

Private and Public Prayer

1. Private Prayer

a) Tertullian

Tertullian includes private prayer when he expounds upon what Jesus and his disciples taught is required for prayer, in that when one prays one:

should be confident that the sight and hearing of Almighty God are present beneath roofs, and extend even into the secret place. (Ch. 1)

In times of tragedy, war and celebration the gods were invoked to help, or praised and thanked for their help. The few examples below from Greek and Roman literature and the Old and New Testament indicate the type of prayer used for both private and public prayer.

b) Greek

One example of a private prayer which is also associated with a purification ritual can be found in the *Odyssey*, 4.759-67, before Penelope prays to Atrytone (Athene), she washes, dresses in a clean garment, and prepares the groats of barley in the sacrificial basket.³²³ Although she has 'attendant women' with her it is her private prayer of petition, reminding Athene of Odysseus' faithfulness to sacrificial ritual:

Hear me, Atrytone, child of Zeus of the aegis, if ever here in his own palace resourceful Odysseus burned the rich thigh pieces of an ox or sheep in your honor, remember it now for my sake and save for me my beloved son, and fend off the suitors who are evilly overbearing.³²⁴ (*Odyssey*, 4, 759-767.)

This prayer also attests to the private prayer and sacrifice in the home that Odysseus also performed. Although written for Greek theatre presentation the following two examples taken from the Greek dramatists Euripides and Aeschylus indicate the type of Greek prayer that could have been used in Graeco-Roman times. In Euripides' drama *Medea*, written in c. 431 BCE and set in Corinth, Medea finds out that her husband Jason has betrayed her for the hand of the princess of Corinth, and she is full of despair and anger, and wants revenge. She first prays to the Olympian god, Zeus 'flame of the sky' for death, then she prays to the goddesses Themis and Artemis:

Medea: Come, flame of the sky, pierce through my head! What do I gain from living any longer? (145)

Medea: Mighty Themis! Dread Artemis! Do you see how I am used . . . In spite of those great oaths I bound him with. . . (165)³²⁵

In her despair she calls on Zeus, the king of gods to destroy her, then she calls on Themis 'the

³²³ Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, p. 73.

³²⁴ Homer, *The Odyssey of Homer*, trans. Richmond Lattimore, Harper Perennial, New York, 1984(1974), pp. 84-5.

³²⁵ Euripides. *Medea and other plays*, trans. Philip Vellacott, Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1963, p. 22.

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goddess of what is right and proper'³²⁶ followed by Artemis, daughter of Zeus, her arrows can cause sudden death. In Aeschylus' play *Eumenides*, written c. 458 BCE, the prayer is a general petition to the gods prayed by the chorus for prosperity:

Chorus.....I pray that the sun's bright radiance bring from the earth abundantly all goods of life that depend on fortune. (920).³²⁷

Chorus: This is my prayer: that never in this city shall stir the noise of faction that it is never sated with evils. (976)³²⁸

A hymn of praise to Zeus (see Appendix A, p. 111) and a prayer written by the Stoic philosopher, Cleanthes (331 - 233 BCE), illustrates his 'deeply religious outlook'³²⁹ and his dependence on Zeus as king of the gods. His prayer, later used by Cicero and Epictetus,³³⁰ is an example of a short Greek prayer. It is a prayer of submission to Zeus and to Destiny:

Lead me, O Zeus, and thou, O Destiny, to the end that ye have ordained for me. I will follow without reluctance. Were I a fool, and refused, I should nevertheless have to follow.³³¹

Epictetus also includes a hymn of praise of God's providence in his 'Discourses' 1.16:

Great is God, for he has given us these instrument with which to till the earth.
Great is God, for he has given us hands, and ability to swallow, and a belly and the power to grow without knowing it, and to breathe even while we are asleep.³³²

c) Roman

Roman personal prayer is illustrated through the main character in Virgil's epic poem the *Aeneid*. Virgil (70 BCE- 19 BCE) wrote the *Aeneid* 'only a few years before the Christian Era started'.³³³ Although an epic poem of myth it provides examples for contemporary prayer and petition. Aeneas prays for help for his fleet after landing on the 'holy' island of Delos:

Reverently I entered the temple built of ancient stones and prayed. "Apollo, grant us a home of our own. We are weary. Give us a walled city, which shall endure, and a lineage of our blood. Let there be some new citadel for us; henceforth preserve it as a remnant of Troy saved from the Greeks and from merciless Achilles.(Bk. 3, 91).³³⁴

Virgil is pointing out the value of reverence and acknowledgment of the gods as he describes Aeneas' prayer. It foreshadows the eventual founding of Rome, a city that had endured. Despite the scepticism of Virgil's age, Aeneas' reverence and dutiful respect for the gods was for the Romans the ideal that they should aspire to if they wanted to remain powerful and remain in right relationship with the gods. Aeneas' constant reverence and awareness of the gods and his use of private prayer is also illustrated as he awakes from a vivid dream and says:

³²⁶ Homer, *The Odyssey*, p. 375.

³²⁷ Aeschylus, *The Oresteia*, trans. David Grene & Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1989, p. 168.

³²⁸ Ibid., p. 169.

³²⁹ Grant, Frederick C., *Hellenistic Religions: The Age of Syncretism*, p. 152.

³³⁰ Ibid.,

³³¹ Ibid.,

³³² Ibid., p. 156.

³³³ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, p. 11

³³⁴ Ibid., p.77.

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I started from my bed, raised upturned hands towards the sky with a prayer, and poured an offering of unwatered wine on the hearth. (*The Aeneid* 3, 175)³³⁵

This statement is also an example of posture for Roman prayer and the Romans' use of libations as an offering to the gods. The Romans prayed in time of need during sickness and in battle. The vow of something in return for an answer to prayers is a common theme in Roman prayer. R.M.Ogilvie cites a private prayer of a Roman consul as:

Claudius, consul in 296 B.C. in the middle of a desperate battle, raised his hands to heaven and cried, 'Bellona, if you grant us today the victory, I vow to dedicate a temple to you'.³³⁶

Private prayers for individual needs can be assumed as Marcus Aurelius discusses in his *Meditations* what a person may pray for, such as things that are within ones power when he says, 'who told you that the gods do not co-operate even in the things that are in our power? Begin with prayers for such things, and you will see'. (Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*. 9, 40.)³³⁷

R.M.Ogilvie, in his *The Romans And Their Gods* states that a 'Christian apologist, Arnobius, cites this prayer as being typical of pagan prayers:'

Draw near, draw near, Penates and you, Apollo, and you, Neptune, and by the mercy of your godhead avert all these evils by which I am consumed, tortured and vexed.³³⁸

The petitioner is calling on the *Penates* the household gods who protect the personal needs such as food and health, also Apollo, the god favoured by Augustus and the Roman state and who was regarded as a god of healing to a minor degree, and Neptune the god of the sea.

d) Mystery Religions

Because of the nature of the Mystery religions examples of private prayer are rare. However one well-known example is Lucius' private appeal to Isis in Apuleius *Metamorphoses*, Bk. XI.³³⁹

e) Jewish.

The Psalms, as well as being used for public prayer in Judaism also served for private prayers said in the home. Prayers were also said before and after meals as well as before any important action and gradually all actions were preceded by a blessing so that 'every activity of life, everyplace, and every portion of time were permeated with thoughts of God'.³⁴⁰ The Book of Tobit, probably written 200 –180 BCE to illustrate God's justice in that 'suffering is not a punishment but a test',³⁴¹ had both Tobit and Sarah privately petition the Lord for help. In

³³⁵ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, p. 80.

³³⁶ Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 39.

³³⁷ Liebeschuetz, op. cit., p. 210,

³³⁸ Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 32.

³³⁹ Cf my Chapter 4, p. 40. For prayer see appendix A, p. 110.

³⁴⁰ James Hastings & John A Selbie et al, (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1918, p. 192.

³⁴¹ Irene Nowell, Toni Craven & Demetrius Dumm, 'Tobit, Judith, Esther', pp. 568-579 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary - 2nd Edition*, p. 568.

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Tobit's prayer (Tob 3:2-6) (see Appendix A,) and Sarah's prayer (Tob. 3:11-15) (see Appendix A) they both consider their situation so desperate that they would prefer death. Following his misjudgment of his wife Tobit prays 'with much grief and anguish of heart'. (Tob 3:1) Sarah's prayer of despair follows her decision not to hang herself as she would bring too much sorrow to her father, so she prays that the Lord will let her die. Although these prayers were said by fictional characters and were written before Christian times they illustrate Jewish private prayer of petition and trust in the justice of the Lord.³⁴²

f) Christian

According to the New Testament Jesus instructed his apostles to pray privately when he said: '... whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.' (Mt. 6:6.) Throughout the Gospels Jesus is shown to be praying by himself in a quiet deserted place or on a mountain such as in the following examples:

...after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray, (Mt. 14:23.)

In the morning while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed, (Mk. 1:35.)

After saying farewell to them, he went up on the mountain to pray, (Mk. 6:46.)

...he would withdraw to deserted places and pray, (Lk. 5:16.)

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God, (Lk. 6:12.)

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus' prayer of petition and submission to the will of God was repeated three times as he prays in Gethsemane:

Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak. Again, he went away for the second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.' Again he came and found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. (Mt. 26:41-44.)

Peter also is described as going to a private place to pray:

About noon the next day, as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray.' (Acts 10:9.)

³⁴² Nowell, Craven & Dumm, op. cit., p. 568.

2. Public Prayer

a) Greek

In Greek religion the 'head of the house, family, or village, the president of the council, the elected chief magistrate of the city – known as the archon in Athens – or the army general,' performed the public sacrifices accompanied by prayer.³⁴³ For the mystery cults, to ensure that the procedure was carried out properly, a priest or priestess of the particular god who was being honoured would oversee the ceremonies.

b) Roman

Apart from public prayers of a community as said at festivals and rituals, public prayers were said by individuals at ceremonies in temples, at festivals, or at games. The common practice of the Romans praying before battle is illustrated by Scipio Africanus, the leader of the great expedition about to sail from Sicily to attack Carthage in 204 BCE. Livy writing two hundred years after the event included a prayer offered by Scipio on his flagship for a successful voyage:

Ye gods and goddesses, who inhabit the seas and the lands, I supplicate and beseech you that whatever has been done under my command, or is being done, or will later be done, may turn out to my advantage and to the advantage of the people and the commons of Rome, the allies, and the Latins who by land or sea or on rivers follow me, [accepting] the leadership, the authority, and the auspices of the Roman people; that you will support them and aid them with your help; that you will grant that, preserved in safety and victorious over the enemy, arrayed in booty and laden with spoils, you will bring them back with me in triumph to our homes; that you will grant us the power to take revenge upon our enemies and foes; and that you will grant to me and the Roman people the power to enforce upon the Carthaginians what they have planned to do against our city, as an example of [divine] punishment. (Livy, *'History of Rome,'* XXIX, 27, 1-4.)³⁴⁴

He used the generic invocation of all the 'gods and goddesses who inhabit the seas and the land' so that he would not offend any god by missing out on naming them. Another Roman officer in Tiberius' reign, first century CE, Velleius Paterculus, prayed to named gods:

Jupiter Capitolinus, and Mars Gravidus, the author and consolidator of the Roman name, and Vesta, guardian of the perpetual fires, and all the other gods who have raised this might of the Roman Empire to the furthest eminence of the world, I pray and beseech you publicly: guard, preserve, protect this order, this peace, this prince and when he has fulfilled the full span of mortal life, ordain successors who in due time may be able to bear on their shoulders the burden of the Empire of the world with the steadfastness that we have seen him bear it. (Pocket History of Rome)³⁴⁵

It was a formal prayer of loyalty to the Emperor and a petition for the gods' protection and favour of the Roman people. It is also an acknowledgment that the gods have been responsible for Rome's might. He called on Jupiter Capitolinus, the head of the gods, and Mars Gravidus,

³⁴³ Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, p. 95.

³⁴⁴ Grant, Frederick C. *Ancient Roman Religion*, p. 159.

³⁴⁵ Ogilvie, op. cit., p. 39.

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god of war, as author and consolidator of the Roman name, and Vesta, the guardian of the perpetual fires as well as all other gods to be protectors of the Roman people. To petition the gods for protection was a constant motif in Roman prayer.

c) Mystery

Public processions and rituals in which there was public prayer were a feature of some Mystery religions. Apuleius outlines the public prayer said after the procession to the shore for the 'blessing of the fleet', a ritual associated with the worship of Isis, in his novel *Metamorphoses*.³⁴⁶ Public prayer was also seen in the Dionysian Mysteries as the shouts of *euboi* in the 'collective hysteria' of the ritual³⁴⁷ and the chants or meaningless word sounds during the procession to Eleusis in Eleusinian Mysteries.³⁴⁸

d) Jewish

The public prayers of some major characters in the Bible illustrate Jewish dependency on God. They were mainly prayers of petition, praise and thanksgiving. A prayer considered as being an ancient song of thanksgiving³⁴⁹ is attributed to Miriam. It is a prayer of praise to their God in Ex. 15:21 reportedly sung publicly on the spur of the moment on the banks of the Red Sea. Miriam with great joy took a tambourine and started dancing, 'and Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea".' (Ex. 15: 21.) Miriam's song is a continuation of the longer song of Moses. (Ex. 15:1-18.)

Another song of praise and thanksgiving is attributed to Hannah at Shiloh where she dedicated her son Samuel to God. She prays in the temple in the presence of the priest Eli. Her prayer commences with claims of exultation that her petition for a child was answered:

... 'My heart exults in the Lord; my strength is exalted in my God. My mouth derides my enemies, because I rejoice in my victory. There is no Holy One like the Lord, no one beside you; there is no Rock like our God.' (1 Sam. 2:1-2.)

The 'Rock' metaphor for God is used frequently in the Old Testament. In 2 Samuel, David expressed gratitude and praise in his song of thanksgiving when he said:

The Lord is my rock, my deliverer, my God, my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge, my savior; you save me from violence. I call upon the Lord who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies. (2 Sam. 22:2-4.)

The priests controlled public worship in the Temple, consisting of sacrificial ceremonies and set prayers, however this ceased with the destruction of the Temple. The synagogues then became the main places of public worship. According to Jewish custom prayers were to be said three

³⁴⁶ Cf. my Chapter 4, pp. 40-1.

³⁴⁷ Cf. p 79.

³⁴⁸ Cf. my Chapter 2, p17.

³⁴⁹ Richard J Clifford, 'Exodus' pp. 44-60 in *New Jerome Biblical Commentary - 2nd Edition*, p. 50.

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times a day. The *Amida* or standing prayer was the central prayer. Part of the thrice-daily liturgy was the recitation of this with the *Sh'ma* and closing with the *Kaddish* (the great doxology of the synagogue).³⁵⁰ The Sabbath holyday started on the evening before. The liturgy was similar to the weekday prayers with extra psalms at the morning service, such as the Hallelujah Psalms, Ps. 146-150, and Miriam's song. The reading of scripture was the pivotal point of the Sabbath. The afternoon service was similar but shorter than the morning service. The conclusion of the Sabbath was at sunset with psalms chanted and a closing ceremony called *Habdala* (separation) to symbolize the separation between the holydays and workdays.³⁵¹ There were public prayers at all the various feasts consisting of blessings, praise such as the *Hallel* (Great praise: Ps. 113-118)³⁵² and a doxology.

e) Christian

In Luke's Gospel there are examples of individuals using prayers in public drawn from the Old Testament such as Mary's 'Magnificat', a song of praise, Luke 1:46-55 (see Appendix A), and the prayer of Zechariah commonly known as the 'Benedictus' Lk. 1:67-79 (see Appendix A).

In the following prophetic prayer of Simeon, Luke draws from the prophet Isaiah.³⁵³ Simeon took the baby Jesus in his arms and praised God saying:

Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.
(Lk. 2:29-32.)

The first Christians attended the synagogues and prayed the same public prayer as in Judaism. When they developed their own worship, temple worship (in idealized format) was favoured however the term 'synagogue' was used at times for the assembly (also called the *ecclesia*) up 'until the fourth century'.³⁵⁴ The main prayers were those used in the rituals that developed from the Jewish home celebration of the Passover called *Seder*, which was continued as the Lord's Supper at first in smaller assemblies then in larger gatherings as the Christian communities grew. This worship was still private as only those who had been baptised could take part in it.³⁵⁵ At the end of a description 'On Assembling in the Church' in Bk. 2, Sec. 7 of the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* is stated the instruction, 'let the door be watched, lest any unbeliever, or one not yet

³⁵⁰ Werner, op. cit., pp. 6-8.

³⁵¹ Ibid., p. 9.

³⁵² Ibid., p. 10.

³⁵³ Robert J. Karris, 'The Gospel According to Luke' pp. 675-721 in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary - 2nd Edition*, p. 684.

³⁵⁴ Werner, op. cit., p. 20.

³⁵⁵ Dix, op. cit., p. 16.

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initiated, come in'.³⁵⁶ This practice is similar to the debarring of the uninitiated to Greek Mystery ceremonies.

3. Concluding Summary

Tertullian states that one should be confident when one prays in private that their prayer will be heard. Private prayers were usually prayers of petition, praise and thanksgiving. Greek private prayer of petition was usually attended by sacrifice. For Roman private worship Aeneas' prayers exemplified reverent private prayer of petition. Both Greek and Roman prayers were usually accompanied by libations. A common form of prayer in Greek and Roman private prayer was the vow to do something in return for a favourable answer to one's prayer. Other private prayers were prayers for protection or healing. Some Jewish private prayers of petition in the Old Testament were prayed as a result of desperation. In the New Testament Christian private prayer was exhorted and exemplified by Jesus.

Public prayers of individuals were said on behalf of the community in most religions. Officials prayed on behalf of the Greeks and the Romans. Both the Greeks and the Romans prayed to implore the gods' protection before any state undertaking. Prayers of loyalty to the emperor or to Rome were also said in public, written as poetry or inscribed on monuments. Jewish public prayer from the Old Testament such as the psalms and Miriam's song were prayed in public in the Temple and synagogues with the main prayers being the *Sh'ma*, the *Amida*, the *Kaddish* and the *Hallel*. Public Prayers from the New Testament followed Jewish practice of including psalms and canticles but the ritual prayers in the home and larger assemblies were only for those who were baptised into the community.

³⁵⁶ 'Constitutions of the Holy Apostles' *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, p. 422.

Certain Customs

1. Introduction.

Tertullian in his treatise felt it necessary to point out certain customs that were acceptable before or after prayer and some that were not acceptable and perhaps superstitious.

2. Kiss of Peace

In several passages Paul instructs the members of the community to ‘greet one another with a holy kiss’. (Rom. 16:16, 1 Cor. 16:20, 2 Cor. 13:12, and 1 Thess. 5:26.) This greeting is mentioned in the gospels, when Judas betrays Jesus, he had told the Jewish authorities ‘the one I will kiss is the man’. (Mt. 26:48b.) The fact that Judas ‘came up to Jesus and said, “Greetings Rabbi!” and kissed him’ indicates that the kiss was a sign of greeting from a disciple to his teacher. The ‘holy kiss’ was possibly a traditional greeting practice adopted from a Jewish custom into the early church and encouraged by Paul. This kiss developed into a sign of peace following prayer. St Justin Martyr, in Chapter 65 of his *First Apology*,³⁵⁷ writes about the practice following Baptism he says, ‘having ended the prayers, we salute one another with a kiss’.³⁵⁸ Another mention of a kiss in a community gathering is made in Bk. 2 Sec 7, ‘On Assembling in the Church’ in the *Constitutions of the Holy Apostles* when the writer refers to ‘what things in particular every one is to do in the solemn assembly of the clergy and laity for religious worship.’ He writes ‘after the prayer is over...then let the men give the men, and the women give the women the Lord’s kiss’.³⁵⁹ Tertullian also refers to this kiss as a ‘seal of prayer.’

Tertullian stated that some members of the community when ‘fasting withhold the kiss of peace which is the seal of prayer, after prayer made with brethren’. (Ch 18)³⁶⁰ His comment, upon learning that some members of the community were withholding the ‘Kiss of Peace’ when fasting was, ‘what prayer is complete if divorced from the ‘holy kiss?’ (Ch 18)³⁶¹ This indicates that the kiss had been incorporated into the community liturgy and prayer. Tertullian states that the practice of abstaining from the kiss of peace when fasting was prevalent, and that it would be far more in keeping with a correct attitude to continue the practice even when fasting, as then others would not know that one was fasting except at home or at public celebrations. He also points to one of the precepts of the Lord that one should fast secretly, because Jesus had said, ‘and whenever you fast, do not look dismal... so that your fasting may be seen not by others’.

³⁵⁷ Justin, ‘First Apology’ *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, op. cit.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

³⁵⁹ ‘Constitutions of the Holy Apostles’, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 7, pp. 421-2.

³⁶⁰ Tertullian, ‘On Prayer’, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 3, p. 686.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*,

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(Mt. 6:16-18.) Tertullian was referring to the fact that by abstaining from the 'holy kiss' they were defeating the purpose of keeping their fast secret.

3. Fasting

After Jesus set an example by fasting in the desert (Mt. 4:2.) the practice of fasting became a feature of Christian worship. Fasting was also a major feature in Jewish worship. In Gen. 2:16-17 Adam and Eve were instructed by God not to eat from a certain tree, this was the first occasion of the necessity for abstinence in Jewish history. In Lev. 16:29 it was ordained that the Jews should have a Day of Atonement and one of the requirements was to abstain from food and work, although many Jews fasted at other times. The Pharisee that Jesus had described as praying in the temple had said 'I fast twice a week'. (Lk. 18:12.) Some Jews kept private fasts on Mondays and Thursdays, according to the *Didache* 8:1,³⁶² and on certain days fasting was prescribed, according to Jewish custom, as preparation for other important feasts. The *Didache* advised Christians to fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. The custom of fasting as a sign of self-denial and as preparation for feast days was continued in early Christianity and encouraged by many of the early church writers; Tertullian mentions one of the public occasions for fasting when he says:

So, too, on the day of the Passover, when the religious observance of a fast is general, and as it were public. (Ch. 18)

Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians pleading with the community to pray for all, he referred to the need to persevere in prayer and fasting:

Wherefore, forsaking the vanity of many, and their false doctrines, let us return to the word which has been handed down to us from the beginning; 'watching unto prayer,' and persevering in fasting; beseeching in our supplications the all-seeing God 'not to lead us into temptation,' as the Lord has said: 'The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak.' (Ch. 7:2.)³⁶³

However fasting was not only from food but also from wrongdoing. According to Justin in 'Dialogue with Trypho' Ch XV³⁶⁴ one was to undo any wrong one had done, repair grievances, feed the hungry and shelter and clothe the poor in addition to fasting. The 'Shepherd of Hermas' also stated that when one fasted it was to be from evil ways as well as food. 'Do no evil in your life and serve the Lord with a pure heart.' 'Similitude Fifth'³⁶⁵

The Greeks fasted at some of their rituals such as during the *Thesmophoria* where the women fasted for the second day as part of the gloomy mood 'corresponding to Demeter's grief' then on the third day they sacrificed and feasted on the meat of the sacrifice.³⁶⁶ Certain mystery religions had foods that were forbidden to the participants before taking part in the rituals. The

³⁶² 'Didache' pp. 171-179 in Richardson's *Early Christian Fathers*, p. 174.

³⁶³ Polycarp, 'To the Philippians', *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, p. 34.

³⁶⁴ Justin, 'Dialogue with Trypho', pp. 194-270 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1. p. 202.

³⁶⁵ Hermas, pp. 9-56 in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 'Similitude Fifth', p. 33.

³⁶⁶ Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, p. 244.

visitors to the shrine at Pergamon were required to abstain from goat cheese and goat meat for one day.³⁶⁷

4. Dress and hair covering

Tertullian points out the necessity for modesty of dress for women when praying in public:

Touching modesty of dress and ornamentation, indeed, the prescription of Peter likewise is plain, checking as he does with the same mouth, because with the same Spirit, as Paul, the glory of garments, and the pride of gold, and the meretricious elaboration of the hair. (Ch. 20)

He refers to 'the prescription of Peter', which said 'do not adorn yourselves outwardly by braiding your hair, and wearing gold ornaments or fine clothing.' (1 Pet. 3:3.) Paul had also said women were to wear a veil when praying:

but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head; it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. (1 Cor. 11:5.)

Tertullian ignores the fact that St Paul then makes the point that if the custom of women wearing veils becomes a problem in the community it is up to the individual community to resolve it. Paul says that it is a custom that women's heads be covered (referring to the Jewish custom) however he says 'We have no such custom, nor do the churches of God'. (1 Cor 11: 16.)

In some Greek festivals and cults there were regulations on clothing. One such cult was the cult of Asclepius. Asclepius was the Greek god of health and medicine and was a popular god in early Christian times. The Romans had adopted him and his cult was widespread through the Empire because he was said to bring about miraculous healing. The suppliants had to wear white and wear a wreath; they left the wreath at the temple after being healed.³⁶⁸ Priests of the cult had a record of some of these healings inscribed on stele outside Asclepius' temple at Epidaurus, which were copied from thank-offerings or related to them by grateful suppliants.³⁶⁹ The testimonies reported that the suppliants performed the rites (probably prayers), and after purification rituals and a sleep were healed. Another Greek inscription lists acceptable clothing, jewellery, hair fashion and hair covering in a temple in Lykosaura in Arkadia for the cult of Despoina. The women were not allowed to become initiates if they were pregnant or breast-feeding. The inscription also stated what items were acceptable for sacrifice:

Belonging to Despoina...let it not be permissible for those to pass in who are bringing into the sanctuary of Despoina any gold objects which are not intended for dedication, not purple, flower-decorated or black clothing, nor sandals, nor a ring. If anyone does enter with any of the things, which the stele prohibits, let him dedicate it in the sanctuary. Nor (let it be permissible to enter) for women with

³⁶⁷ Dillon, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 161.

³⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 169.

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their hair braided, nor for men with their heads covered. Nor (let it be permissible) to bring in flowers, nor for a woman who is pregnant or breast feeding to become initiate... And let those making sacrifices use for sacrifice olive, myrtle, honeycomb, barley groats cleared of darnel, a statue, white poppies, (small lamps, (various kinds of) incense, myrrh and aromatics...³⁷⁰

Intricate vestments for Jewish priests are described in Ex. 28:1-23 when Aaron was ordained as high priest and his four sons as priests. There is no mention of priestly vestments or distinguishing clothing for the leaders of worship in the early Christian church until the fourth century CE when Theodoret was presented with a 'sacred robe' by Constantine c. 330 CE.³⁷¹ Later on the vestments of the leaders of prayer for the communities were ordinary dress of the Roman upper classes.³⁷²

Tertullian also refers to the custom of taking one's cloak off before praying when he says:

As, e.g., it is the custom of some to make prayer with cloaks doffed, for so do the nations approach their idols; (Ch. 15)

In *The Aeneid*, Virgil describes Aeneas tearing his garment off when he was approaching Jupiter in prayer as, 'Aeneas the True rent the garment off his shoulders'. (Bk. 5.690.)³⁷³ It was possible that Virgil was describing a current Roman custom prior to prayer as Tertullian had also stated that 'nations approach their idols' with 'cloaks doffed'.

Despite the fact that Tertullian had previously drawn a distinction between the head coverings and clothing of men and women at public prayer he now refers to other matters of clothing and makes it clear that the Lord hears one regardless of clothes. Tertullian may have wished to clarify the distinction that Paul had made between men's and women's head coverings in 1 Cor 11:4 as Paul had said, 'Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head'. Tertullian may have added this precept for Christian prayer to contrast with the custom of Roman officials and priests who would put part of their toga over their head to pray.

It was also a Jewish custom at certain times of ritual for a 'prayer shawl (to be) worn in the synagogue over the shoulders (sometimes over the head) during the morning service, and all day on the Day of Atonement'.³⁷⁴ The clothing regulations for some mystery cults such as the cult of Trophonios entailed the suppliant's wearing a linen tunic. Following other purification rites the worshipper who wished to consult the oracle prayed to an image and 'then dressed in a linen

³⁷⁰ G. H. R. Horsley, (ed.) *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1979*, , New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity, Vol. 4, Macquarie University, Sydney, 1987, p. 110.

³⁷¹ Dix, op. cit. p. 399.

³⁷² Ibid.,

³⁷³ Virgil, *The Aeneid*, p. 140.

³⁷⁴ Comay & Hatefutsoth, op. cit., p. 54.

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garment which was tied with ribbons' and leather boots. He then consulted the oracle according to the customary procedure, which, for this oracle, was to go down into a chasm.³⁷⁵

Other practices had developed amongst Christians prior to, during and after prayer that Tertullian thought were inappropriate and superstitious such as;

5. Purification

Tertullian refers to a custom of some who go to extremes in external purification by:

taking water at every prayer, even when they are coming from a bath of the whole body. (Ch. 13.)

But what reason is there in going to prayer with hands indeed washed, but the spirit foul? - inasmuch as to our hands themselves spiritual purities are necessary, that they may be "lifted up pure" from falsehood, from murder, from cruelty, from poisonings, from idolatry, and all the other blemishes which, conceived by the spirit, are effected by the operation of the hands. These are the true purities; not those which most are superstitiously careful about. (Ch. 13)

Hippolytus wrote in his *Apostolic Tradition* c. 215 that when people arose in the morning they had to wash their hands before praying and when they arose at midnight they also had to wash their hands before praying. The washing of hands was a symbol of purification declared in Psalm 26:6.³⁷⁶ Many examples of purification before worship can be found in Greek literature. 'The most widespread means of purification is water and in Greek purification rituals contact with water is fundamental'.³⁷⁷ As a sign of reverence the washing of hands and the wearing of clean clothing before sacrifice was part of the ritual in Greek religion. Water basins were placed at the entrances to Greek temples and sanctuaries for purification rites before entering. Many cults had strict purification rites before worship; an inscription regarding ritual purification required of worshippers of the Isis and Sarapis cult before entering a sanctuary was written on a stele in Magapolis c. second century CE:

Stele of Isis and Sarapis. God, good fortune. A holy sanctuary of Isis, Sarapis and Anubis. Let anyone who wishes to sacrifice enter the sanctuary upon purification, after childbirth on the ninth day, after an abortion for forty-four days, after menstruation on the seventh day, after bloodshed for seven days, after (eating) goat's meat and mutton on the third day, after all other sorts of food on, the same day when one has washed from the head down, after sexual intercourse on the same day when one has washed ...³⁷⁸

The Jewish customs regarding purity and purification are many and detailed in the Old Testament such as 'a priest washed himself ritually before exercising sacred functions.' (Ex. 29:4; 30:17-21; Lev. 8:6; 16:4.)³⁷⁹

³⁷⁵ Dillon, op. cit., p. 161.

³⁷⁶ Deiss, op. cit., p. 69 & p. 71.

³⁷⁷ Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, p. 76.

³⁷⁸ Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity*, Vol. 4. p. 110.

³⁷⁹ Castelot & Cody, 'Religious Institutions of Israel' pp. 1253-1283. *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary - 2nd Edition*, p. 1274.

6. Sacrifice

Tertullian points out that prayer had taken the place of sacrifice:

For this is the spiritual victim which has abolished the pristine sacrifices. 'To what purpose,' saith He, '(bring ye) me the multitude of your sacrifices? I am full of holocausts of rams, and I desire not the fat of rams, and the blood of bulls and of goats. For who hath required these from your hands?'(Ch 28)

From ancient times sacrifice was a major part of many religions and, combined with prayer and votive offerings, was thought the means by which they could influence the gods and obtain their favour. Sacrifice as well as prayer played an important part in the Greek and Roman communications with their gods. For the Jews the sacrificial aspect was closely linked with the Temple observances. When the main place of worship became the synagogues sacrifice ceased. Sacrifices were replaced by prayer, many psalms in the Old Testament had referred to the need to replace external physical sacrifice with the sacrifice of prayer e.g. Ps. 40:6-8; also Hosea calls prayer 'the fruit of our lips'. (Hos. 14:2.)³⁸⁰

Tertullian then recommends certain practices such as prayer in the spirit and the use of psalms and hymns.

7. Prayer in the Spirit:

What, then, God has required the Gospel teaches. 'An hour will come,' saith He, 'when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and truth. For God is a Spirit, and accordingly requires His adorers to be such.' We are the true adorers and the true priests, who, praying in spirit, sacrifice, in spirit, prayer, - a victim proper and acceptable to God, which assuredly He has required, which He has looked forward to for Himself! (Ch 28)

Tertullian points out that prayer is the sacrifice that God wants and that the when people pray they are as priests offering up the spiritual victim of prayer. He also is referring to prayer under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There are many instances in Paul's letters where Paul exhorts his readers to pray with the help of the Holy Spirit i.e. to pray in the Spirit:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. (Rom. 8:26.)

One of the characteristics of the early church reported by Paul was their gathering together and praying in the Spirit (in tongues). This use of ecstatic utterances was also a feature of some other religions and had been used by Greek oracles to prophecy when they were petitioned for help or advice. The use of wordless utterances when in ecstatic trances was also reported in some cult practices of the mystery religions. An early Church father about the same time as Tertullian, 'Origen (in his treatise 'On Prayer') adds, there is no need for spoken petitions; for after

³⁸⁰ Werner, op. cit., p. 23.

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constant reading of scripture the soul is brought into a sense of union with Christ, the immanent 'world-soul' and is enabled to accept with thankfulness whatever burdens and difficulties it has to bear'.³⁸¹

8 Psalms and Hymns

Tertullian instructs that the sacrifice of prayer be offered to God attended by 'good works, amid psalms and hymns':

This victim, devoted from the whole heart, fed on faith, tended by truth, entire in innocence, pure in chastity, garlanded with love, we ought to escort with the pomp of good works, amid psalms and hymns, unto God's altar, to obtain for us all things from God. (Ch 28)

Hymns had been part of worship throughout most religions in antiquity. The Greeks had their epic hymns of worship and of tales of the gods, and in festivals and initiations dancing and music were inseparable.³⁸² Processions were usually accompanied by the singing of hymns. Musical poems especially composed for annual religious festivals became a point of contest and gradually developed into Greek drama. The Romans had their songs of praise and encouragement. For example, in 17 BCE Horace wrote the *Carmen Saeculare* which was a hymn 'recited as part of the ceremony last day of the [Secular] Games; it included prayers for the success of Augustus' reforms.³⁸³ Hymns to express faith, love, adoration, joy, triumph, sorrow and despair all formed part of many religions' ways of prayer. The earliest Christians were encouraged by St Paul to 'sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs to God.' (Col. 3:16.)

9. Concluding Summary

Tertullian commented on some customs that had developed in prayer, such as the 'Kiss of Peace', Tertullian said that it should not be neglected because one was fasting.

Fasting had become part of cultic worship in most religions. The Jewish custom was to fast before the Day of Atonement. Some Jewish sects such as the Pharisees fasted twice a week. The early Christians were encouraged to follow the Jewish custom of fasting twice a week although on different days from those of the Jews. The mystery cults also had regulations on fasting as part of their rituals.

Mystery religions also had restrictions on particular dress. Dress for public religious observances in some cults was dictated and for most religions was to be modest and simple such as a white garment for petitioners of Asclepius. For some cults women were not to have their hair in certain ways such as braiding, and the clothing for women attending Christian assemblies was to be modest and without ornamentation. Tertullian thought that certain current customs

³⁸¹ Chadwick, op. cit., p. 109.

³⁸² Burkert, *Greek Religion: Archaic and Classical*, p. 102.

³⁸³ Liebeschuetz, op. cit., pp. 97-8.

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pertaining to dress while praying were superstitious, such as the habit of taking one's coat off before praying. Men were not to cover their heads when praying in Christian assemblies. However priests and officials of some religions would cover their heads with their cloaks or, in the case of the Jews, with a prayer shawl, this was a sign of reverence.

Another sign of reverence towards a deity was purification before prayer. Purification rituals were intrinsic in some cults. Tertullian stated that it was not necessary for Christians to wash their hands prior to every prayer. Another Church Father, Hippolytus, seemed to stress the need to wash hands before prayer, at least before morning and night prayer. Tertullian points out that one should be more particular about approaching prayer with a pure heart rather than being fastidious about washing externally. In Greek religion water was the method of purification. A clean garment was also to be put on before sacrificing in some religions. There were strict purification regulations before entering some temples such as for the cult of Isis and Sarapis.

Sacrifice was important to many religions but prayer had taken the place of sacrifice in the Jewish tradition. Prayer was the sacrificial 'victim' in Christian worship and the earliest Christians were encouraged to trust that the Spirit made their sacrifice of prayer acceptable. St Paul had said that when they did not know how to pray the Spirit would be praying within. Tertullian finally stated that if prayers of petition were 'escorted' with good works, accompanied with psalms and hymns then the petitions would be answered. The prayer styles, psalms and hymns were either extempore or borrowed from other religions, in particular from Judaism.

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Conclusion

My objective in this thesis was to investigate those religions which existed at the time of earliest Christianity in the Graeco-Roman context, and to examine the prayer forms in earliest Christianity in this context. I have outlined the prayer types of the Graeco-Roman religions considering posture, places and times of prayer and accompanying rituals in order to examine the context of the pagan society and culture of the day and to investigate the similarities and differences in prayer forms and external expressions of prayer between these and Christian forms and expressions. From this investigation it is clear that Christianity borrowed many external prayer forms, particularly in modes of expression, times and rituals, from the religions that were present in the Roman Empire not only from Judaism but also from all the pagan religions.

There were many similarities in styles and content of prayer forms but each religion had its own religious framework as to the god or gods worshipped and the prayers were said according to the person's or the community's needs. That the Graeco-Roman environment had a great influence on religions and on how, why and where people prayed, is true, especially for Christianity which was the newcomer. Religions which were present at the time of Christianity and in particular Judaism influenced the development of prayer forms in Christianity. It can also be seen that Christianity drew some of its structures of prayer forms and worship from other religions. These prayer forms are shown in the early Christian writings, some of which were collected to form the New Testament. Although investigations show how Christianity was influenced by the other religions and their associated prayer forms the Christians developed their own prayer practices and characteristics. Tertullian tried to distance Christianity from the other religions with regard to prayer practices of his time by declaring that certain practices in prayer were either unnecessary or superstitious. Most of those characteristics mentioned by him were popular with other religions. The differences between Christian prayer forms and those of other religions were determined by the Christian's attitudes and belief in their God.

In summary, petition was the main prayer type for earliest Christianity and petition was the predominant prayer form in a majority of the religions in the Graeco-Roman world. As to external expressions, Greek prayers were usually extempore and linked with libation and sacrifice; most Roman prayers were spoken aloud in a set formula and accompanied by sacrifice; prayer in mystery religions usually accompanied certain ritual actions and a ritual meal with ritual words; Jewish prayers such as *Sh'ma*, and a collection of blessings called the *Amida* and were frequently said standing either in the Temple with sacrifice then later in synagogues without sacrifice. Many prayers in the New Testament were based on Jewish prayers and followed Jewish customs in posture and times, but extempore prayers of petition were most favoured in later

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Christian writings. In all religions the prayers were frequently made up of an invocation followed by praise followed by the request and then sometimes a promise to do something in return. Community prayers and ritual followed different patterns according to the deity but most religions had their seasonal and annual public festivals, prayer, sacrifice and fasting. Prayer and a communal ritual meal became the centre of Christian worship with a once-only purification and initiation ritual. Most religions had their public prayers said on behalf of the community with public acclamations to involve the participants. Public prayers from the New Testament followed the Jewish practice of including psalms and canticles, however, in time only those who were baptised into the community could participate in Christian ritual prayers in their assemblies.

In Symmachus' plea for the restoration of the Altar of Victory in the Senate, which had become a symbol of the official state cults in Rome, he had suggested that all of the religions in the Roman Empire were worthy of practice. He had said 'not by one avenue only can we arrive at so tremendous a secret,' and that it did not matter what practical system was adopted and had also said 'that whatever each of us worships is really to be considered one and the same' (Barrow 1973 p. 41). No doubt most of the followers of the other religions would not agree, however, this is matter for another discussion. It is clear that the practices in all religions regarding prayer and worship were similar with regards to the external characteristics of petition and praise of whatever was worshipped, but they were not all the same as each had its own particular context.

Symmachus and his pagan party urged the emperors to retain the ancient institutions, but the new force of Christianity, which initially was regarded by the Romans as a superstitious sect associated with Judaism, was now taking the place of the old Roman traditions and had become as popular as paganism. The communities' prayer practices became acceptable to others who had been used to certain aspects in their own religions and many of the external aspects were easy to accept as they had been drawn from other religions first from Judaism then from other pagan practices. The leaders of the Christian movement stressed the need for community prayer, praying both for each other and the wider community. The communities grew and finally gained favour with the Roman authorities because the blend of many aspects from other religions' prayer forms had evolved into a strict orderly ritual accompanied by moral behaviour and community loyalty and it was useful as a political tool for engendering unity in the somewhat fragmented Roman state machinery. Certain emperors had come to regard Christianity favourably especially Constantine earlier on, and in Symmachus' time, Gratian, Valentinian and finally Theodosius. The strictly controlled community aspect of Christianity had provided for them an organisation ready made as a tool for unity as well as a source of spiritual fulfilment.

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Unfortunately for Symmachus and his pagan party, Christianity remained the favoured religion of the ruling powers and Theodosius eventually proscribed pagan religions.

Having examined the external characteristics of Greek, Roman, Mystery, Judaic and early Christian prayer types, the conclusion that many external aspects of Christian prayer were similar to those of other religions is obvious. This was due to the nature of the society in which Christianity developed. There was a vast spectrum of prayer and worship in the Graeco-Roman world in the religions of the Greeks, Romans and Jews, and Christian society was influenced by this social milieu and it drew upon these influences and the variety of prayer forms that were already in existence, to help formulate its own rituals and prayer forms. However while doing this its leaders always remained centred on belief in the teachings of Jesus and his disciples and prayer, both public and private to their God combined with care of each other, was the basis of their worship.

APPENDIX A

Chapter 4. p. 38

HARVEST RITUAL

Before the harvest the sacrifice of the pig must be offered in this manner: Offer a sow as *porca praecidaneae* to Ceres before you harvest spelt, wheat, barley, beans, and rape seed. Offer a prayer, with incense and wine, to Janus, Jupiter and Juno, before offering the sow. Offer a pile of cakes to Janus, saying, "Father Janus, in offering these cakes to you, I humbly pray that you will be propitious and merciful to me and my children, my house and my household". Then make an offering of cake to Jupiter with these words: "In offering you this cake, O Jupiter, I humbly pray that you, pleased with this offering, will be propitious and merciful to me and my children, my house and my household". Then present the wine to Janus, saying: "Father Janus, as I have prayed humbly in offering you the cakes, so may you in the same way be honored by this wine now placed before you". Then pray to Jupiter thus: "Jupiter, may you be honored in accepting this cake; may you be honored in accepting the wine placed before you". Then sacrifice the *porca praecidaneae*. When the entrails have been removed, make an offering of cakes to Janus, and pray in the same way as you have prayed before. Offer a cake to Jupiter, praying just as before. In the same way offer wine to Janus and offer wine to Jupiter, in the same way as before in offering the pile of cakes, and in the consecration of the cake. Afterward offer the entrails and wine to Ceres (*On Agriculture* 134)[Davis, 1912 p. 9].

Chapter 4. p. 40

PRAYER TO ISIS

"O queen of heaven—whether you are bountiful Ceres, the primal mother of all crops, who in joy at the recovery of your daughter took away from men their primeval animal fodder of acorns and showed them gentler nourishment, and now dwell in the land of Eleusis, or heavenly Venus, who at the first foundation of the universe united the diversity of the sexes by creating Love and propagated the human race through ever-recurring progeny, and now are worshipped in the island sanctuary of Paphos; or Phoebus' sister, who brought forth populous multitudes by relieving the delivery of offspring with your soothing remedies, and now are venerated at the illustrious shrine of Ephesus; or dreaded Proserpina of the nocturnal howls, who in triple form repress the attacks of ghosts and keep the gates to earth closed fast, roam through widely scattered groves and are propitiated by diverse rites—you who illumine every city with your womanly light, nourish the joyous seeds with your moist fires, and dispense beams of fluctuating radiance according to the convolutions of the Sun—by whatever name, with whatever rite, in whatever image it is meet to invoke you: defend me now in the uttermost extremes of tribulation, strengthen my fallen fortune, grant me rest and peace from the cruel mischances I have endured. Let this be enough toil, enough danger. Rid me of this dreadful four-footed form, restore me to the Lucius I was. But if some divine power that I have offended is harrassing me with inexorable savagery, at least let me die, if I may not live." (Apuleius *Metamorphoses*, Bk. XI. Ch. 2. pp. 293-4).

APPENDIX A

Chapter 9. p. 92

HYMN TO ZEUS, Stobaeus Eclogae 1. 1. 12. (Cleanthes)

Most glorious of immortals, Zeus The many-named, almighty evermore, Nature's great Sovereign, ruling all by law- Hail to thee! On thee 'tis meet and right That mortals everywhere should call. From thee was our begetting; ours alone Of all that live and move upon the earth The lot to bear God's likeness. Thee will I ever chant, thy power praise! For thee this whole vast cosmos, wheeling round The earth, obeys, and where thou leadest It follows, ruled willingly by thee. In thy unconquerable hands thou boldest fast, Ready prepared, that two-tined flaming blast, The ever-living thunderbolt: Nature's own stroke brings all things to their end. By it thou guidest aright the sense instinct Which spreads through all things, mingled even With stars in heaven, the great and small- Thou who art King supreme for evermore! Naught upon earth is Wrought in thy despite, O God, Nor in the ethereal sphere aloft which ever winds About its pole, nor in the sea-save only what The wicked work, in their strange madness. Yet even so thou knowest to make the crooked straight, Prune all excess, give order to the orderless; For unto thee the unloved still is lovely- And thus in one all things are harmonized, The evil with the good, that so one Word Should be in all things everlastingly. One Word-which evermore the wicked flee! Ill-fated, hungering to possess the good They have no vision of God's universal law, Nor will they hear; though if obedient in mind They might obtain a noble life, true wealth. Instead, they rush unthinking after ill: Some with a shameless zeal for fame, others pursuing gain, disorderly. Still others folly, or pleasures of the flesh. [But evils are their lot,] and other times Bring other harvests, all unsought- For all their great desire, its opposite! But, Zeus, thou giver of every gift, Who dwellest within the dark clouds, wielding still The flashing stroke of lightning, save, we pray, Thy children from this boundless misery Scatter, OFather, the darkness from their souls, Grant them to find true understanding- On which relying thou justly rulest all- While we, thus honored, in turn will honor thee, Hymning thy works forever, as is meet For mortals, while no greater right Belongs even to the gods than evermore Justly to praise the universal law! (Grant 1953 pp. 153 to 154)

Chapter 9. p. 93

PRAYER OF TOBIT

You are righteous, O Lord, and all your deeds are just; all your ways are mercy and truth; you judge the world. And now, O Lord, remember me and look favorably upon me. Do not punish me for my sins and for my unwitting offenses and those that my ancestors committed before you. They sinned against you, and disobeyed your commandments. So you gave us over to plunder, exile, and death, to become the talk, the byword, and an object of reproach among all the nations among whom you have dispersed us. And now your many judgments are true in exacting penalty from me for my sins. For we have not kept your commandments and have not walked in accordance with truth before you. So now deal with me as you will; command my spirit to be taken from me, so that I may be released from the face of the earth and become dust. For it is better for me to die than to live, because I have had to listen to undeserved insults and great is the sorrow within me. Command, O Lord, that I be released from this distress; release me to go to the eternal home, and do not, O Lord, turn your face away from me. For it is better for me to die than to see so much distress in my life and to listen to insults. Tob. 3:2-6. . (NRSV (1993), p. 446)

APPENDIX A

Chapter 9. p. 93

PRAYER OF SARAH

At that same time, with hands outstretched toward the window, she prayed and said 'Blessed are you, merciful God! Blessed is your name forever; let all your works praise you forever. And now Lord, I turn my face to you, and raise my eyes toward you. Command that I be released from the earth and not listen to such any more. You know O Master, that I am innocent of any defilement with a man, and that I have not disgraced my name or the name of my father in the land of the exile. I am my father's only child he has no other child to be his heir; and he has no close relative or other kindred for whom I should keep myself as wife. Already seven husbands of mine have died. Why should I still live? But if it is not pleasing to you to take my life, O Lord, hear me in my disgrace.' Tob. 3:11-15 (NRSV (1993), pp. 456-7)

Chapter 9. p. 96

THE MAGNIFICAT Luke 1:46-55. Mary's Song of Praise

And Mary said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked with favour on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation. He has shown strength with his arm, he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts, He has put brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, according to the promise he made to our ancestors, to Abraham and to his descendants forever . (NRSV (1993), p. 57)

Chapter 9. p. 96

BENEDICTUS Luke 1:67-79

Then his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit, and spoke this prophecy; Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has looked favorably on his people and redeemed them, He has raised up a mighty savior for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets from of old, that we would be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; Thus he has shown the mercy promised to our ancestors, and has remembered his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham, to grant us that we, being rescued from the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days. And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins, By the tender mercy of our God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace. (NRSV (1993)p 58)

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