

The Fatherhood of God.

DEAR BRO. EDITOR.—Will you allow me a few words in review of what has recently been written upon this subject:

In my early days I embraced the doctrine of universalism. After a few years I was led to see that this theory was neither Scriptural or reasonable. This was the "latent fallacy" I feared was couched in the "Editorial of the MESSENGER AND VISITOR of October 9. Subsequent discussion has proved that I in this was not far astray. All the arguments that have been used and the Scripture quotations called to the support of that editorial, are just what were used fifty years ago to support the doctrine of universalism.

The Universal Fatherhood of God—The Universal Childhood of our race—The Universal Salvation—seem to be the logical order and sequence of the argument, "For if children then heirs."

I am sure it was far beyond the expectation of Baptists that this doctrine should be advocated in the MESSENGER AND VISITOR. This was my reason for writing on the subject. All will be glad to see that Bro. F. and others who agree with him are by the use of certain phrases—not easily understood attempting to avoid the support of Universalism.

In the "far-afeld" discussion indulged in, it is quite noticeable that but little use is made of the Scriptures, in support of this foundation (?) doctrine of the Fatherhood of God. In the New Testament Scriptures God is said to be Father in no less than thirty-five passages, and yet my dear Bro. F. only calls one of these, Heb. 12:9, to his aid; and then by this he places the Devil in the family of God, with all the "inescapable obligations" of the Divine parentage as a pledge for his salvation.

And it may be further mentioned in this connection that the parable of the Prodigal Son or the parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus is not included in the above Scriptures; as the Fatherhood of God is, not taught by them.

Now in view of this entire absence of Scriptural support our good brethren must not be surprised if others are slow to believe in the universal Fatherhood of God, as they teach it.

Is it not just possible that in teaching this doctrine a few fallacies have misled?

1. For the Godhead, the function of Fatherhood, which is common to the human and the demon as well as the Divine, is placed at the foundation of this theory. This the Book forbids, I Cor. 3:11. "For other foundation can no man lay, etc., Eph. 2:20. Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone, Col. 2:9. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

2. Then is not confusion introduced by using the words Fatherhood, Creatorship and Sovereign as synonyms?

It appears to be overlooked that he who was made flesh and dwelt among us "was the only begotten of the Father," John 1:14, and that our sonship is through him, I Cor. 8:6. Then John 3:16 which is made to do such valiant service in support of the Universal Fatherhood of God, most certainly forbids such a thought. For in his great love for the world "he gave the only begotten Son." See John 1:18, 3:18; 1 John 4:9.

Again the fact of sin, and death by sin is overlooked by the advocates the universal fatherhood of God. What is death but the complete breaking up of relationships? "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." "As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." As the original relation was destroyed by sin and spiritual death, so is it to be restored by the "new birth" to spiritual and eternal life.

Then the Sermon on the Mount is made to do service here. We are asked by these good brethren to "see how Christ talks to that mixed multitude" the italics mine. A more careful reading of the text rules out the "mixed multitude." "And when he was set his disciples came unto him," and he preached the sermon to them. I may be pardoned if I suggest a more careful study of the Book.

I am not at all anxious for the Baptist creed or the Baptist faith; but I am anxious as to the faith and practice of Baptists. Times change and old creeds die, but the faith of God's elect survives. "Let there be light"—but let not the mists of a faded obscure the "word." From the several communications at hand from some of our ablest pastors I am assured that this discussion—though marred somewhat by human infirmities—will be of some service to the cause of truth.

"The Canadian Baptist, one of our ablest journals, has this to say on this subject, "The Examiner is moved by the revelations of the papers and discussions on the Idea of Penalty in the Baptist Congress recently held, to come out in a vigorous editorial in protest against the drift apparent toward Universalism. The drift is the direct outcome of accepting the doctrine of the 'Universal Fatherhood of God.' The Examiner well says, It would be an awful thing if the dry rot of Universalism should gain a foothold in our churches." J. H. SAUNDERS.

Ohio, Yarmouth, N. S., Dec. 27.

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I have read with great interest all that has been said upon this subject of late, and I feel like adding a few words.

If I have apprehended the real point of difference between the different brethren, it is this: What relation do the unconverted have to God? One part claims God as their Father, and the other that the Devil is. "The Universal Fatherhood of God," claims all the race as God's children, but divides them into two classes, obedient and disobedient children. Their claim is based upon the fact that God created all men and by virtue of that fact is their Father. They especially emphasize the fact that man was created in the image of God. The Prodigal Son is used to illustrate the position of the disobedient in his relation to his Father. I do not know just how much of God's image was erased at the fall of Adam and Eve, but the moral stamp or image was blotted out, and man became immoral and thus incapable of doing right.

That there is difference between the "hog and the dog" and man, there is no doubt. But because God made man in his own image does not constitute him father any more than if he made man in the image of something else. It is his creative power that gives him the position of father, and therefore he is in a sense the father of all created things. It was in this sense the apostle used it in his sermon to the Athenians. He simply undertook to show that God was a living personality and not wood or stone, silver or gold, that He was the creator of man, not man the creator of God. That he made of one blood all nations or peoples.

"In him we live and move, and have our being." This could be said of any other living creature, for all are dependent upon him.

The parable of the prodigal is not a revelation of an unconverted soul coming to the Saviour.

- (1). Because he had been with the father before this.
- (2). Because he makes his resolution to return, altogether upon the basis of previous knowledge of what his father could give him; and all this without ulterior aid or help.
- (3). Because God always moves first in the salvation of a soul.

Then if the prodigal is a converted sinner, the elder brother must represent the church. Who ever heard of a church getting angry because souls were being converted. The prodigal simply represents the Gentile nations coming back, after centuries of wandering; under the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

The elder brother represents the Jew Ever since Peter preached that first sermon to the Gentiles they have sulked. What called forth this parable was the accusation brought against Jesus that he associates with publicans and sinners.

Now there must be more than two classes, for our Lord declares that certain men were children of the Devil, and Paul in Romans 9:8 says, "They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God." Gal. 3:26 "For ye are all the children of God through faith in Jesus Christ."

If we are all the children of God any way, it is strange the Apostle seemed to be so ignorant of the fact. Because he again declares Gal. 4:4, 5. "But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth his son born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them which were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." He argues that if "we are sons then heirs of God." If God is the father of all men then all men are his sons, "and if sons heirs."

It matters not whether we are obedient or not, we are sons all the same, and never can be anything else. But our Lord in the parable of the tares, declares that growing side by side in the great world field, are children of the kingdom and of the evil one, and that they shall remain there until the end of the world.

So brethren you will have to get a little more light and widen out your division of the human family to embrace this class that two teachers, Christ and Paul declared existed in the world and will continue to exist.

If we are all children then Jesus Christ must have been wrong when he taught the new birth. How can a man be the child of his father and not be able to see his father's home or to enter into it. Sonship gives privileges, yes rights. Nicodemus was not a bad man but a good man, and still Jesus tells him that he cannot see the Kingdom without a new birth. Paul declares that all men are in a lost state, and not on account of their evil deeds or disobedience, but because of inherited sin and depravity. That all men who are saved are saved by grace, not works or obedience, but faith. If we are God's children by virtue of our creation, then it seems awfully strange that God had to make us all over again before he would have anything to do with us. That not one out of countless millions will ever see his face in peace without having their sins washed away in the blood of the Lamb.

All the hosts that John saw, who came up out of tribulation, "had their garments washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb." "There is no other name under heaven given among men: whereby we must be saved, than the name of Jesus."

If the unsaved are the disobedient children of God, how far can they go on in sin, before they get over into that other class—children of the devil? If regeneration is the line between obedient and disobedient children, there must be a line between the disobedient and the devil? Give us a little more light, for light is what we want.

Our Lord said that "he that is not for me is against me." "He that believeth on him is not judged but he that believeth not is judged already."

There are only two classes the saved and lost. "He that hath the son hath life and he that hath not the son hath not life."

We are the servants of the master we serve, the children of the parent we obey. If saved we are the children of God with all the boundless possibilities of eternal life in the eternity of God.

If not, we are dominated by evil influences under the control of satanic hate and are according to the plain teaching of God's word children of darkness.

F. D. DAVIDSON.

Safety in Temptation.

The prayers and anxieties of friends and well wishers are not enough to save our youth from the danger surrounding them. They need to have impressed upon them the fact that they must have a greater personal interest in themselves. If they do not desire to be delivered from temptations, no one can do anything for them. They have it in their power to refuse to be charmed by the siren of vice, in any of its forms. Their only safety is in positive refusal to be enticed. The charge laid on them is a very plain one. "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." Sinners may entice, but they cannot do more with free moral agents. It is not a sin to be tempted, but the sin is in the yielding to the tempter. If we hold our ground and refuse to yield, all the temptations in the world cannot injure us. It is hard to row against a stream, but safety lies in that direction. So difficult is it, that in the whole life the call is imperative for watchfulness and prayer, to strengthen good resolutions. The only help for young men is to take their stand in noble decision and let tempters know their principles and purposes. Dallying with temptation prepares the way for a speedy downfall. One who is willing to be tempted will not wait long for an opportunity. Some one will soon find him out and lead him according to his inclination. Wherever young men congregate, it is noticed that if there are many to tempt there are also many who think it manly to be tempted. There is often a lack of independence of character, and inability to say, "no." Our youth need to be urged to manly bearing and moral courage. Often they are spoken of as innocent dupes who are led off by the designing. Let them rather be appealed to as men who must assert their manhood. "Show thyself a man" is a good text for young men. They must stand on their own feet and put forth their own strength if any good comes to them. There is no greater cowardice than to sin against light and knowledge, against conviction of duty, and against the entreaty of tried and trusty friends, under the enticement of those who will lead to ruin. The call is growing louder for manly conduct, standing one's ground, resisting the approach to evil, and with settled determination saying, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?"

But it will show little knowledge of the weakness of his own heart, if any one tries to stand and resist evil in his own strength. Many a young man has felt that it was easy to do right, when his mother or sister was near. Many a one has found strength in some college friend, or business associate, whose example was always noble and helpful. But we need more than the mere influence of the pure and good. We must have a divine Helper. In our weakness we seek the friend of sinners and make a close alliance with him by faith. Through Christ strengthening us, we can do all things. He can make us courageous for the right and fixed in our opposition to the wrong. He can do more than hold us back from evil; he can fill us with his presence and charm us with new views of better things until we lose the desire to wander from God. There is such a thing as setting the affections on things above, till the temptations of life make little impression any more. With the life of Christ filling the soul, the love of sin is destroyed. He is the only safe man in this world who lives so near to Christ that the joy of the Lord is his strength in every evil hour.—Presbyterian.

The Lovers.

Cherub face with eyes of blue,
Looking up from heart so true.
Head thrown back and curls of gold
Mother's heart in thrawidom hold.
Sweet lips parted with a smile
All her anxious thoughts beguile.
Dimpled bands of pearly hue
Thrill with tender touch her face.
Dear Mamma! you are so sweet!
Reaching arms her neck embrace—
I love you, Mamma, I do!
I would have you for my wife:
Had Papa not married you.

Time has clipped his curls
and tinged her brown with white.
He sends her roses sweet in
winter time,
Making the cheerless days
with music bright,
As birds of song the far-off
sunny clime.

MRS. ALICE SEAW CHEFMAN.