Two Hearts Beat As One

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Ask most believers what they think the highest image of God is in the Bible and what will the answer be? The majority of answers will propose “Father” as the highest image. While this is an elevated image of God, it is not the highest image of God in Scripture. Glimpses of the highest image are offered in the Old Testament letter of Hosea. The prophet Hosea is commanded to take a wife who was a prostitute. If this wasn't bad enough, even though the prophet is kind to his wife, provides for her, and treats her with dignity, she leaves him, returning to her harlotry ways. God commands the prophet to chase after his adulterous wife and to buy her back from her pimps. Hosea not only pays a price but accepts an exceptionally high cost for a spouse who doesn't seem that much of a catch. Imagine what all the neighbors would think after seeing Hosea bring this woman home. The famous 18th-century poet Percy Shelley once observed that he would become a Christian if it weren't for the ugly bride that Jesus insisted on keeping. By the time we arrive at Revelation, the concluding image of Scripture is a wedding feast. We are the unfit bride Jesus insists on courting as He calls Himself our loving “bridegroom.” Imagine a royal groom coming down the aisle with a guttersnipe.

Even though the image of "Father" is an affectionate way to think of the divine, there are some drawbacks. As a believer matures in the faith, we are meant to develop beyond the identity of seeing ourselves as children. God Himself provides the image of marriage as the model for how we are to relate. The highest idea is to function in unity with one another just as a husband and wife are joined in matrimonial bliss. E. Stanley Jones had a picturesque way of describing marriage. He called it the “Kindergarten of Heaven.” Rather than the child to parent image capturing our position with God, it is the training ground of marriage where we best learn the highest way God intends for His people to relate. One of my daughter's favorite bedtime books in her younger years was the story Cinderella. She was just learning to read, but she knew enough to recognize a story with happy ending. In the story, there is a poor servant girl who is courted by a royal prince. Cinderella moved from rags to riches, and it's all due to a prince who reaches down into her world, pulling her up into his. My little girl learned to dream at a young age. As she ages, hopefully, she'll see this story as less inspiring than the greater real life story Scripture offers. In fact, it doesn't even compare.

Remember in the Cinderella story; there were two wicked step sisters. Not only were the stepsisters wicked but they were unattractive in every way. The story leads the reader to recognize how their behavior made them repulsive, not just physically, but in their total countenance. Cinderella was poor, but she was still good, and incredibly gorgeous, despite wearing only rags. In reality, we are more like those stepsisters. Our appearance from heaven's perspective is closer to what Hosea the prophet was asked to marry. There is nothing we have to offer. When Prince William courts someone that looks like Kate Middleton, no one is surprised. People can say what they want about her representing “common” life. If Prince William started courting someone he met in the gutter downtown; now there is room for surprise. As Scripture concludes, the grand finale we have is an extravagant wedding feast. Jesus is making us His bride, changing us from lowly dust to radiant glory, from gutter snipe to bride of honor. When you think of the image of God, don't think of Father. Think of Bridegroom.