

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

PayPal

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Expository Times* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_expository-times_01.php

pdfs are named: [Volume]_[Issue]_[1st page of article].pdf

through good and ill report, to hold on the even tenor of his way.

What Dr. Davidson was to his intimate friends, the writer, who knew him but slightly and chiefly in his later years, cannot tell. He did not go out of his way to form personal attachments with his pupils; and probably few were ever admitted to the sanctuary of his inmost thoughts. But it can truly be said that even a slight acquaintance with him was more than most men's close companionship. There was always something elusive about his personality; and intercourse with him involved a series of surprises. But every fresh

glimpse of his nature revealed something that was attractive: he was so genuine and unassuming and kind, so ready to help, so generous in his appreciation of other men's work. Even more than the charm of his conversation, one loves to think of his genial homely ways, his simplicity of mind, his humility, his wondering what made people so good to him, his sympathy with common folk, his fondness for little children: these and a hundred kindred traits of character will long be talked of by many firesides, when men name with reverence and affection the greatest teacher they have known.

'Prayer in Early Christendom.'

BY THE REV. CANON E. R. BERNARD, M.A., SALISBURY.

A NEW book on this subject has recently appeared in Germany.¹ It is a book of much interest and of permanent value. The matter is well arranged, and the style lucid and attractive. The aim which the author sets before him is not merely critical or antiquarian investigation, but something deeper as well. He studies the prayer of early Christendom as an expression of its special religious life. Hitherto, he says, there has been a reluctance to enter on this aspect of the subject. There have been preliminary questions to be settled, and, further, it is a subject which requires special delicacy in its treatment. It may be said without hesitation that the author has this delicacy of sympathy and appreciation. The tone of the book throughout, and especially of the part of it which relates to the prayer life of Christ, is reverent and full of feeling. The critic speaks, but it is the devout critic.

On the other hand, it is clear from the first that the writer is a disciple of Harnack, and the book is dominated by a conception of the Person of Christ similar to his, appreciative, enlightening, as far as it goes, but, as we believe, wholly inadequate. The Fourth Gospel is regarded as emanating from the circle of the disciples of St. John. The narratives of the Synoptists are very freely criticized; and the Pastoral Epistles,

¹ *Das Gebet in der ältesten Christenheit.* Von Eduard Freiberrn von der Goltz. Leipzig, 1901.

which afford so much light on the subject of early prayer, are dated in the generation after St. Paul.

Considering the extent to which our knowledge of the inner life of Christ depends on the Fourth Gospel, it might be supposed that the refusal to acknowledge the historical character of that Gospel would vitiate the whole inquiry. But this is by no means the case. He grants that the writer had access to oral or written sources of information of the highest value. So far does he go in this direction that he loses scarcely anything of importance by his formal abandonment of the Johannine authorship. One may almost say that he privately forms a conception of the character and aims of Christ from a study of this unhistorical document, and then coming back to his source, naïvely confesses that although the narrative is unhistorical, yet it is an admirable presentation of what Christ really was.

The strongest instance is the sympathetic treatment of the prayer in Jn 17. It is, he says, a free composition by the author of the Gospel. It is quite impossible to say how much of it is genuine. It defies analysis. [Cp. p. 234, where he says the author forgets in 17³ that he is representing the Lord as the speaker.] And yet he proceeds to say (p. 31), 'One cannot fail to recognize that nowhere else in the New Testament is the inner relation of Jesus to His Father, and to

those who believe on Him, characterized with such tenderness and appreciation.' And he goes on to point out, in a passage of much beauty, how precisely the leading thoughts of the prayer fit the moment and circumstances to which they are attributed. The same kind of acknowledgment is made with regard to the words of Jesus to the woman of Samaria (Jn 4²¹⁻²⁴). There he fails, as he does with regard to 12²⁷⁻²⁸, to see the precise fitness of the words to the connexion in which they stand, but of the words themselves he says: 'Whether the words of Jesus (Jn 4²¹⁻²⁴), on worship in spirit and in truth are in this form an original saying of Jesus or not, at any rate they express what is most essential and important in the actual teaching of Jesus respecting prayer' (p. 54).

In short, we have to thank the author for bringing out the truth and beauty of the portraiture of Christ in the Fourth Gospel, though he is precluded by his doctrinal preoccupation from realizing the full value of his own work. No writer has better shown how much the life of Jesus was a life of prayer, and how essential to Christian prayer is the conception of the filial relation to God, which was shown and taught by the Lord to His disciples. The treatment of the Lord's Prayer in pp. 43-53 is admirable. One point must be specially mentioned. He shows the wonderful capacity for expansion possessed by the Lord's Prayer. 'The Lord puts in the mouth of His disciples only what is most natural and most simple, what from their conditions and their circumstances must be the wish of their hearts. And yet there lay in the same words for the Lord Himself much more than the disciples could then understand; the whole depth of His own religious consciousness, so far as He could communicate it to others, found simultaneously its expression therein' (p. 43). The prayer is an expression of the innermost feelings of the believer at the most different stages of religious apprehension. The simple surface sense of the petitions and the profound developed sense are equally true. Again, he points out with truth that in the three first petitions there is no essential difference in the contents, but merely a change of the aspect in which the things of God are regarded. His suggestion that the words *ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν κ.τ.λ.*, are to be regarded as a warning to the worshipper and not a part of the prayer, seems

unnecessary. In St. Matthew's form the clause is not a claim of merit, but merely states the necessary condition for forgiveness as having been fulfilled. Attention should also be called to the fearless and devout exposition (p. 60) of the great promise to prayer (Mk 11^{23 f.}).

The treatment of prayer in the name of Jesus is, as might be expected, unsatisfactory. It is not merely reduced to an appeal to, or commemoration of, Jesus as the teacher by whom the new spirit of filial prayer had been taught; but it is actually suggested (p. 124) that the growing practice of using the formula of prayer in the name of Jesus Christ, led the author of the Fourth Gospel to ascribe the command to use it to the Lord Himself (as in Jn 15¹⁶). The real origin of the usage is, we are told, to be traced to the personal experience of St. Paul, whose whole relation to God was conditioned by 'the day of Damascus,' and the revelation then made to him. To most English readers this will seem a strange inversion of the facts. In the same section there is what may appear a slight inaccuracy, but is nevertheless an important one. 'Until now, He (Jesus) had prayed with them and for them.' There is no record of the Lord having prayed with His disciples. His teaching them the Lord's Prayer cannot rightly be so understood. The absence of any notice of prayer with the disciples is remarkable and deeply significant.

Later on in the work the author returns to the subject of the Lord's Prayer in connexion with his leading idea of the freedom of prayer ('das freie Gebet') till far into the third century (p. 181). His frequent insistence on the view that the Lord's Prayer was intended as a lesson in prayer and not as a formula, though he admits that its certain use as a formula must have been foreseen, may appear exaggerated. But it is part of a spirit of protest against the mediæval notion of prayer, which is as necessary to-day as it was at the Reformation. The ideal for worship is prayer in the Spirit, in which the words uttered correspond precisely to the mind of the worshipper, or of the congregation united in the Spirit. Human nature being what it is, forms of prayer were, of course, inevitable and indispensable, as the author fully confesses; but they were a declension from the original ideal, and it is a merit in the book to press upon us the conviction that they were such.

The question of prayer to Jesus during His life on earth is treated in pp. 68-78, and is closed with the sound observation that the question of the justification of prayer to Jesus is not decided when it has been established that Jesus Himself has nowhere said anything about such prayer.

The second chapter deals with the prayers of St. Paul, and does full justice to the position of the apostle in the development of the Christian life (pp. 83-84). But the failure to recognize the authenticity of the Pastoral Epistles leads to a strange misapprehension of the apostle's mind towards those who lay outside the Christian circle (pp. 117, 118). The severity of St. Paul which he refers to was to save the Church, and not from disregard of the individual.

The chief interest of this chapter lies in the full investigation of the Pauline use of *κύριος*, *ὁ κύριος*. The author is largely indebted to Dalman's *Worte Jesu*; and for a clear understanding of the difficulties which beset the use of these terms in the Synoptists, the original investigation in *Worte Jesu*,¹ pp. 266-272, should by all means be consulted. But the examination of the Pauline use is von der Goltz's own work. He concedes all that Christology requires as to the implication of Deity in the Pauline use of *κύριος*. It was for the apostle very nearly equivalent to the later phrase of Greek Christians, *ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν*. It was the name for the revealed God on His cognizable and visible side (p. 98). But instead of drawing the natural inference that St. Paul regarded Christ as truly God, he proceeds to explain away his concession very much in the manner of Harnack and Herrmann. The conception of a vague appeal to Christ in prayer really directed to God, which is all that the author acknowledges to be found in the Pauline Epistles, has already been well analysed by Seeberg (*Die Anbetung des Herrn bei Paulus*, p. 50 ff.), and von der Goltz has done nothing to meet Seeberg's criticisms. It is interesting to note that the author takes the verb in 'Maranatha' as imperative, and accepts this formula as one of the earliest beginnings of prayer to Christ. Seeberg has shown that this is almost certainly the true interpretation, and thus Rev 22²⁰, *ἔρχου Κύριε Ἰησοῦ*, appears to be the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic phrase 'Maranatha.' It must, however,

¹ This work will shortly be published in an English translation by T. & T. Clark.

be allowed that, although direct prayer to Jesus is fully justified by N.T. usage, there is a practical danger of such prayer 'putting, as it were, into the background the glory and love of the Father' (Bishop Westcott, *Lessons from Work*, p. 53). The bishop has in view, especially, 'modern hymns addressed to Jesus,' and to this we may add modern manuals for communicants.

In the third chapter we pass from St. Paul to a general survey of Christian prayer in the apostolic and sub-apostolic age. Here we find an examination of the phrase, *ἐπικαλεῖσθαι τὸ ὄνομα*, which had been dismissed in a summary way in the preceding chapter. The author's endeavour is to give it such a wide and general sense as may invalidate its evidence for direct prayer to Christ. But Seeberg's full and careful examination of the phrase in relation to the O.T. (*op. cit.* pp. 35-46), appears to establish the contrary. He claims to have proved that, 'in LXX language, *ἐπικαλεῖσθαι* is the specific expression for calling on Jahweh, and that the cases where the word is otherwise applied are only rare exceptions' (*op. cit.* p. 40). The force of his argument depends largely on the amount of credit given to the early chapters of Acts. For those who accept them, the quotation of J1 2³² may well seem to be the turning point in the meaning of the phrase, 'to call upon the Lord.'

There are interesting passages in this chapter (3rd) on early forms of doxology (p. 158), on the use and misuse of Amen (p. 160 f.), followed by an able survey of the first beginnings of the inevitable declension from the standard of primitive prayer (p. 161 and *passim*). Next we come to 'Das freie Gebet,' which is, as has already been observed, a ruling idea in the book as a characteristic of early Christianity. He considers that the variants in the text of the Lord's Prayer point to an absence of any sense of an obligation to an exact repetition of the Lord's own words. It is satisfactory to observe the warm appreciation which he shows throughout for Dr. Chase's 'excellent' work on the Prayer. Space forbids notice of the interesting observations on the prayer in *Clem. ad Rom.*, and on the Eucharistic prayers in the *Didache*. The latter are especially suggestive and original. Of prayer and praise in the Apocalypse, he says that the book, instead of being a type for Christian worship, is itself dominated by the impression created by the contemporary worship of the early Church.

The fourth chapter surveys the evidence as to Christian prayer in the end of the second century and in the third century. Here he can only rely on 'occasional statements in Christian writers or on the wearisome, and always insecure endeavour to ascertain which are the older elements in the liturgies of the fourth century.' The Canons of Hippolytus, and the Prayers of Serapion, however, form a happy exception. The chapter contains a full and interesting account of Origen's beautiful treatise on Prayer, which exhibits clearly its apologetic purpose, and its consequent weaknesses, especially in the exposition of the Lord's Prayer. But when all is said, Origen has done more to meet the philosophical difficulties attaching to prayer than any one has done since.

An appendix (pp. 328-353), gives the more important texts which have been dealt with in the course of the book.

It has not been possible in this brief review to give an adequate idea of the abundance of suggestive thought, and the thoroughness and honesty which characterize the work. A sense of its defective Christology has necessitated what may appear to be depreciatory criticism, and one cannot but feel that there was scarcely need to give the question of Prayer to Christ so predominant a position. The vigorous and eloquent defence of such prayer by Th. Zahn, which stands first in his *Skizzen aus dem Leben der alten Kirche*, will surely hold its ground against our author's comments. It would well repay translation into English.

But we have no desire to depreciate the valuable contribution to theological literature which von der Goltz has given us, and must again express our sense of the insight, reverence, and ability with which he has performed his task.

The Great Text Commentary.

THE GREAT TEXTS OF THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.

ACTS I. 8.

'But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth' (R.V.).

EXPOSITION.

But.—Instead of the useless knowledge they had asked, 'You cannot *know* the future, but you can *make* it.'—PELOUBET.

Ye shall receive power.—This power includes: (1) the power of working miracles; (2) personal, moral, and spiritual power in the conflicts and temptations of life, and especially in bearing suffering and persecution for Christ's sake; (3) power in the ministry of the word.—ABBOTT.

When the Holy Ghost is come upon you.—This clause describes the method by which they were to receive power, namely, by the Holy Ghost coming upon them. It contemplates, not a single outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, as the Authorized Version implies, but a new dispensation of the Spirit, whose indwelling presence should become a continuous power within them.—RENDALL.

And ye shall be My witnesses.—'My (not *μοι*, 'to me,' but *μου*, 'of me,' with the best MSS) witnesses'—not only witnesses to the facts of their Lord's life, but also *His* witnesses, His by a direct personal relationship.—KNOWLING.

DOCTRINA et sanguine.—BENGEI.

THE more special theme of their witness is to His resurrection: see 1²² 2²² 3¹⁵ 4³³ 5³² 10³⁹⁻⁴³ 13³¹ 22¹⁶ 26¹⁶ (the last two referring to Paul).—BARTLET.

THE 'apostles' are simply 'witnesses of Jesus' (as the Lord's own work was to bear witness to the truth); and as the resurrection was the crucial fact which proved the divine sonship of Jesus, an 'apostle' is in particular one who can bear witness that with his own eyes he has seen the risen Jesus, and it becomes a criterion of an 'apostle' to ask, Has he *seen* Jesus our Lord?—RACKHAM.

Both in Jerusalem, etc.—The Acts themselves form the best commentary on these words, and the words themselves might be given as the best summary of the Acts. We have first the preaching of the gospel in Jerusalem until the martyrdom of Stephen; then the dispersion throughout Judæa and Samaria (8¹); Philip going down to Samaria (8⁸); and afterwards Peter and John (8¹⁴); then the conversion of Paul, the 'Apostle of the Gentiles,' and the vision of Peter; finally, a full account of the missionary labours of Paul and others, culminating in the establishment of the gospel in the capital of the world.—PAGE.

EXEGETICAL NOTE.

Power.

In v. 7 the word is *ἐξουσία* (R.V. 'authority'), in v. 8 *ὄραμα*. The former is authority [either as delegated or unrestrained, the liberty of doing as one pleases (*ἐξουσί*);