

THE BACKGROUND AND ORIGIN OF THE CHRISTIAN HOURS OF PRAYER

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L'INTRODUCTION DE la prière canoniale chrétienne est intimement liée à la prière de la liturgie judaïque." These opening words of Dom Julien Puyade, in a recent article on "Les heures canoniales syriennes et leur composition," express a common assumption among liturgists which needs to be questioned.¹ Therefore, I propose to raise once more the question of the background and origins of the Christian hours of prayer.

The sources for our study consist mainly of the Church Orders up to 400 A.D. In the *Didache* the instruction is to "pray [the Lord's Prayer] three times a day" (8, 3). The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus mentions seven hours of prayer: morning prayers (31, 4); at the third hour (35, 2-3); at the sixth hour (36, 4); at the ninth hour (35, 5-6); at night time (36, 7); at midnight (36, 12-13); and at cockcrow (36, 3). In the *Statutes of the Apostles* (Ethiopic text), it is instructed that they pray "at the time they awake . . . at the third hour, at the sixth, at the ninth . . . as thou makest beginning of another day, as a likeness of the Resurrection, pray before thou retest thy body on thy bed . . . and at midnight, at the time of the cockcrow."² Lastly, according to the *Testament of*

¹ *Orient syrien* 3 (1958) 401. Eric G. Jay makes a similar statement in his *Origen's Treatise on Prayer* (London, 1954) pp. 38-39: "It is almost certain . . . that the origin of the hours of prayer is, at least in part, to be found in the daily Jewish synagogue services." But he later refers to "the Christian custom of prayer at the third, sixth, and ninth hours (9.0 a.m., midday, and 3.0 p.m.);" and states that it "is not derived from the Jewish synagogue, although the contrary has been commonly assumed." This article is attempting to show that the latter contention is true.

² Edited and translated by G. Horner (London, 1904), *Statutes* 43 and 48 (pp. 180, 182-84). It is agreed by Gregory Dix, B. Botte, and R. Connolly that the Ethiopic is the oldest text of the three. In the words of Dom Botte: "L'Ethiopien nous fait remonter, directement ou indirectement, à un archétype copte plus ancien et plus complet que notre texte sahidique actuel et même que celui qui a servi de base à la traduction arabe" (*Hippolyte de Rome: La Tradition Apostolique* [Sources chrétiennes 11; Paris, 1946] p. 15). The Sahidic and Arabic texts agree on the hours of prayer: waking hour, third, sixth, ninth, before retiring, at midnight, and at cockcrow. Cf. J.-M. Hanssens, *La liturgie d'Hippolyte* (Rome, 1959) for a critical account of the text of Hippolytus.

Our Lord (1, 22), the obligatory times for prayer are: at the first hour, at midnight, at early twilight, then also in the morning, at the third, sixth, ninth, and the twelfth hour at the lamp-lighting.

There is no consensus of scholarly opinion as to what the *Didache* means by the three hours and whether they are private or public prayers. F. H. Chase links the instruction in the *Didache* concerning "the Lord's Prayer with the Jewish hours of prayer, morning, afternoon, and evening; hours which were observed by religious Jews in private, and, at least on certain days, in the public worship of the Synagogue."³ On the other hand, Eric G. Jay remarks that "in the absence of any specific directions about meeting in assembly this passage must be taken to refer to private prayer. No hint is given of the exact times of day intended."⁴ Three hours of prayer—the third, the sixth, and the ninth—are common knowledge to Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, and Cyprian.⁵

³ *The Lord's Prayer in the Early Church (Texts and Studies 1/3; Cambridge, 1891)* p. 13.

⁴ *Origen's Treatise on Prayer* (London, 1954) p. 36. Cf. J.-P. Audet, *La Didaché* (Paris, 1958) p. 371: "La prière aux trois principaux moments du jour est un cadre cultuel trop spontané et trop commun pour qu'on ne tient pas compte ici de cette possibilité. Mais cela dit, il faut s'arrêter là, si l'on ne tient pas à dépenser ses hypothèses en pure perte. Nous n'avons aucun moyen de déterminer des 'heures' précises là où l'instruction s'est contentée d'une référence implicite aux usages courants dans son milieu, et où la liberté individuelle, de toutes manières, devait s'exercer assez largement (voir *Ps.*, 55:18; *Dan.*, 6:11, 14; sur l'usage de la Communauté de l'alliance, voir *Man. de disc.*, x, 1-3, 9-11, à propos duquel on pourra consulter J. A. Jungmann, *Altchristliche Gebetsordnung im Lichte des Regelbuchs von 'En Fešcha*, dans *Zeitschr. f. kath. Theol.*, LXXV (1953) 215 s.; voir aussi C. W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office*, pp. 65-67; J. Stadlhuber, *Das Stundengebet des Laien im christlichen Altertum*, dans *Zeitschr. f. kath. Theol.*, LXXI (1949) 131 s.; pour le monde gréco-romain, F. Cumont, *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, New York, 1912, pp. 162 s., dont la suggestion en regard des 'heures' chrétiennes paraît trop précise; sur l'arrière-fond de croyances astrales, *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain*, 4^e éd., 1929, pp. 163 s.)"

⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata 7, 7* (*The Ante-Nicene Fathers 2* [New York, 1885] 534): "Now, if some assign definite hours for prayer—as, for example, the third, and sixth, and ninth—yet the Gnostic prays throughout his whole life, endeavouring by prayer to have fellowship with God. And, briefly, having reached to this, he leaves behind him all that is of no service, as having now received the perfection of the man that acts by love. But the distribution of the hours into a threefold division, honoured with as many prayers, those are acquainted with, who know the blessed triad of the holy abodes." Tertullian, *On Prayer 24-25* (tr. by E. Evans. *Tertullian's Tract on the Prayer* [London, 1953] p. 35): "Concerning the times of prayer no rules at all have been laid down, except of course to pray at every time and place. . . . But concerning time, we shall not find superfluous the observance from extraneous sources of certain hours also—I mean those

Tertullian in his treatise *On Prayer* 25 states: "But concerning time, we shall not find superfluous the observance from extraneous sources of certain hours also—I mean those common ones which mark the periods of the day, the third, sixth, and ninth, which you may find in the Scriptures were in established use." Hours marking the intervals of the day have scriptural attestation concerning their special associations. "The first [gift of the] Holy Spirit was poured out upon the assembled disciples at the third hour. On the day on which Peter experienced the vision of everything common in that vessel it was at the sixth hour that he had gone to the housetop to pray. He also, along with John, was going up to the Temple at the ninth hour when he restored the palsied man to soundness." These three hours have for Christians a special meaning since we are "debtors of three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit." These three hours are in addition to the basic hours of the beginning of light and of the night. In addition to the five hours already established, a sixth one is mentioned by Tertullian in *Ad uxorem* 2 in the form of a question asked of Christian women with reference to their heathen husbands: "Will not thy rising in the night to pray be interpreted to be some act of magic?" Hence the midnight hour of prayer.

The three common hours which Tertullian describes as hours found in established use in the Scriptures are in Acts 2:15 (the third hour), 10:9 (the sixth hour), and 3:1 (the ninth hour). A brief look at these references in the book of Acts is therefore in order. Of the three, the third (3:1, the ninth hour) is the only one specifically referring to an hour of prayer. The Temple services were held twice a day, namely, in the morning (between dawn and sunrise) and in the evening (between

common ones which mark the periods of the day, the third, sixth, and ninth, which you may find in the Scriptures were in established use." Origen, *On Prayer* 12, 2 (Eric G. Jay, *op. cit.*, pp. 114–15): "The man who links together his prayer with deeds of duty and fits seemly actions with his prayer is the man who prays without ceasing, for his virtuous deeds or the commandments he has fulfilled are taken up as a part of his prayer. For only in this way can we take the saying 'Pray without ceasing' as being possible, if we can say that the whole life of the saint is one mighty integrated prayer. Of such prayer, part is what is usually called 'prayer', and ought not to be performed less than three times each day." Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 34 (*Ante-Nicene Fathers* 5 [New York, 1886] 456): "And in discharging the duties of prayer, we find that the three children with Daniel, being strong in faith and victorious in captivity, observed the third, sixth, and ninth hour, as it were, for a sacrament of the Trinity, which in the last times had to be manifested."

sunset and dark). (Cf. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 3. 10, 1 § 237 and 14. 4, 3 § 64–66 for daily Temple sacrifices.⁶) The afternoon hour came into being during the days of the Herodian Temple when the priests sacrificed at the ninth hour instead of in the evening. It is to this hour, perhaps, that Acts 3:1 is referring. The D text adds *to deilimon* before *epi tēn hōran*. Does this addition make it clearer that the hour was that of the evening sacrifice?

The third hour, *hōra tritē* (Acts 2:15), has no religious significance. No source in pre-Rabbinic literature asserts the custom of praying at the third hour.⁷ R. J. Knowling states that the Jews did not eat until the sixth hour.⁸ Was it then too early to expect such a crowd to have had their meal with their wine? As to the third reference (10:9) where we read that Peter went up to the roof to pray about the sixth hour, there was no public prayer set at this hour, either in the Temple or in the synagogue.

Duchesne believes that the hours in the book of Acts "constituted the principal divisions of the day; they were observed for business, and were marked by the call of the city bells."⁹ Tertullian's *On Prayer* 25 is perhaps the basis of the above statement where the three hours are de-

⁶ In a footnote to Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 3. 10, 1 §237 (Loeb Classical Library 4, 431), H. St. J. Thackeray says: "According to Ex. xxix. 39 'between the two evenings' (at twilight); actually in the Herodian temple between 3 and 4 o'clock, *A. xiv. 65 peri enatēn hōran*, *Mishna Pesahim* v. 1." In the *Manual of Discipline* (1QS 10: 1–3; 9–11) reference is made to the entering of day and night as being appropriate periods for praise and prayer. Josephus describes the Essenes as follows, in *Jewish Wars* 2. 8, 5 §128 (tr. by William Whiston): "As for their piety towards God, it is very extraordinary; for before sun-rising they speak not a word about profane matters, but put up certain prayers, which they have received from their forefathers, as if they made supplication for its rising." Cf. also F. J. Foakes-Jackson and Kirsopp Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity* 4 (London, 1933) 31, for a similar comment.

⁷ Ernst Haenchen in his commentary on *Die Apostelgeschichte* (Meyers Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament 3; Göttingen, 1956¹⁰) p. 146, n. 2, states: "Dies war nicht (wie manche Kommentare behaupten) eine jüdische Gebetszeit. Das Judentum hat für die dreimal täglich zu sprechenden Gebete nie bestimmte Stunden festgelegt (Bill. II 696 ff.). Meist betete man bei Sonnenaufgang und bei Sonnenuntergang. Die Christen haben die Sitte des dreimaligen Gebets übernommen: nach Did. 8, 3 soll man dreimal täglich das Vaterunser beten. Zur Zeit Tertullians (de orat. 25, de ieiun. 10) ist die 3. Stunde die erste der drei täglichen Gebetszeiten."

⁸ *The Acts of the Apostles (The Expositor's Greek Testament*, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll, 2 [London, 1912]) p. 78. Cf. Josephus, *Vita* 54, as the source for the above statement concerning the midday meal hour on the Sabbath.

⁹ *Christian Worship: Its Origins and Evolution* (London, 1919) p. 447.

scribed as those which mark the periods of the day. Once the three hours, though initially they were the "common ones which mark the periods of the day," became hours of prayer for the Christians, they assumed new associations and meanings for them. Tertullian takes for granted that these hours "in the Scriptures were in established use." It will be preferable to state that *when* these hours became Christian hours of prayer (due to their convenience), a scriptural basis was sought and this was provided by the three references in the book of Acts. We find this process of interpretation to begin in Tertullian.

The specific "Christian" association with the hours of prayer are carefully worked out in the *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus, a work contemporaneous with that of Tertullian.¹⁰ Here is a list of the hours. *Morning Prayers*: "And the faithful as soon as they wake and are risen, before they betake themselves to their work shall pray to God..." (31, 1; cf. 35, 1). *Terce*: "And if indeed thou art at home pray at the third hour and praise God.... For in this hour Christ was seen nailed upon the tree. And therefore in the Old [Testament] the Law bade the shewbread to be offered at the third hour..." (36, 2-3). *Sext*: "Pray also likewise at the sixth hour, for at that hour when Christ had been hanged upon the wood the daylight was divided and it became darkness" (36, 4). *None*: "And at the ninth hour also let prayer be protracted and praise [be sung].... For in that hour Christ [was] pierced in His side...and shed forth blood and water..." (35, 5-6). *Night Prayers*: "Pray also before thy body rests upon thy bed" (36, 7). *Matins*: "And at midnight rise and wash thy hands with water and pray.... It is necessary for the following reason to pray at this hour, and truly those men of holy memory who handed on the Tradition to us taught us thus: because in this hour every creature hushes for a brief moment to praise the Lord.... Wherefore it is right for all of them that believe to be careful to pray at that hour. And testifying to this the Lord says thus, Behold the Bridgroom has come; arise, [go forth] to meet Him; and He adds, saying, Watch therefore, for ye know not in what hour He comes" (36, 8; 36, 12-13). *Cockcrow*: "And at that hour when the cock crows, likewise rise [and pray], because at the hour of cockcrow the children of Israel denied Christ Whom we have known by faith..." (36, 14).

¹⁰ *The Treatise on the Apostolic Tradition of St. Hippolytus of Rome*, tr. by Gregory Dix (London, 1937) pp. 57, 62-67.

Two of the hours for prayer, morning and evening, carry no specific religious traditions and instructions as to why they should be observed. From the *Apostolic Constitutions* (8, 32 and 38) we gather that there were two principal daily *public* prayers, at morning and in the evening. Pliny the Younger writing to the Emperor Trajan informs him that the Christians "affirmed... the whole of their guilt, or their error, was that they were in the habit of meeting on a certain fixed day before it was light, when they sang in alternate verses a hymn to Christ, as to a god...; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble to partake of food.... Even this practice they had abandoned after the publication of my edict..." (*Letters* 10, 96). Cyprian prefers, it seems, the morning celebration of the resurrection of the Lord (the Lord's Supper) rather than the evening one even though "it behoved Christ to offer about the evening of the day, that the very hour of sacrifice might show the setting and the evening of the world..." (*Ep.* 62, 16).

Duchesne remarks: "The custom was established at an early date of devoting the last moments of the night, the time between cock-crow and sunrise, to private prayer, and also the end of the day, the gloomy hour when the sun disappears, when shadows fall, and the household lamps are lit. These were the fundamental prayers universally in use—the morning and evening prayer, or matins and vespers."¹¹ In the *Apostolic Constitutions* (2. 8, 59) we read that the bishop is expected to instruct the people to "assemble yourselves [themselves] together every day, morning and evening, singing psalms and praying in the Lord's house: in the morning saying the sixty-second Psalm, and in the evening the hundred and fortieth...."

There appears to be a steady and consistent tradition in regard to morning and evening prayers.¹² As for the three hours of prayer—Terce,

¹¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 446.

¹² Dom Jacques Froger states in his work on *Les origines de Prime* (Rome, 1946) pp. 117, 131: "Le *Cursus canonique* du début du IV^e s. comprend donc uniquement deux grandes Heures: Vêpres et Nocturnes"; "Ces deux grandes Heures étaient pratiquées dès lors aussi bien par les Eglises séculières que par les moines, et il est difficile de dire de quel côté est l'emprunt. Le texte d'Eusèbe, vu sa date, me semble suggérer comme plus probable que l'usage de ces deux Heures canoniques a commencé dans les Eglises séculières; en les créant, elles n'auraient fait, du reste, que 'normaliser' les prières privées du matin et du soir qui se pratiquaient déjà depuis fort longtemps dans l'Eglise."

Sext, and None—W. O. E. Oesterley finds it not difficult to assert that “The rule of the three hours of prayer of the daily Synagogue worship was observed by the first Christians (*the third hour*, Acts 2:15; *the sixth hour*, Acts 10:9 and *the ninth hour*, Acts 3:1).”¹³ And yet the same author (with his collaborator, G. H. Box), in reference to the three times of prayer in the Temple services, states in another work that “it is a mistake as Schürer (*HJP* Vol. iii, p. 290 ff.) has pointed out, due to a misunderstanding of certain passages in the Acts (2:15, 3:1, 10:3, 9, 30) to suppose that the stated hours were the third, sixth and ninth hours (i.e. our 9, 12 and 3 o'clock). The actual times were (1) about the time when the morning burnt offering was offered; (2) in the afternoon at the ninth hour (3 o'clock) when the evening meal-offering was offered; and (3) sunset.”¹⁴ If the synagogue hours of prayer are based on the Temple hours of prayer, then we must once and for all establish the fact that the references in Acts 2:15 and 10:9 do not refer to either Temple or synagogue hours.¹⁵

The synagogue hours are three: evening prayer (*ma'arib*), morning prayer (*ṣah'arit*), and afternoon prayer (*minhāh*), and to find biblical injunctions for three hours of prayer is not so difficult. There is, first of all, Daniel 6:10. The verse reads: “He got down upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he had done previously.” Another reference is in Psalm 4:17, “at evening, and at morning, and at noonday will I complain and moan, and he shall hear my voice.” In both instances, I believe, the prayers are private. Furthermore, they do not necessarily imply the hours of public prayer kept in private. Moreover, the biblical background for hours of prayer is not of one tradition. The night watches, for instance, are convenient periods of prayer (Ps 63:6 and 119:148). There are three: the first watch (Lam 2:19), the middle watch (Jg 7:19), and the third watch (Ex 14:24; 1 S 11:11). Next, in Isaiah 62:6 we find the watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem day and night. P. Selvin Goldberg comments on this verse: “for Talmudic times we have the expressed statement of

¹³ *The Jewish Background of the Christian Liturgy* (Oxford, 1925) p. 125.

¹⁴ Cf. footnote 27.

¹⁵ In his article on “Bréviaire” in *Dictionnaire d'archéologie chrétienne et de liturgie* 2 (Paris, 1910) 1264, H. Leclercq follows the popular belief that “la prière récitée par les disciples à la troisième heure dans la salle de la Cène, le jour de la Pentecôte, elle correspond à l'heure de la prière au temple.”

Rabbi Judah the Patriarch (who is of the opinion that the division was into four watches) that 'there are four watches of the night and four watches of the day', cf. *y. Ber.* 2d, I, 1.¹⁶ Goldberg refers to the Mourners for Zion who had the practice of praying six times daily, and this was prescribed on the ground of Isaiah 60:6. The seven hours of prayer find their biblical basis in Psalm 119:146.¹⁷

The Jewish tradition is as varied as the Christian. Both seem to consider, however, that the two basic hours of prayer are the evening and the morning prayers, the Jewish tradition being based on the two continual sacrifices in the Temple (Ex 29:38-42; Nm 28:1-18; cf. 1 Chr 16:40; 23:30; 2 Chr 13:11),¹⁸ and the Christian, no doubt, having the Jewish practice as its basis.

The foregoing brief study on the origins of the Christian hours of prayer should be supplemented by an intensive study such as Dom Jacques Froger's *Les origines de Prime*, which is a work on the liturgical passages in Cassian's *Institutes* (ca. 360-435), providing, therefore, an additional basis for study of the origins and background of the Christian hours of prayer.¹⁹ There is, perhaps, good reason to believe Froger and others who maintain that all the other hours (except the Nocturns

¹⁶ *Karaite Liturgy and Its Relation to Synagogue Worship* (Manchester, 1957) p. 1, n. 4.

¹⁷ Cf. Agapius, *Histoire universelle*, Part 2, section 1 (ed. and tr. by Alexander Vasiliev; *Patrologia orientalis* 5 [1915] 24) for a reference to the seven hours of prayer and their Old Testament background: "De ce temps-là date la coutume de faire la prière à trois heures, à six heures et à neuf heures, sans compter les prières du matin, du soir, d'avant le jour et de minuit: ce que fait le total des sept prières du jour et de la nuit. On dit aussi que l'usage de faire ces prières remonte à l'époque d'Enoch, fils de Seth, fils d'Adam. . . ." Cf. A. van der Mensbrugge, "Prayer-time in Egyptian Monasticism (320-450)," in *Studia patristica* 2 (*Texte und Untersuchungen* 64; Berlin, 1957) 435-54.

¹⁸ Max Joseph in his article on "Prayer" in *The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* 8 (New York, 1942) 618, comes closer to our contention when he writes: ". . . the origin of the divine service in the synagogue seems to have been the reading of the Scriptures, to which were later attached the prayers as they developed. These prayers were arranged so as to correspond with the order of the sacrifices and the times of the day." In this regard cf. Eric Werner, *The Sacred Bridge* (London, 1959), for an elaborate discussion of "The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church during the First Millennium." Werner relates the three references in the Book of Acts to the three daily services of the synagogue (pp. 3-4) and identifies the Nocturns and Lauds with the evening and morning services of the synagogue (p. 134).

¹⁹ In conjunction with Froger's book cf. also his "Note pour rectifier l'interprétation de Cassien, *Inst.* 3, 4; 6, proposée dans *Les origines de Prime*," *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* 2 (1952) 96-102.

and the Vespers) are of monastic origin. This statement should be modified, however, by the fact that the origin is that of the canonical hours or office and not of the private hours of prayer. The monastic origin of the canonical hours could be defended on the basis of Cassian's *Institutes*, Etheria's *Peregrinatio ad loca sancta*, Palladius' *Lausiac History*, and other sources. The influence of the monastic life lies not in originating the hours of prayer, but in establishing the private hours as public. In the words of F. Cabrol: "From that time, i.e., from the end of the third century, the monastic idea exercised a preponderant influence in the arrangement and formation of the canonical Office."²⁰

For our purpose the work of Tertullian *On Prayer* and of Hippolytus on the *Apostolic Tradition* constitute the basis for our speculative thesis, even though we have referred to Church Orders dated in the third and fourth centuries. In a recent work, A. Salles asserts that the Roman liturgy and the liturgy of the *Apostolic Tradition* belong to two different families.²¹ He suggests that the milieu in which the *Tradition* developed would perhaps be the Judeo-Christian community, the early community founded by the Master. Here at this point Salles disagrees with Dix when the latter states that Hippolytus is "doing what he says he is doing, setting down genuine old Roman customs and rules of which the memory of Roman Christians then 'went not back to the contrary.'"²² The two authors agree, nevertheless, on the Judaic background of the *Tradition*. Dix states: "Hippolytus reveals clearly for the first time how firmly the Jewish liturgical basis persisted in the Catholic cultus after a century and a half of Gentile Christianity."²³ This Jewish character is reflected primarily in the Eucharistic prayer, in the baptismal rite, in the regulations of the agape. But when we consider the background and origins of the hours of prayer, the Jewish influence appears to be in the background of only two hours—morning and evening prayers. C. W. Dugmore finds Etheria's account of the daily offices supporting his contention that "the special importance attached to these times of prayer [Matins and Vespers] is best explained on the hypothesis that they represent the tradition of the primitive

²⁰ "The Breviary," *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 2 (New York, 1907) 771-72.

²¹ "La 'Tradition apostolique' est-elle un témoin de la liturgie romaine?" *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 148 (1955) 212-13.

²² *Op. cit.*, p. xxxviii. ²³ *Op. cit.*, p. xliii.

Church at Jerusalem, derived directly from Synagogue practice and continued throughout that obscure period of which we have few, if any, records, until they became incorporated in the monastic Hours of prayer sometime in the fourth century."²⁴ The "morning" and "evening" prayers were the "regular prayers" as described by Tertullian. They were private in character even though they took a corporate nature in the life of the early Christians. Hence one has to draw a distinction between liturgical hours—where laity took active part—and canonical hours—which became the official hours of prayer of all the clergy. In all, the purpose of the hours of prayer, as pointed out so clearly and forcefully by Josef A. Jungmann, is "a healthful spiritual food . . . to the faithful for their daily devotions. Not just prayer formulas spoken by the lips; not merely prayers of petition outlining one's own personal needs and wants; but rather meditative prayer, thoughts of faith, fundamental concepts of the Christian religion."²⁵ Jungmann finds this purpose in Hippolytus when the latter reminds the faithful that "if ye perform [them] and remember them and instruct one another and encourage the catechumens [to do them] ye will not [be able to] be tempted or to perish, having Christ always before your minds."²⁶

Based on the sources of our particular study, the evidence concerning the hours of prayer, private and public, may be summarized as follows:

1) The three references in Acts (2:15; 10:9; and 3:1) should not be considered as the Temple or synagogue hours of prayer.²⁷ Of the three only 3:1 is a clear reference to the afternoon sacrifice at the Temple.

²⁴ *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (London, 1944) p. 51; cf. p. 70. Cf. also P. Batifol, *History of the Roman Breviary* (London, 1912) p. 28, for a similar conclusion.

²⁵ *The Early Liturgy to the Time of Gregory the Great* (Notre Dame, Ind., 1959) p. 103. Concerning the three hours of prayer—Terce, Sext, and None—Jungmann states: "The choice of these particular times is founded on Jewish prototypes" (p. 99). Once more we find a well-known liturgist repeating traditional interpretation. Cf. Monseigneur Cassien and Dom Bernard Botte (edd.), *La prière des heures (Lex orandi 35)* (Paris, 1963), for recent discussion on "Les heures de prière dans le Judaïsme à l'époque de Jésus" (pp. 59–84), "Les heures de prière dans la Tradition Apostolique et les documents dérivés" (pp. 101–15), and "La prière des moines au temps de Jean Cassien" (pp. 117–38). The present article has not been influenced by these studies since they came to my attention too late for assimilation.

²⁶ Jungmann, *op. cit.*, p. 104; translation of Hippolytus 31, 15 here given from Dix, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

²⁷ W. O. E. Oesterley and G. H. Box, *The Religion and Worship of the Synagogue* (New York, 1907) p. 316: "In the Temple services public provision was (as is well known)

The third hour and the sixth and the ninth are the "principal divisions" of the day. We should guard against the temptation to identify these with the *Didache* references to praying the Lord's Prayer three times daily, and to establish an Old Testament background by the references in Dn 6:10 and Ps 4:13 for the three hours of prayer.²⁸

2) There seems to be a consensus in the sources that the morning and evening hours of prayer are "old and well-established practice" (cf. Tertullian, *On Prayer* 25; Cyprian, *On the Lord's Prayer* 35).

3) Terce, Sext, and None, which denote the principal divisions of the day, came to be convenient hours of prayer; and, happily, references to these hours were found in the book of Acts.

4) This led to a development, as witnessed in Tertullian and in Hippolytus, which may be described as the "Christianizing" of the three hours of prayer. Tertullian does this in his treatise *On Prayer*, a work written during what Cayré calls his Catholic period. Hippolytus develops this in a much more elaborate form in his *Apostolic Tradition*.²⁹

made for the three *times of prayer*. But it is a mistake as Schürer (HJP Vol. iii, p. 290 ff.) has pointed out, due to a misunderstanding of certain passages in the Acts (2:15, 3:1, 10:3, 9, 30) to suppose that the stated hours were the third, sixth, and ninth hours (i.e. our 9, 12 and 3 o'clock)." Cf. R. J. Knowling, *op. cit.*: "According to Schürer, followed by Blass who appeals to the authority of Hamburger, there is no ground for supposing that the third, sixth and ninth hours of the day were regular stated times for prayer. The actual hours were rather (1) early in the morning at the time of the morning sacrifice. . . ; (2) in the afternoon about the ninth hour (three o'clock), at the time of the evening sacrifice; (3) in the evening at sunset (*Jewish People*, div. ii., vol. i., 290, E.T.). The third, sixth, and ninth hours were no doubt appropriated to private prayer, and some such rule might well have been derived from Psalm lv. 7; cf. Dan. vi. 11. This custom of prayer three times a day passed very early into the Christian Church, *Didache*, viii. 3. To Abraham, Isaac and Jacob the three daily times of prayer are traced back in the *Berachoth*, 26 b; Charles, *Apocalypse of Baruch*, p. 99."

²⁸ Cf. Leonhard Fendt, *Einführung in die Liturgiewissenschaft* (Berlin, 1958) p. 19: "Das Matthaeus-Vaterunser ist nach Did. 8, 2 im Gebiet der Did. zu Hause gewesen (mit den Abweichungen: *en tō ouranō* und *iēn opheilēn*), beantwortet durch diese Doxologie: *hoti sou estin hē dynamis kai hē doxa eis tous aīdnas*. Dreimal täglich wurde es gebetet. Die jüdischen Gebetsitten werden ausdrücklich abgelehnt. Aber ist damit etwas über den Gebrauch des Vaterunsers in der Versammlung gesagt? Und stimmt Knopfs Bemerkung (Handbuch zum Neuen Testament, Ergänz.-Bd. S. 23): 'Ältestes Zeugnis für den regelmässigen Gebrauch des Vaterunsers und für die 3 Gebetsstunden des Tages', nämlich morgens, mittags (oder nachmittags), abends, entsprechend dem jüdischen Gebrauch—erst Tertullian De or. 25 und De ieiun. 10 nenne die 3., 6., 9., Stunde?"

²⁹ Chapters 31, 35, 36 (cf. edition of Gregory Dix). The *Traditio apostolica* is dated by scholars between the end of the second century and the second decade of the third century.



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