

us not. Thou, O Lord, art our Father." "Have we not all one Father?" is almost the closing utterance of Jewish prophecy. The idea of Divine Fatherhood, therefore, could not have presented any novelty; not even, probably, the very language used by our Lord. "Our Father which art in heaven," may have been familiar words of prayer to the Jews before the time of our Lord. Here we may have one of those utterances of religious thought common to the Jewish schools of the period. Some have pleased themselves with this idea. Some have even imagined that the Lord's Prayer in its several details was a familiar Jewish prayer. Nor would it matter if it were. For here, as with other parts of our Lord's teaching, it is not absolute novelty that is claimed for it. It is not that the same things or similar things were never said before by any teacher. But it is that no one has ever said them, as He did, "with authority." No one ever transfigured them, as He did, with living light for the souls of men, or gave them a creative transforming power over the wills of men. This is the Divine originality of our Lord, that He illuminated all truth, traditionary or otherwise, concerning our relations to the Divine, and imparted to it a force and life of meaning that it never had before. The idea of Divine Fatherhood, for example, became animated in all his speech and in all his acts into a spiritual principle, such as neither Gentile nor Jew had before felt it to be. In Christ, God was seen not merely to be the creative source of the human race, "who hath made us, and not we ourselves;" He was not merely to be a Divine Power or Ruler; the Divine Personality—creative and authoritative—was not only brought forth in Him into a clearer and happier light: but more than this: it was made plain that God loves men, and cares for them with a genuine, moral affection. As a wise and good man regards his children—and in a far higher degree—God regards us. He not merely made us and rules us, but he truly loves us; and all His actions towards us—all His dealings with us—spring from love. Love is the essence of the Divine Fatherhood in Christ. It sums up all its other meanings. We may love wrongly: a human father may

allow his affection to outrun his justice in dealing with his children. There is no security for the balance of moral qualities in us. But in God as revealed in Christ there is a perfect consistency of all moral attributes, and love is the expression of this consistency. As St. John says, "God is love" (1 John iv. 8). The revelation of the Divine love in Christ is in a true sense the revelation of all else. All other truth can be conceived from this point of view. All leads back to this source.

And this it was which men had hitherto failed to see. They had been unable with a clear vision to reach this Source, and to perceive how all Divine action springs out of it. They had never before got to the true point, from which, and from which alone, all the other characteristics of the Divine fall into order. It had been from the beginning of the world, and even continues to be, the hardest thing for men to believe that God really loves them. They lacked then, and they often lack still, faith to look beyond the appearances of nature, and the issues of life—frequently so full of evil—to a light in which there is no darkness, and to a love of which there is no doubt. The fowls of the air and the lilies of the field of which our Lord speaks in this chapter might have taught them better, if they had been able to see all the Divine meaning in them. But, after all, evil lay near to many poor human creatures as a bitter burden too heavy to be borne; and the lilies of the field were far away, and the birds of the air sang not for them in the branches. The lack of faith to look beyond the darkness and evil of the world, and to read the Divine meaning of good in all nature and providence is, after all, for many men, perhaps for most men, something rather to be deplored than to be wondered at.

But this Divine meaning has been brought near to us all in Christ. In Him the great source of all being is perfectly good. He has a father's heart. He loves all creatures He has made. "This is the message that we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all." (1 John i. 5). "He that loveth not knoweth not God, for God is love" (1 John iv. 8). It is not only in Christ