

FATHER, GOD THE

In the Christian religion God is conceived of as "Father," "Our Father in heaven" ([Matthew 6:9,14,26](#), etc.), "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus" ([2 Corinthians 11:31](#), etc.).

The tenderness of relation and wealth of love and grace embraced in this profound designation are peculiar to Christ's gospel. Pagan religions also could speak of God as "Father" (Zeus Pater), and in the general sense of Creator God has a universal fatherly relation to the world ([Acts 17:24-28](#)).

In the Old Testament God was revealed as Father to the chosen nation ([Exodus 4:22](#)), and to the special representative of the nation, the king ([2 Samuel 7:14](#)), while fatherly love is declared to be the image of His pity for those who fear Him ([Psalms 103:13](#)).

In the gospel of Jesus alone is this Fatherhood revealed to be of the very essence of the Godhead, and to have respect to the individual. Here, however, there is need for great discrimination.

To reach the heart of the truth of the Divine Fatherhood it is necessary to begin, not with man, but with the Godhead itself, in whose eternal depths is found the spring of that Fatherly love that reveals itself in time. It is first of all in relation to the eternal Son--before all time--that the meaning of Fatherhood in God is made clear ([John 1:18](#)).

In "God the Father" we have a name pointing to that relation which the first Person in the adorable Trinity sustains to "Son" and "Holy Spirit"--also Divine ([Matthew 28:19](#)). From this eternal fountain-head flow the relations of God as Father

(1) to the world by creation;

(2) to believers by grace.

Man as created was designed by affinity of nature for son ship to God. The realization of this--his true creature-destiny--was frustrated by sin, and can now only be restored by redemption. Hence, the place of son ship in the gospel, as an unspeakable privilege ([1 John 3:1](#)), obtained by grace, through regeneration ([John 1:12,13](#)), and adoption ([Romans 8:14,19](#)).

In this relation of nearness and privilege to the Father in the kingdom of His Son ([Colossians 1:13](#)), believers are "sons of God" in a sense true of no others. It is a relation, not of nature, but of grace. Fatherhood is now the determinative fact in God's relation to them ([Ephesians 3:14](#)).

It is an error, nevertheless, to speak of fatherhood as if the whole character of God was therein sufficiently expressed. God is Father, but equally fundamental is His relation to His world as its Moral Ruler and Judge.

From eternity to eternity the holy God must pronounce Himself against sin ([Romans 1:18](#)); and His fatherly grace cannot avert judgment where the heart remains hard and impenitent ([Romans 2:1-9](#)). For the fuller discussion of these points see GOD; CHILDREN OF GOD; TRINITY.