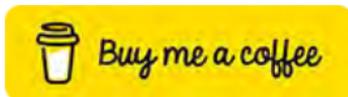


# Theology on the Web.org.uk

*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:



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



<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

**PayPal**

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

---

A table of contents for the *Journal of Theological Studies* (old series) can be found here:

[https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles\\_jts-os\\_01.php](https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jts-os_01.php)

pdfs are named: [Volume]\_[1<sup>st</sup> page of article]

reader will look at Mr Crawford's table of parallels, he will see how much there is to be set in the balance against these tentative objections. It is quite possible, as indeed it is to be hoped, that the decision will go in his favour. Be that as it may, he has earned our gratitude by calling fresh attention to a biography which deserves to be carefully re-edited and minutely criticized on account of its exceptional importance, literary, ecclesiastical and historical, to every serious student of the obscure but fascinating tenth century.

J. ARMITAGE ROBINSON.

### 'MY FATHER' IN JEWISH THOUGHT OF THE FIRST CENTURY

MR C. G. MONTEFIORE says: 'The divine fatherhood was realized by Jesus with the utmost clearness and intimacy. He would have wished that all his disciples should have realized that fatherhood as closely and fully as he. . . . We certainly do not get in the Hebrew Bible any teacher speaking of God and to God as "Father", "my Father", "your Father", and "our Father", like the Jesus of Matthew. We do not get so habitual and concentrated a use from any Rabbi in the Talmud. And this habitual and concentrated use rightly produces upon us an impression. By it we are led to believe all the more in the truth of the doctrine on which it rests. We are moved by it to wish that we, too, could feel that doctrine, even as Jesus teaches that we ought to feel it; and that we, too, could order our lives in its light and by its strength.'<sup>1</sup> Again, 'The historic Jesus of the first three Gospels can hardly be said to put forth mysticism. But if there is not much mysticism, there is a great deal of intimacy. And one charm, one attraction, one power of this intimacy is that it is so human. Except in a very few, and historically very doubtful, passages, Jesus never implies that his own intimacy and intimate relation with God is not possible for others.'<sup>2</sup>

Again, 'Jesus felt and realized God to be his Father, himself to be His son, with vivid intensity. And if God was the father of Jesus, so was He, so did He desire Himself to be felt, the father of other men. He was the father of the unjust and the sinner, as He was the father of the righteous and the just. . . . The fatherhood of God implies, then, to Jesus that God cares for man, and is always near him, even as a father

<sup>1</sup> *The Old Testament and After*, 1923, pp. 204-206.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

cares for and is near his human children. . . . The erring child is still a child, both to its human and to the divine father. God desires the return of the prodigal; He welcomes and draws him back to his true home. All this is thoroughly Jewish and Rabbinic, when Judaism and Rabbinism are not "at their most unfamiliar", if I may so express myself, though certainly when they are "at their best".<sup>1</sup>

Now what evidence is there in the Judaism of the first century or thereabouts of the individualistic apprehension of the Fatherhood of God? I mean, what evidence is there of the use of 'my God', not 'our God'; and further of 'my God' not merely because the speaker knows himself to be a member of the Nation of Israel, but as having direct and personal relationship with God as his Father? I should add that we must be careful also to eliminate in our enquiry the use of the term by a person who is thinking of God as the universal Father, the Father of all men, and we must try, on the contrary, to limit the use of the term for our purpose to that of a man who has willingly and personally entered a life of sonship, apart altogether from the fact either of his nationality or of his creation.

Frankly, there is extraordinarily little of such evidence. The phrase, in our meaning of it as thus defined, occurs nowhere in the Old Testament, Jer. iii 4 and 19 being the cry of the nation as a whole (cf. also ii 27). Ps. lxxxix 26 comes somewhat nearer, for, of each descendant of David, particularly, as it would seem, the Messianic King, it is said, 'He shall cry unto Me, Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation'. In the Apocrypha *Ecclus.* iv 10 is worth noticing, for a man of high ethical attainment is addressed (in the Greek), 'So shalt thou be as a son of the Most High, and he shall love thee more than thy mother doth'.<sup>2</sup> Again, we read in *xxiii* 1, 4: 'O Lord, Father and Master of my life. . . O Lord, Father and God of my life'.<sup>3</sup> Again in *li* 10, which in the Greek indeed runs: 'I called upon the Lord, the Father of my Lord' (suggesting a Christian interpolation), but in the Hebrew: 'And I will praise the LORD; my Father art Thou, for Thou art the mighty one of my salvation'. Then there is *Wisdom* ii 16-18, 'He vaunteth that God is his father. Let us see if his words be true, and let us try what shall befall in the ending of his life. For if the righteous man is God's son, He will uphold him'. Possibly also we should add the exclamation of the landsman in *xiv* 3 as he thinks of the ship at sea, 'And Thy providence, O Father, guideth it along'.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Religious Teaching of Jesus*, 1910, pp. 93-95. Contrast Bousset, *R.J.N.Z.*, 1906, pp. 432-434.

<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew is: 'And God shall call thee son, and shall be gracious to thee, and deliver thee from destruction'.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. not extant.

<sup>4</sup> Perhaps cf. *Jub.* xix 29.

We may add, too, the prayer of Eleazar in 3 Macc. vi (3) 4 'O Father, Thou didst destroy Pharaoh', and v. 8, 'Thou didst restore him (Jonah), O Father'.

In specifically Rabbinic sources there are, *Pirge Aboth* v 23 (v 30), 'to do the will of thy Father who is in heaven'. The date of the author of that saying, Judah ben Tema, is unknown, but he lived perhaps as late as A.D. 200. Anyhow, it is not connected very closely with our subject. In the *Mekilta* on Exod. xx 6 (ed. Weiss, p. 75, end of par. 6; ed. Horowitz, p. 227), R. Nathan (c. A.D. 160) says that the wounds of Zech. xiii 6 given 'in the house of them that love me' (or perhaps he takes the word in the sense 'of them that make me be loved') have caused me to be loved of my Father who is in heaven'. Again, the *Siphre* on Deut. § 48 (ed. Friedmann, p. 84 b) says that Prov. xxiii 15, 'My son, if thine heart be wise, my heart shall be glad, even mine', might refer to an earthly father, but R. Simeon ben Jochai (died c. A.D. 150) argues there that the superfluous 'even mine' includes the man's 'Father in heaven'.<sup>1</sup> The *Siphra* on Lev. xx 26 (Weiss, 93 d) tells us that R. Eleazar ben Azariah (c. A.D. 100) says, 'A man should not say, I do not want to wear linsey-woolsey, I do not want to eat pork, &c., &c., but he should say, I do want to, yet what shall I do? For my Father who is in heaven hath given me this rule'. So again in the *Seder d'Eliyahu Rabba* (ordinary editions, § 30, in that of 1863, p. 55 b, but ed. Friedmann, 1902, § 28, p. 149) R. Zadoq (A.D. 70) once entered the Sanctuary and found it lying waste, and said [before the Holy One, Blessed be He! O Ruler of the world, omitted by Friedmann], 'my Father who art in heaven, Thou hast laid Thy city waste, and hast burnt Thy Temple, and yet Thou stayest quiet and at rest'. Again, in § 9 (ed. 1863, p. 19 a; Friedmann, § 10, p. 51) Elijah is said to pray, 'My Father who art in heaven, let Thy great name be blessed for ever and ever'.<sup>2</sup>

And that is all! All the references, at least, that I can find. Is this strange? Hardly; for even in the New Testament there is no example of a Christian addressing God as 'my Father'. 'Father', yes; but 'my Father', no. And there do not appear to be any examples of 'my Father' in early Christian writers, though these would, in any case, be difficult to trace, and I may easily have overlooked them.<sup>3</sup> The fact appears to be that Dr Israel Abrahams'

<sup>1</sup> לרבות אביו שבשמים.

<sup>2</sup> On *Father* among the names of God, see especially A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, 1927, pp. 56-62.

<sup>3</sup> Even Goodspeed's *Indices to the Apostolic Fathers* (1907) and to *Justin Martyr* (1912) do not admit of easy reference, with so common a word as *πατήρ*. There seems to be nothing in Suicer.

explanation of the phenomenon in Judaism applies equally well to Christianity, when he quotes Abaye (died A.D. 339) as saying, 'A man must always associate himself even in private prayer with the community'.<sup>1</sup> We Christians, however deep and personal our religion may be, love to say 'our Father' rather than 'Father', and even than 'my Father'. I may add that I have not overlooked such N.T. passages as 1 Pet. i 17, 'If ye call on Him as Father'; nor Rom. viii 15, 'Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father'; nor Gal. iv 6, 'God sent out the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father'. Nor am I wholly forgetful of the many N.T. verses in which God is spoken of as 'Father' of us believers, without any addition of a pronoun, either in the plural or in the singular. But still the fact remains, that for one cause or another during the early centuries neither on Jewish nor on Christian lips is the phrase 'my Father' other than a rare and isolated expression.<sup>2</sup>

And then what a contrast we find when we come to the utterances of Christ, not only in the Fourth Gospel but even in the Synoptic. True that He speaks once, nay twice, and that twice over, making numerically four times in all, of 'thy Father' who is, and who seeth, in secret, when He is speaking to a believer (Matt. vi 6, 18). But otherwise Christ reserves His use of the singular pronoun to the first person, and speaks of God, or addresses God, again and again as 'my Father'. In the earliest of our Gospels, however, that of St Mark, the phrase 'my Father' never occurs.<sup>3</sup> But the word 'Father' is used of God only four times in that Gospel. One is xi 25, 'that also your Father who is in heaven may forgive you'. The others are viii 38, 'when he (the Son of man) cometh in the glory of his Father' (so nearly Luke and Matt.); xiii 32 (copied by Matt.), 'of that day or that hour knoweth no man, not even the angels nor the Son, save the Father only';

<sup>1</sup> *Studies*, ii 1924, p. 105. He has just been referring to the alteration of the Talmudic, 'O Lord *my* God, and God of *my* fathers', to the Liturgical, 'O Lord *our* God, and God of *our* fathers'.

<sup>2</sup> In Jewish Aramaic, however, 'my father' is regularly *Abba* (though אבא in Est. II. 1. 1), and 'my mother' is *Imma* (though אמן in Job xvii 14). And there is also some evidence in the Christian Palestinian-Syriac dialect. See especially John xx 17, ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν, where the Palestinian Syriac has ܐܘܢܐ ܕܐܒܘܝܘܢܐ ܕܐܒܘܝܘܢܐ ܕܐܒܘܝܘܢܐ. The Old Syriac and the Peshitta have the reverse, ܐܒܘܝܘܢܐ in both cases. See further Dr. F. C. Burkitt in *Evang. da Mepharreshe*, ii 47, also Dalman's *Grammatik des Jüdisch-Palästinischen Aramäisch* (1894, pp. 157 f., 162; 1905, pp. 90, 198).

<sup>3</sup> But Ἀββὰ occurs Mark xiv 36: the translation *páter mou* in Matt. xxvi 39 is simply correct. F. C. B.

lastly, xiv 36, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee', altered in Matt. to 'my Father', and in Luke simply to 'Father'. St Mark does not seem to have been interested in the truth of the Fatherhood of God in any of its applications.

On the other hand, Q (if it be Q) has the famous words (Matt. xi 25-27; Luke x 21 sq.), 'I thank Thee, Father, . . . all things were delivered to me by my Father, and no one knoweth the Son (or 'who is the Son', Luke) save the Father, nor doth any know the Father ('and who is the Father', Luke) save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him'.

The Fatherhood of God is mentioned much more often in the Third Gospel, indeed some sixteen or seventeen times. Of these the 'single Tradition' of Luke has three other examples of 'my Father' than those already noticed, viz. ii 49, 'in the house (or 'business') of my Father'; xxii 29, 'as my Father hath appointed for me'; xxiv 49, 'Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you'; besides the very intimate use of 'Father' in xxiii 34 (in one of St Luke's editions), 'Father, forgive them', and in *v.* 46, 'Father, into Thy hands I commit my spirit'.

It is worth while to enumerate the additional instances (eleven or probably twelve) in Matthew. We find xii 50, 'whosoever doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he is my brother', &c.; xv 13, 'Every root which my heavenly Father', &c.; xvi 17, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood revealed it not to thee, but my Father who is in heaven'; xviii 10, 'Their angels in heaven see continually the face of my Father who is in heaven'; *v.* 14, 'It is not the will of my (*v. l.*, 'your') Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish'; *v.* 19, 'If two of you agree . . . it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven'; *v.* 35, 'so also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if ye forgive not', &c.; xx 23, 'It shall be given to them for whom it has been prepared by my Father'; xxv 34, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father'; xxvi 29, 'Until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of my Father'; *v.* 42, 'My Father, if this cup cannot pass away except'; *v.* 53, 'Or thinkest thou I cannot beseech my Father, and He shall even now send me', &c.

All these examples of the use of 'my Father' are taken, it will be noted, from the Synoptic Gospels, one from Q (as it seems) the others from either Luke or Matt. And we cannot get rid of them unless we accept Mark alone as our authority for Christ's use of 'Father', and even then there is something not easily explained. Of course the Jewish answer is obvious. Klausner puts it succinctly enough when he says baldly, 'Nor did he regard himself as Son of God in the later Trinitarian sense; for a Jew to believe such a thing during the period

of the Second Temple is quite inconceivable: it is wholly contradictory to the belief in the absolute unity'.<sup>1</sup> This begs the whole question. Anyhow, we have the amazing fact that according to documents written some thirty or forty years after the death of Jesus, He did use the terms 'my Father' and (its very near equivalent in the way He employs it) 'Father' in a manner which has no real parallel among either Jews of His time or Christians.

Was this only because He had a more complete sense of human relationship to God than other good men had? Or was there in reality a consciousness of a relationship deeper and more intimate, a relationship extending beyond the possibility of the merely human, reaching up to such connexion with the divine as had, in fact, existed before He came into the world? This last is clearly the opinion of the writer of the Fourth Gospel. I have no doubt myself that it is also the opinion of each of the three writers of the Synoptic Gospels, including St Mark.<sup>2</sup>

A. LUKYN WILLIAMS.

## A FURTHER NOTE ON THE PAHLAVI CROSSES

IN Mr Winckworth's Note on the ancient Crosses of Southern India (*J. T. S.* xxx 237 ff.) five Crosses are enumerated, viz. the Mount Cross near Madras, of which a diagram is given, two at Kottayam, one at Katamarram, and one at Muttuchira. This last one (at Muttuchira) was not published when Mr Winckworth wrote, but Mr T. K. Joseph of Trivandrum, Secretary to the Kerala Society, now sends me a photograph and some further information.

'Only about a third of the Muttuchira inscription is left, the rest having been purposely destroyed. The whole inscription was on the

<sup>1</sup> *Jesus of Nazareth*, Heb. 1922, p. 411; E. T. 1928, p. 377. Mr Montefiore acknowledges frankly, 'If Jesus said Matt. xi 26, 27 (Luke x 21 sq.) we do not think the better of him, but the worse. From our point of view, who are anxious to make of Jesus a great Jewish teacher, we should be, perhaps, almost as desirous to prove the spuriousness of those verses as many Christians are to prove the authenticity' (*The Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed., 1927, ii 169).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase 'my Father' is attributed to Christ also in Rev. ii 27; iii 5, 21; cf. also xiv 1. See also the words used of Him in Heb. i. 5; 1 John iv 14.