UNIVERSITY „OVIDIUS" CONSTANŢA
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**Summary of Ph.D. Thesis**

# THE DAILY PRAYER RULE AS REFLECTED BY THE HOLY SCRIPTURES AND IN THE WORKS OF THE FATHERS OF THE CHURCH UNTIL THE BEGINNING OF THE FIFTH CENTURY

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# INTRODUCTION

## 1. Argument

The Ph.D. Thesis entitled *The Daily Prayer Rule as Reflected by the Holy Scriptures and in the Works of the Fathers of the Church until the Beginning of the Fifth Century* aims at exploring the universe of daily individual prayer within the greater frame of public worship as reflected by the Holy Scriptures and witnessed by various monuments of Church literature pertaining to the first five Christian centuries.

We chose the beginning of the fifth century as the *ad quem* border of our research for a number of reasons:

1) St. John Chrysostom, the last of the Three Holy Hierarchs, died in 407, marking the end of the Golden Age of Patristic literature;

2) The period comprised between the end of the fourth century and beginning of the fifth also registers the flourish of the patristic genre of Church Orders. It is in this epoch that the *Apostolic Tradition* ascribed to St. Hippolytus received its last redaction. The same applies for the compilation work which resulted in the *Apostolic Constitutions*. Once crystalized in a final form and codified, such Church Orders have lost contact with the ever-evolving aspects of Church life. Having ceased to keep track of historical developments, they lose their relevance for the study of Church History past the sixth century. They do retain of course their canonical relevance.

3) It was at the beginning of the fifth century, that the great Latin Church Fathers (Augustine, Hieronymus, St. John Cassian) wrote their major works. They were among the first to translate some of the works of the Greek Church Fathers, thus introducing in the Western Christian world – among other jewels of spirituality – the first Eastern *Monastic Rules*, which gave a decisive impulse towards establishing monasteries in the Christian West.

4) After the beginning of the fifth century, the volume of the historical information concerning daily prayer rule and the order of the daily offices decreases dramatically. Their flow would subsequently regain its strength beginning with the eight century.

To this day the Three Holy Hierarchs, i.e. St. Basil the Great († 379), St. Gregory the Theologian († 390) and St. John Chrysostom († 407), to which one may add one other famous Cappadocian Father, St. Gregory of Nyssa († 394), remain embodiments of the integrity in

pursuing both the ideal of priesthood and that of a life of prayer. It was particularly the Cappadocian propensity toward living the faith – assuming the theology of the Church at the personal level, and, further still, living it liturgically – that exerted upon the author an irresistible attraction and sparked the interest in researching what the actual daily prayer life of the Cappadocian Fathers might have looked like. The fact that the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church proclaimed the year 2007 as the Commemorative Year of Saint John Chrysostom and the year 2009 as the "Commemorative Year of Saint Basil the Great and of the other Cappadocian Saints" also gave a decisive impulse to the research in this field.

## 2. Preliminary Assumptions

The greater frame of the work, namely researching the life of prayer in the first four centuries imposed an interdisciplinary approach, at the fruitful intersection of Church History, Biblical Studies, Liturgics, Patrology and Spirituality. In its turn, this combination of means and methods reinforced the prerequisite of approaching the relevant literary sources in their original language (where possible: Greek and Latin) and that of employing selected elements of source criticism.

Studying a topic such as the Christian individual prayer in the fourth century implies a particular set of challenges, which the author tried to codify as research assumptions. The most important of these are:

1) Prayer had been always an essential part of the Church life. Simply put, one cannot imagine an era in the history of the Church during which the Church has not prayed.
2) The Lord's exhortation: "*But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly* (Mat 6:6 NKJ)" defines – and had defined – to a great extend the individual prayer of every Christian.
3) Praying is a matter of discretion. As such, spiritual Fathers and authors are inclined not to talk – little less write – openly about it, lest they might fall prey to conceit.
4) Praying is inherent practical. It often involves discipline, guidance, tradition, sources – all of which are not necessarily of the written kind.

5) Based upon these propositions we may postulate that, with regard to prayer and worship, *if a given historical reality is not reflected by the literary sources, this does not necessarily imply that the reality in question had not existed*.
6) As proof in favour of this postulate we may invoke the so-called *disciplina arcani*, a principle which prevented early Christians from putting down in writing the mysteries of faith, for fear of disclosing them to the pagans. Liturgical texts, prayers and the Creed pertained to those "mysteries of faith", which Christians kept away from the eyes and ears of those held unworthy of learning them: pagans and even novice Catechumens. For instance, the Jerusalem practice around the year 380, as witnessed by the pilgrim Egeria (Etheria), was to disclose the Creed to Catechumens only in the Lent weeks preceding their baptism – hence their given name of *photizomeni*, i.e. "those being illumined". They were expected to have had committed the Creed to memory, so that they may be able to recite in front of the bishop immediately before their baptism. A secondary effect of this attitude towards the "mysteries of faith" is the lack of preserved liturgical codices: the earliest known examples (e.g. *mss*. *Barberini 336*; *Sinaiticus gr*. *863*, şi *864*) which have reached us could be traced back to the eighth century. To the Christian-orthodox research all this can be regarded as proof in favour of the *importance of the unwritten Tradition*.
7) The *written historical sources cannot do justice to the richness of the prayer life of the Early Church*, they "fall behind" the reality, which they are trying to evoke. To the modern researcher, this principle invites the possibility of making educated assumptions about what past liturgical practices and specific rituals might have been. Nevertheless, no assumption may supersede in importance verified historical accounts.
8) Another important premise underlying our research is the fact that, with regard to the Early Church, *one cannot draw a firm line between public and private prayer*. Within certain limits, the observation which renown liturgist Robert Taft S.J. made on early monastic prayer also applies to the generic prayer life of early Christians: "It would be patently anachronistic to draw too sharp a distinction between 'liturgical' and 'private' prayer in early monasticism. In monastic literature during the foundational epoch the only difference between solitary prayer and common prayer was whether there was more than

one person present."[1] This remark may also be used to describe realities which extend beyond the span of the fourth century. It would also be impossible to apply the distinction between public and private prayer in the Preconstantinian era, as persecutions meant the Christian worship had to be carried out in private houses or in catacomb churches. The distinction between public and private sphere is a modern construction.

9) Finally, in close proximity to the distinction between public and private, we note the existence of a *mimetic principle*, manifested in the historically-proven propensity towards copying ritual patterns. It was not uncommon for the Christians of the fourth century to perform at home evening or morning prayers, whose content and order was inspired by the "public" services of the local Church. Another example, which to this day retains its defining force for the Orthodox Church, is the imitation of monastic rituals and rules of prayer by lay people. The classical example is again provided by the *Pilgrimage of Etheria* (XXIV, 12), which narrates about the practice of certain lay people in the Jerusalem churches of the 380' A.D., who emulated the monks present and joined them in carrying on with the vigil in the second part of the night. The "urban monastic" liturgical typology as a whole may be perceived as a significant historical embodiment of the propensity towards imitating in the city certain rules of worship observed by monks in their churches in the desert. *For the purposes of our study, this means that we may turn to historical information about the "public" services as sources for the "private" prayer*.

### 3. An Interdisciplinary Approach

The theological work of the Cappadocian Fathers has been studied from different angles and perspectives: Patrology, Church History, Liturgics, Spirituality, aso. Each discipline tends to explore, classify and utilize the literary sources according to their purposes and methods. As far as the Romanian literature is concerned, the prestigious series *Studia Basiliana* (3 vols., 2009) presents us with a good example of the "classical" approach: the studies comprised in these volumes as organized according to scholastic theological disciplines: Bible Study, Dogmatic Theology, History of Dogmas, Patrology, Homiletics, etc. Yet the specific topics of prayer and praying transcend the boundaries of one single theological discipline and call for an

[1] Robert TAFT, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West. The Origins of the Divine Office and Its Meaning for Today*, The Liturgical Press, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, MN, 1986, page 71.

interdisciplinary approach. A few firm steps towards an interdisciplinary approach took Rev. Mihai Colibă in his study of the Basilian *Ascetic Rules* and their influence on the monastic life and the Christian worship (*St.Bas.* II, 2009).

Settling for an interdisciplinary approach presented us with the enormous advantage of attaining a certain degree of fruitful freedom from disciplinary limitations, typologies, etc. Each theological discipline we accessed during our research shed new light upon the subject at hand. **Church History** provided a better understanding of the historical context and some specific mechanisms, such as the preparation for Baptism and *disciplina arcani* in the fourth century. Important reference points in these aspects provided the studies authored by Rev. Prof. Dr. Daniel Benga (2001; 2007).

Even more frequently we have turned to the means and resources of **Comparative Liturgics**. We actually employed – and discussed – some of its technical categories, such as "cathedral office", "monastic office", "urban monastic office", of which contemporary Comparative Liturgics make use in order to describe the liturgical life of the Church beginning with the fourth century. It was beyond the purpose of our research to deal with the history of the Seven Canonical Hours (or "Church Lauds"), since these received what would become their "classical" byzantine formulation in the following centuries. (Conventionally it is thought that this evolution process concluded in the ninth century.) Given that our study focuses on historical realities primarily pertaining to the fourth century, we can only offer some evidence with regard to the prehistory of what would become the seven canonical hours. In the timeframe comprised between the late third and to the fourth century one can only speak of a motion towards discerning and ascribing concrete church services to the seven hours of prayer mentioned by the Psalmist: "*Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments*" (Psa 119:164 NKJ). That does not mean that none these services existed – it simply means that at the end of the fourth century there was not a consensus as to what these seven offices were. On the other hand, we do have some compelling evidence as to the contents of some of these fourth-century offices, but not for all of them.

Among the most valuable contributions to the study of Comparative Liturgics which we referred to, one can mention the cardinal contributions of Anglican scholar Paul Bradshaw (1981), that of renown American Liturgist Robert F. Taft S.J. (1986), as well as the more recent Ph. D. Dissertation (1998) of late Hegumenos Gregory (Graham, as layman) W. Woolfenden

(1946-2008). These major studies mapped out the geography of daily Christian prayer and daily liturgical offices of the first centuries and identified and organized virtually all known pieces of literary evidence. Moreover, they put forth a series of explanations for the development of daily offices and prayers as well as some attempts at reconstructing structures which were only alluded to in the literary sources. They provided natural reference points to our research. While these studies tend to use the Cappadocian evidence as indication of different scholastic typologies – notably, the "cathedral office", followed by the "urban monastic office" –, we tried to argue in favour of a "Cappadocian" typology, whose influence is still visible in Eastern Orthodox monasticism and spirituality.

The objectives of our study go deeper in time than the strict interests of the Liturgist, towards the dawn of the Church and even beyond that, thus entering the realm of the **Biblical Studies**. One should remember that the substance of most prayers employed in the Early Church was mainly biblical. To a Christian-Orthodox researcher, the Bible is more than a literary source for the study of the life of early Christians or that of Jews: it is the word of God, which should be treated with due reverence. As such, we refrained from adopting some of the untenable presuppositions of Western biblical criticism and chose to found our research upon studies which work *from within* the Church Tradition and to its support. For the studies of the early Christian ethos, we turned to the classical contributions of Romanian biblical scholars Rev. Prof. Ioan Mircea (1955) and Rev. Prof. Grigorie Marcu (1960), as well as to recent studies, employing modern tools of research, such as those of Rev. Prof. Constantin Preda (2002; 2007). As for the Qumran Scrolls we referred to multiple studies signed by Professor Daniel K. Falk (1997; 2000; 2015, etc.).

The historical material acquired from the sources was assessed by means put forth by **Patrology** and **Spirituality**. It is only by these means that we may gain some sense of understanding the importance of the Psalter for early monasticism, the rationale behind combining work and prayer, the pursuit of inner prayer or – to broaden the perspective – the reasons behind the appealing power exerted to this day by monasticism unto Christian-Orthodox lay people.

### 4. General Outline of the Dissertation

On the course of 232 pages and its nine chapters the dissertation tries to retrace the major coordinates of the private prayer as witnessed in both the Old and the New Testament, and relevant Church literature of the first four centuries, with special focus on the monastic and Cappadocian contributions on the matter.

## Chapter I: Prayer in the Books of Old Testament

As no explicit rule of daily prayer is to be found in the writings of the Hebrew Bible, we are compelled to look for individual pieces of evidence and subsequently try to relate them. A typological analysis seems to be most appropriate.

The first reference to prayer is to be found in the Book of Genesis 4:26: "*And as for Seth, to him also a son was born; and he named him Enosh. Then men began to call on the name of the LORD*". Two other references tell us of Abraham, who "*built an altar to the LORD and called on the name of the LORD*" (Gen 12:8 NKJ; cf. 13:4). The first recorded words of a prayer are those of Melchizedek: "*Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand*" (Gen 14:19-20 NKJ)". From these as well as other examples, such as Gen 24:27, we may infer that the most ancient form of prayer preserved in the Scriptures was the *blessing* and that *calling the name of the Lord* was essential to prayer.

The Law given to Moses did not specify a rule of daily prayer. It however included the requirement of the daily perennial sacrifice, carried twice a day, "*in the morning, and* […] *at twilight*" (Exo 29:38-39; cf. Num 28:3-4). The daily gathering of manna also imposed a rhythm on the people of Israel. The most conclusive evidence supporting the existence of a rule of prayer in the Old Testament is the *Shema Yisrael* passage: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates*" (Deu 6:4-9 NKJ). Anglican biblical scholar Walter R. Moberly suggested that the commandment of the daily recitation of *Shema Yisrael* could have

been related to the morning gathering of manna or to the continual sacrifice. It remains unclear when exactly the *Shema* became part of the daily Jewish office. The first Talmudic reference to the recitation of *Shema* twice a day, in the morning and in the evening is to be found in the *Berakoth Treatise*, set in written form in the second Christian century. Nevertheless, praying before and after sleep, as well as giving thanks for food may well be regarded as universal manifestations of the *homo religious*. Such prayers are simply too pervasive to be necessarily and exclusively derived from the daily Temple sacrifice.

We also turned our attention towards the Psalms and on the basis of their classification and specific content tried to discern certain affinities, which would have made them suitable for being used either during specific temple services or daily prayers. Liturgical scrolls discovered at Qumran provide additional information on the use of psalms during the daily prayers of the Qumran community members. For instance, Psalms 3 and 90 were used in the Qumran community as well as by rabbis to counter nocturnal temptations. Such elements of typological analysis also allowed us to monitor the use of specific psalms during later Christian offices.

## Chapter II: Individual Prayer in the Writings of the New Testament

Certain New Testament passages, such as Lk 4:16-30, give accounts of instances in which our Lord Jesus Christ engaged in certain synagogue liturgical offices. This goes to show just how dependant we are on the text of the New Testament for the study of Jewish liturgical offices.

Such accounts are complemented by those recollecting moments at which our Lord prayed in solitude or in the company of his nearest disciples: Mat 14:23; 17:1; Mk 9:2, etc. As for the times at which according to the Gospels our Lord frequently prayed, one could discern His custom of keeping watch and praying at night (Lk 21:37; cf. Mk 13:33-37, etc.). The research of Arthur Roger Ekirch (2001; 2205) has shown that keeping vigil and praying at night were – among other – common nocturnal activities in the pre-industrial era, as humans shared a different, solar-oriented, two-phase sleep pattern, which included one period of sleep after sunset, and another one towards dawn.

The Gospels also narrate about Our Saviour's praying before or after important events, such as choosing and dispatching the Apostles to mission (Lk 6:12-13; 9:1-6; Mat 14:23, etc), but also spontaneous prayer (Lk 10:21-22; Joh 17, etc.).

Moreover, our Lord gave to the Apostles instructions on how one should pray and on what one should pray for (Mat 6:5-8. 31-33; Mk 12:40; Lk 6:46; 18:13). The most valued practical teaching regarding prayer given to us by the Lord is the prayer bearing His name (Mat 6:9-13; Lk 11:2-4). The reverence it commands derives from its unsurpassed inspired character – being no less as the very words of the Lord –, from its masterful combination of simplicity and complexity. Early Christians as well as theologians of later centuries have found it to be the most appropriate liturgical expression of the new filiation "according to grace" in which we were installed by the Economy of Salvation accomplished by the Incarnate Son of God. The words "*today*" and "*daily bread*" manifest the appropriateness of this prayer for daily use.

We also turned our attention to exploring the possibility that the Apostles and early Christians might have taken over specific Judaic liturgical elements or "building blocks" into the Christian worship, and, if so, what those might have been. Non-scriptural evidence suggests that during the first century A.D. the *Shema* was recited by the Jews twice a day, in the evening and in the morning. Rabbinic tradition might have also called for a prayer at noon. Our investigation led us to the conclusion that one cannot simply assume that early Christian prayer rule simply followed Jewish customs. It is however possible that, at least until their exclusion from the synagogues (echoed in Act 4:24-30) and perhaps even after they departed from Jerusalem, the prayer rule observed by the Apostles and the Early Church was influenced by the rhythm of the daily temple sacrifices as suggested Act 3:1; 10:3.30. The ancient historian Josephus Flavius mentions that, before the destruction of the Temple of Herod, the daily Judaic sacrifices were carried out twice a day: in the morning and at the ninth hour.

Apart from a few examples of spontaneous prayer preserved in the *Acts of the Apostles*, we cannot be sure, as to what the contents of the daily prayers of early Christians might have been. As described by the *Acts*, Christian prayer was performed „with one accord" (*homothymadón*: Act 1:14; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29), "calling the name of the Lord" – i.e. our Lord Jesus Christ: 2:21; 9:14-15. 21; 22:16; 26:9, etc. Calling Jesus Christ "Lord" and praying in His name (cf. Joh 16:23-24; Mat 18:20) is in itself a confession of the faith in Him, as the resurrected Son of God. It is also to be assumed that the Lord's Prayer played an important part in the prayer life of early Christians. One could interpret the passages from Rom 8:15 and Gal 4:6 to be allusions to the Lord's Prayer. Other prayers of early Christians

might have included blessings, hymns, and various psalms, such as those identified by Franciscan scholar Adalbert Hamman (1952).

## Chapter III: Prayer in the Writings of the Apostolic Fathers

Our research also looked at the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*, the so-called *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Epistle of St. Clement of Rome*, the Epistles of St. Ignatius of Antioch, at St. Polycarp's of Smyrna *Epistle to the Philippians*, as well as relevant *Acts of the Martyrs*. From the *Didache* we come to know that Christians were called upon to pray three times a day, and that the prayer to be said at those not-yet-specified times was the Lord's Prayer. Apparently, as far as Christians were concerned, the Lord's Prayer came to replace the *Shema*. St. Polycarp († 155/156) also bears witness for the popularity of this prayer.

Various accounts of the *Acts of the Martyrs* (2nd to 4th century A.D.), speak of praying at noon (St. Polycarp, St. Alexander), of the custom of singing psalms (St. Perpetua, St. Sabbas the Goth) or of the night vigil (St. Cyprian; St. Agape, Chionia and Irene).

## Chapter IV: Individual Prayer in Writings of Patristic Authors from the Second Half of the Second Century to the First Half of the Third Century

It is worth noting that the *Stromata* Clement of Alexandria (†c. 215) mention for the first time the third, sixth, and the ninth hour prayers, and brings them into connection with the "seven times a day"-model of praying of the Psa 119:164. Tertullian (†c. 240) was the first patristic author to provide a theological rationale for the canonical hours of prayer: the third – The Pentecost (Act 3), the sixth – Apostle Peter's Prayer (Act 10:9), the ninth – Apostles Peter and John visiting the Temple for prayer. The same author speaks of praying at night and also mentions for the first time the custom of signing oneself with the cross.

In his turn, Origen († 254) recommends praying three times a day – morning, noon, evening –, in accordance with Dan 6:11-12, as well as praying facing east. He also left us some examples of psalm-based daily prayers. St. Cyprian introduces a new, Christ-centred, rationale for the sixth and the ninth liturgical hours: the Crucifixion and the Death of Our Lord on the Cross. For the Bishop of Carthage these canonical hours complement the daily prayers spoken at

dusk and at dawn, whose symbolism has to do with the eschatological anticipation and Resurrection, respectively.

Tertullian, Origen and St. Cyprian wrote the most ancient commentaries on the Lord's Prayer to have reached us. They were written sometime in the years 198-200, 232-234 and 252, respectively. They bear witness to both Matthew and Luke lections of the prayer and show preference towards the first. All three commentaries emphasize the unique character of this prayer, *verbatim* dictated by our Lord, a fact which makes it especially suitable for use in worship. Moreover, as already the first patristic commentaries put it, addressing God as "Father" implies confessing Our Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and the belief in Baptism as means of partaking in His Sonship. Both points of faith expressed preeminently the Christian identity and help differentiate Christians from Jews and their claims. The early exegesis of the words "*Thy kingdom come*" stresses the importance of the eschatological expectation in an era in which Christianity was far from becoming a socially accepted option. The same holds true for the supplication concerning the "daily bread" – in Greek, *epioúsion*, literally "for being" – which is understood of denoting primarily the Eucharist, the bread of the eternal life (in both Origen and Tertullian).

We also made some remarks (p. 97-98) concerning the stance and the gestures accompanying prayer in the Early Church, as witnessed by literary works of the second and third centuries.

## Chapter V: Daily Prayer in the Most Ancient Church Orders (3rd to 5th c.)

The most ancient of the Church Orders (*Kirchenordnungen*, *Church Orders*, *Règlements ecclésiastiques*) are notoriously difficult to assess because of their inherent nature. They belong to the genre of the *living literature*, which means they were successively re-written, so as to suit the needs of different generations and specific local communities. Moreover, such community orders were passed down as well as circulated, rewritten and combined within different cultural areas pertaining to the Mediterranean and across the span of at least two centuries, from the beginning of the third, to the beginning of the fifth. One could regard their vein as running chronologically parallel to our topic, yet as an ever-present reference point. Authorship and chronology seem to be irrelevant to the matter at hand. One cannot know if these community orders were actually applied and observed, or if they simply remained ideal constructions. We

surveyed the following church orders: *Traditio Apostolica*; *The Apostolic Constitutions*; *Testamentum Domini*; *The Apostolic Canons* in the Coptic and Arabic Redaction; The *Apostolic Didascalia* in the late Ethiopian Redaction.

The *Apostolic Tradition* attributed to St. Hippolytus of Rome († c. 236) recommends to all Christians to pray immediately after they had woken up (ch. 35), and, should they not be able to take part in the catechesis held in the church, at least to read from the Scriptures at home. The three canonical hours are also mentioned as well as praying before sleep, at midnight and at cockcrow. Chapter 42 mentions signing one's forehead and eyes with the cross.

The eighth book of the *Apostolic Constitutions* reiterates, although with some differences, the instructions of the *Apostolic Tradition* regarding daily prayer. The seventh book of the *Constitutions* provides us with examples of an evening and a morning hymn, respectively, as well as an example of a lunch prayer. All these prayers are indebted to the Psalms (evening: Ps 119:12; morning: Ps 80:2; lunch: Ps 136:25). The second book of the *Constitutions* mentions the daily offices performed in the "houses of the Lord" in the morning and the evening. The passage mentions the intonations of the Psalm 63 during the morning office and of the Psalm 141 as well of the *Nunc dimittis* hymn during the evening service. Should one had not been able to partake in the daily offices held in church, it was recommended to say these psalms and the corresponding prayers privately. The liturgical features witnessed by the second book of the *Constitutions* evoke the "cathedral office" of the fourth century.

We put together a table (p. 113) showing the approximate chronological evolution of the daily Christian prayer rule from a tripartite pattern of prayer (morning – noon – evening or, alternately, the Hours III, VI, XI) towards the "classical" pattern of prayer containing seven daily offices. According the ancient Church Orders, the three canonical hours were complemented by the following prayer times: the three canonical hours, praying in the evening or before retiring, at midnight, at cockcrow and in the morning. A second table (p. 115) displayed information relevant for the evolution of the biblical rationalization invoked by patristic literature in favour of the canonical hours III, VI and IX. History seemed to have favoured the Christological symbolism promoted by African writers of the Marcan tradition to the detriment of the "Apostolic" symbolism promoted by other writers.

## Chapter VI: Prayer in the Context of the Fourth Century Public Worship

Our survey of private prayer in the context of fourth century Christian public worship made use of technical categories forged by the field of Comparative Liturgics, such as "cathedral office", "monastic office" and "urban monastic office". The construction "cathedral office" denotes the course of daily Christian liturgical offices, rendered public during the climate of religious freedom granted by Emperor Constantine the Great. The term "cathedra", a bishop's seat, evokes the richest known form – albeit, local – of an early liturgical office and implies an urban environment.

Typical daily cathedral offices include evening and morning offices, soon to be complemented by a vigil. Psalm 141 became a central part of the evening service – so much that it came to be known as the "evening psalm", or, because of its being intoned at the time as the evening lamps were lit, the "psalm of the light". As witnessed by both the diary of Egeria and the second book of the *Apostolic Constitutions*, urban vigils were characterized, among other features, by tripartite antiphonal (alternate) singing, whose purpose was expressing the Trinitarian faith as well as combating fatigue. Morning office featured Psalm 63, which came to be known as "the morning psalm" (Eusebius of Caesarea, John Chrysostom), but also litanies, prayers, and blessings. The historical sources include specific liturgical directives concerning catechumens and their Christian instruction. We also made use of the writings of St. Ambrose in order to determine what the contents of the "cathedral office" in the late fourth-century Milan might have looked like. One local feature of the Milan cathedral office was the inclusion of the Beatitudes in the morning office.

## Chapter VII: Egyptian Monastic Prayer Rules before the Diffusion of the Basilian *Ascetic Rules*

The "cathedral office" of the fourth century has its complement in the "monastic office", a name encompassing various manifestations of early monastic daily prayer, to whom various sources, such as Athanasius' *Life of Saint Anthony*, Rufin's *Historia monachorum in Ægypto*, Palladius's *Historia Lausiaca* and the *Patericon* bear witness. Despite its enormous variation, early monastic office is defined on one side by the endeavour to lengthen both liturgical offices

and private prayer, so that these cover the greatest duration of a 24-hour span, and on the other, by the desire to interiorize prayer, so that this may become relentless. These objectives materialized in all-night vigils, complemented by short and repeated prayers, posture alternation and genuflections. The "Upper" Egypt coenobitic prayer rule stipulated a morning and an evening prayer as well as a 12 prayer-vigil. The Psalms were at the core of the earliest known of the daily monastic offices.

## Chapter VIII: Christian Prayer Life in the Fourth Century Cappadocia

Few regions could have boasted a Christian tradition by the middle of the fourth century as respectable as Cappadocia. St. Basil mentions the vesper hymn *Phos hilaron* as an example for the orthodoxy, ancientness, respectability of the unwritten Tradition at within the Church (*De Spiritu Sancto*, ch. 29). Various writings of the Cappadocian Fathers (St. Gregory's the Theologian *Orations 8* and *18*, St. Gregory's of Nyssa *Life of Saint Macrina*, etc.) provide some of the most conclusive evidence regarding the fourth-century "cathedral office", but also attest the Cappadocian insistence on taking part in the catechesis as well as the propensity towards privately imitating daily liturgical offices.

We tried to discern what daily prayer rule accompanied the ascetical experiments of both Saint Macrina the Younger, whose life imitated that of nun, as well as those of Saints Basil and Gregory the Theologian during the years of their retreat in Pont. St. Macrina prayed using the Psalter on evenings and mornings, as well on the canonical hours and at dinner. Saints Basil and Gregory's pattern of prayer included morning and evening prayers as well as vigils. They also made extensive use of the Psalter and sang hymns, took retreats for solitary prayer and experimented with combining working and praying. In an epistle written in the year 372, St. Basil testified that his practice was to receive Communion four times a week.

On the basis of the ascetical tradition as well as on that of his own ascetical experiments St. Basil formulated the *Ascetic Rules*, whose purpose was also to reclaim Cappadocian ascetism for Orthodoxy and provide it with a structure. At the time, Cappadocian ascetism was dominated by the moral authority of the semi-arian bishop and renowned ascetic Eustathius of Sebaste, who was until ca. 370 Basil's mentor too. Later versions of Basil's *Ascetic Rules* were to spread far beyond the boundaries of Cappadocia and were to become the standard for all Eastern Orthodox monasteries. The 37$^{th}$ of the *Longer Rules* affirms the principle of combining work and pray and

stipulates the order of the "praying times". These included: matins, the Hours three, six and nine, vespers, compline, and the Midnight Office. Chronologically, this is the first clear identification of the Seven Church Lauds and simultaneously the first reference to compline. Of course, these are but the seeds of the future Byzantine offices bearing the same name. The Sixth Hour made use of the Psalms 55 and 91, although the latter was also part of the compline. Psalm 119 saw use within the Midnight Office.

The anonymous Cappadocian Writing *De virginitate* (c. 370 AD) addressed those wishing to conduct a nun's life, but not necessarily in a monastery. The rule of prayers which such women were expected to adopt included a vigil starting at midnight, which employed Psalm 51 among other psalms organized in groups of three and followed by a Hallelujah as well as the monastic alternation between psalms and prayers and between standing and kneeling, respectively. Matins included Psalm 63, a doxology, and – surprisingly – Psalm 103.

Basil's *Letter 207* also talks about vigils held in Neocaesarea in the second part of the night (towards morning), enjoying the attendance of lay people, during which Psalms were sung according to an antiphonal system. Psalm 51 was intoned in the morning. The antiphonal singing of Psalms is a monastic feature and its mentioning in an urban context is a direct proof for the existence of the "urban monastic office". Such liturgical practices were perceived by some of his contemporaries to be an innovation, hence Basil's need to defend them and the overall apologetic tone of the *Letter 207*. The Great Cappadocian used the antiphonal singing of Psalms as means of countering the missionary practices of the Arians and Pneumatomachi, a method which was also used by the anti-Arian champion of the West, St. Ambrose. Arians used poems and hymns to promote their doctrine. While St. Ambrose went as far as composing original psalms to be used in worship, St. Basil made the decisive step of allowing biblical psalms to be sung antiphonically during vigils held in urban milieu. Choosing biblical psalms for liturgical use constitutes a confession of their inspired character as well as an indirect confession of the divinity of the Holy Spirit.

We explored some of the remarks of both saints Gregory – the Theologian and the bishop of Nyssa – concerning prayer. Gregory the Theologian's orations contain references to psalmody, vigils, shedding tears of penance, remaining standing while praying, and his poems even include original examples of morning and evening prayers. The bishop of Nyssa insists upon the goal of interiorizing prayer, but recommends to advanced practitioners not to shun

praying together with the less experienced, so as the latter may gain motivation and instruction from the former. The search for a practical recipe which would allow combining both solitary and common prayer remains at the heart of the Cappadocian Fathers' spirituality. The same holds true for Gregory of Nyssa's *Commentary on the Lord's Prayer*. His commentary stresses the need for interiorizing the Christian attitude towards spiritual life and prayer. Nevertheless we are given to understand that his exhortations addressed not only monks, but also those of the lay people who wished to emulate them.

## Chapter IX: Egyptian Monastic Prayer Rules at the End of the Fourth Century and Beginning of the Fifth Century

It is certain that one form of the Basilian *Ascetic Rules* reached Palestine and then Egypt at the latest when Evagrios took flight there in the years 382 and 384 respectively. One cannot say with certainty to what degree the Basilian *Rules* might have influenced late fourth– and early fifth century Egyptian monasticism. Latin translations prepared by Western pilgrims visiting Palestine and Egypt, such as those of Rufin and Nicetas of Remesiana, helped popularizing the Rules in the West even before the end of the fourth century.

This "second age" of Egyptian monasticism is characterized, among other liturgical features, by the endeavour towards reciting or intoning the whole Psalter during the span of 24 hours, which was perceived to be a concrete means of living the ideal of the incessant prayer. However, reciting the whole Psalter during the course of one day was not a task for everyone. Early coenobitic monasticism tried to substitute this with liturgical offices which amounted to 12 prayers, so that their number may equate at least symbolically that of the solar day hours. One example includes six prayers in the evening (compline), followed by another six prayers during the vigil, for a total of twelve prayers, equalling the number of the night hours (St. John Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum*, book II). Other features specific to late fourth-century Egyptian monastic vigils included stance alternation (standing – kneeling – genuflexions), and tripartite responsorial psalmody, divided by short prayers.

The third book of St. John Cassian's *De institutis coenobiorum* provides first-hand information about the liturgical life the late fourth-century Palestinian monasteries sharing in the urban monastic office. Saints John Cassian and his friend Germanus joined a monastery near Bethlehem sometime between 378 and 385, and they remained there for three years before

moving on to Egypt. The list of daily offices provided by Cassian included the six "classical" items: vigil, the Hours III, VI and IX, vespers and matins. In addition to these he mentions a "recently-introduced" office, specific to Palestine, which was celebrated immediately after vigil. Researchers take this new office to be the First Canonical Hour (nowadays counted together with matins). With the addition of this last office, the number of the daily liturgical offices – at least as Palestine was concerned – amounted to seven, and, as such, the words of Psalm 119:164 were once again fulfilled. As already mentioned, for St. Basil the Great, it was compline that made the number of the seven daily offices complete.

We receive further historical information concerning the urban monastic office from St. John Chrysostom. From his writings we can gather that the late fourth-century Antiohian office included typical urban monastic traits, such as prolonging the midnight vigil until morning and celebrating matins immediately after vigil. Antiohian Christians were so much fond of private prayer, that it became necessary for St. John Chrysostom to remind them not to neglect the public church services.

## CONCLUSIONS

Christian daily prayer rule of the first four centuries evolved from a tripartite pattern of prayer (morning – noon – evening or, alternately, the Hours III, VI, XI) towards the Byzantine sevenfold pattern of prayer, which was taken to fulfil the words of the Psalmist: "*Seven times a day I praise You, Because of Your righteous judgments*" (Psa 119:164 NKJ). Praying three times a day seems to have been a practice which the Church had taken over from Judaism (cf. Dan 6:11). In addition to these three times of prayer one should also mention the vigil and the night prayer – a wide-spread custom pertaining to the two-phase sleep pattern of the pre-industrial era. The contents of the Jewish daily prayers were the *Shema Yisrael* (Deu 6:4-9 NKJ), benedictions and Psalms. As early as the first century A.D. Christians replaced the *Shema* with the Lord's Prayer, which for them must have functioned as a symbol of faith, and probably also as a catechetical program. The beginning of the third century brings about the first written pieces of evidence of striving towards attaining a sevenfold daily prayer rule, which in this age included the canonical hours III, VI, IX and the prayers before sleep, at midnight, at cockcrow and in the morning.

The freedom granted to Christianity by Emperor Constantine encouraged the development of daily public worship, which Liturgists indicate as "cathedral office". The daily cathedral office included: evening and morning services as well as vigils. Appropriate Psalms constituted the substance of these daily prayers. The fourth-century also witnessed the rise of the monastic movement. While the first known ascetics experimented with various personal prayer rules, the first monasteries, belonging to the Pachomian tradition, formulated *rules* to be observed by the entire monastic community. The "monastic office" sought practical solutions for lengthening the duration of the daily services so that these may cover the greater extend of the 24 hours. Later fourth-century Egyptian iterations of such monastic rules bear witness to the increasing importance of the Psalter for the daily monastic worship: the night vigil was to include 12 psalms divided into groups of three and chanted in an antiphonic manner.

In his *Ascetic Rules*, Saint Basil codified the monastic principle of combining work and prayer. He also established the now-classical order of the seven daily offices: Vespers, Compline, Midnight Office, Matins, and the Canonical Hours III, VI, and IX. Appropriate psalms provided the core of these offices: Ps 141 for vespers, Ps 63 for matins, Ps 143 for the Third Hour, Psalms 55 and 91 for the Sixth Hour, again Ps 91 for compline, Psalms 51 and 119 as well as others for the night vigil.

The monastic life came to exert an enormous power of attraction on lay Christians, who strived towards emulating in the city the ascetic feats of the monks. The last quarter of the fourth century witnessed the mutual influences between the "cathedral" and the "monastic" offices and the emergence of a new typology, indicated by Liturgists as "urban monastic", which would go on to constitute the foundation of the later Byzantine daily office. St. Basil the Great employed antiphonal psalmody (a monastic trait) in urban context, as means of fighting off both Arians and Pneumatomachi, thus defending true faith on the realm of worship. Although criticized by his enemies for liturgical innovation, St. Basil was proven right by the Christian Tradition. His loyalty to the principle of *lex orandi, lex credendi* remains to this day an essential part of the Orthodox ethos.

The Church of the first four centuries did not know the modern distinction between public and private life of prayer. One should regard the tripartite, sevenfold and duodecimal patterns of daily Christian prayer not necessarily as competing but as complementary. They remain practical answers to St. Paul's exhortation "*pray without ceasing*" (1Th 5:17 NKJ).

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