bring them nearer to Him or makes them more akin to Him. This is now a mere commonplace of Christianity. But as it appeared for the first time fully revealed in Christ, it was intolerable alike to Jew or Gentile. It required a special revelation to make it known to the Apostle St. Peter; it was but faintly apprehended by the early Jewish churches planted by St. James and St. Peter; it needed the great Apostle of the Gentiles to hold it steadily before the conscience, to fix it as a living germ of thought in the intelligence of mankind.

Not only so; but the Christian Church has been continually liable to fall below this great idea, and to let it become obscured. The equal community of all in the Divine is a truth which few Christian communities hold with consistency, or carry out to its clear consequences. There are wide spread notions in all our Churches, which could not last a day if this truth were thoroughly apprehended and applied. And the cause of the misapprehension is not merely the pride of some—that love of exclusiveness so natural to the human heart, or desire of power so dear to it, which all organisations, ecclesiastical as well as civil, directly breed. But it is also the servility of others. It is not only the Pharisee thinking himself nearer to God, and giving thanks that he is not as other