

# The Daily and Weekly Worship of the Primitive Church in relation to its Jewish Antecedents by Roger T. Beckwith

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount 'Think not that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I came not to destroy but to fulfil' (Mt. 5:17), apply as much to worship as they do to other aspects of the Christian gospel. The originality of Christian worship is not that it abolishes Jewish worship but that it reforms and develops that worship, in accordance with Jesus' teaching and in recognition of his saving work. Thus, the background to Christian worship is, at the outset, Judaism, and especially Jewish worship, as established in the Old Testament and as practised in the first century. By studying this we learn to recognise what is new in Christian worship, as well as what is old.

Study of the Jewish background of Christian worship is, however, complicated by many factors:

(i). The period of direct contact and influence was comparatively short, being largely confined to the first century AD, by the end of which the breach between Church and Synagogue was probably almost complete.<sup>1</sup> Later evidence about Jewish and Christian worship must, there-

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<sup>1</sup> According to a baraita or ancient quotation in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakoth 28b-29a), it was around the end of the first century that the *birkath ha-minim* (benediction about the heretics) in the Jewish liturgy was composed by Samuel the Less. In its old Palestinian form, this is bitterly anti-Christian: see C. W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (London, Faith Press edition, 1964), 3f., 119f. Note also Rev. 2:9; 3:9. The strongest link between Jews and Christians would have been the Jewish Christians of Palestine, and as these conformed increasingly to Gentile Christianity, the link would have become more and more tenuous. In 135 AD, when the Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, even the church there became a Gentile body (cp. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 4:5:1-4). The Nazareans and Ebionites, who alone persisted in the literal observance of the Law, became separated from other Christians.

fore, for our purpose, be treated with caution; but the later evidence is much more abundant than the earlier.

(ii). First-century Judaism was divided into three main schools of thought, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Essenes. We have much more ample evidence about Pharisaic worship than about that of the other two schools (though our knowledge of Essene worship has been markedly increased by the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the Qumran *Book of Hymns*), nor do we know for certain which of the schools most influenced the Church.

(iii). Even within themselves, the three schools were divided by geography and language. Most of our Jewish evidence concerns Palestinian, Semitic worship. We do not really know how much like it the Hellenistic worship of the Dispersion was. Christianity, however, drew most of its early converts from Hellenistic countries outside Palestine; and though the Semitic Christianity of Syria doubtless began early, there is little surviving evidence about it from before the fourth century. This again makes comparison difficult.

66 (iv). Even before the end of the first century, Jewish worship was radically disturbed by the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. All Jewish and Jewish Christian evidence from after AD 70 is likely to be affected by this event.

(v). The earliest liturgical texts, both Jewish and Christian, tended to be much more fluid than later ones.<sup>2</sup> Though written liturgical prayers are to be found in the Old Testament,<sup>3</sup> the Pharisees evidently distinguished traditional prayer from biblical, with the result that the structure of their services and the themes of their prayers were apt to be fixed well

<sup>2</sup> Thus, in the Mishnah, Rabbi Joshua and Rabbi Akiba permit the substance of the 18 Benedictions to be used instead of the full text, and Rabbi Eliezer emphasises that devotion is more important than simply reciting a form (*Berakoth* 4:3f.). For such reasons, the writing down of prayers was discouraged among the Jews much longer than the writing down of legal traditions, and a baraita in the Babylonian Talmud (*Shabbath* 115b) says that 'those who write down benedictions are as though they burnt the Law-book'. Among Christians, who shared with the Essenes a greater readiness to put prayers in writing, this situation did not continue so long, but in the earliest period the Lord's Prayer is recorded in the gospels in two different forms; *Didache* 10 permits prophets to offer thanks at the eucharist 'as much as they desire'; Justin Martyr speaks of the bishop giving thanks there 'at considerable length' or 'according to his ability' (*First Apology* 65, 67); and Hippolytus directs that 'it is not at all necessary for him (the bishop) to utter the same words as we said above, as though reciting them from memory . . . only, he must pray what is sound and orthodox' (*Apostolic Tradition* 9).

<sup>3</sup> Num. 5:19-22; 6:23-27; Dt. 21:6-8; 26:3-10, 13-15, and the Psalter, for the liturgical use of which see 1 Chr. 16:7-42, the Psalm titles (especially in the Septuagint of Pss. 24, 29, 38, 48, 92, 93, 94, 96), and Mishnah Bikkurim 3:4, Pesahim 5:7, Tamid 7:4. In all these passages, Tabernacle or Temple worship, not synagogue worship, is primarily in view.

before the wording was; and though there may have been *standard* forms of words, both among Pharisees and among Christians, they can seldom be recovered with certainty. This makes influence more difficult to detect.

The above considerations apply to the Jewish antecedents of all Christian worship—of initiation and ordination, for example, and not simply of daily and weekly worship. If these considerations could not reasonably be qualified, the obstacles in the way of our enquiry would be formidable indeed. Fortunately, however, each of the five can be qualified, and probably ought to be.

Regarding point (i), if the first-century evidence about Jewish and Christian worship is not abundant, it is none the less considerable, being provided by the New Testament, the writings of Philo and Josephus, and the *Didache*. In respect of Jewish worship, a good deal can also be inferred from the Old Testament and the intertestamental writings, as well as from the earliest parts of the rabbinical literature. Since the rabbinical literature is a written record of Pharisaic oral tradition, it is likely to contain a lot of older material, and the Mishnah, written at the turn of the second and third centuries AD, may well comprise many first century traditions, and also show the outworking in the second century of tendencies established in the first.<sup>4</sup> The same is true of the Tosephta, the Halakic Midrashim, the baraitas (sayings quoted from old rabbinical compilations other than the Mishnah) included in the two Talmuds, and Targum Neofiti, which are likewise of relatively early date, probably third-century. The light which these writings throw on Jewish worship is most important, as Jewish Prayer Books begin to appear only in the ninth century.

Regarding point (ii), the statements of Josephus and the rabbis that Pharisaism was the *prevailing* school of thought in the first century (and indeed earlier), so much so that even the Sadducean chief priests had normally to fall in with Pharisaic views in practice, are probably reliable.<sup>5</sup> Pharisaic worship, therefore, is what we mainly need to know

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<sup>4</sup> An example of a parallel (but not identical) development in Jewish and Christian worship of the second century, which presumably went back to a common tendency in the first, is the centralisation of rabbinical ordination in the national patriarch and of Christian ordination in the diocesan bishop. Other examples will be seen below, namely, the development of daily prayers into corporate services, and the use of Psalms 145-150, at first by individuals, but later by congregations.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, who was no bigoted Pharisee, repeatedly states this (*Antiquities* 13:288, 296, 298, 401f.; 18:15, 17), and the rabbinical literature lends him independent support. The extraordinary prominence of the Pharisees in the gospels is suggestive of the same thing. In the synagogues, the Sadducees seem to have been completely powerless.

about, though Essenism seems also to have influenced the Church to some extent.

Regarding point (iii), we know that Hellenistic Judaism looked to Palestine as its mother country, constantly made festal pilgrimages to Jerusalem, translated much Palestinian literature, and imitated Palestinian institutions to a high degree. Moreover, the penetration of Greek language and culture into Palestine was greater than used to be supposed, so there was influence from both sides, and the barrier between the two forms of Judaism cannot have been enormous. As to worship, we know that the Scriptures were read and expounded in the Hellenistic synagogues, as in the Semitic,<sup>6</sup> and that the Hellenistic synagogues were likewise places of prayer;<sup>7</sup> and, as to the forms of prayer that were used, the regulation in the Mishnah that the Shema and the Tephillah, the two chief synagogue prayers, may be said in any language (Sotah 7:1), is no doubt significant. Consequently, it is not a hopeless quest to look for signs of the influence of Jewish worship in the Greek and Latin Christianity of the second and third centuries, or, with regard to a country like Syria, where the Semitic language and culture made Jewish influence more obvious and more persistent, in the Christianity of the fourth and even later centuries.<sup>8</sup>

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Regarding point (iv), the effects of the destruction of the Temple, though profound, are relatively easy to identify. For the Jews, the destruction made synagogue worship a *substitute* for Temple worship, instead of being a *complement* to it, which is what it had previously been, except among the Jews of the Dispersion and the excommunicated Essenes. Also, the destruction doubtless accentuated the tendency, which may already have been present in Jewish liturgical texts, to spiritualise the idea of sacrifice. Furthermore, it brought the festal pilgrimages to an end, and so made the Passover meal a more purely domestic occasion, observed at home and not in a borrowed room at Jerusalem, and regularly involving the whole family. For Jewish Christians, the destruction must have dealt a severe blow to their practice of maintaining Jewish ordinances alongside the Christian counterparts of those ordinances--circumcision alongside baptism (Acts 2:38-41; 21:20f. etc), the Passover meal alongside the

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 13:15, 27; 15:21; Philo, *Hypothetica* 7:12f.; *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* 81f.

<sup>7</sup> Philo's usual name for the synagogue is *proseuche*, 'place of prayer' (*In Flaccum* 41, 45 etc; *De Legatione ad Gaium* 132, 138 etc.), a name which is applied to the synagogue in Egyptian inscriptions and papyri from the third century BC onwards.

<sup>8</sup> In Syrian Christianity, one has also to allow for the possibility that some of the Jewish influence may be of later date than the first century, and that there may be reciprocal influence, Christianity upon Judaism as well as Judaism upon Christianity.

eucharist,<sup>9</sup> and the sabbath day alongside Sunday.<sup>10</sup> After the destruction, the majority of Jewish Christians, being estranged by now from the non-Christian Jews, probably conformed increasingly to Gentile Christianity;<sup>11</sup> a second group seem to have tried, as far as was practicable, to maintain the *status quo* (these became the Nazareans, and the more orthodox Ebionites – if the two are not, in fact, the same); while a third group, who became the more heretical Ebionites, apparently reacted away from the Church, in some matters towards non-Christian Judaism (abandoning Sunday observance, and retaining the eucharist only at Passover time), in some matters towards Encratism (using water for the eucharistic cup) and in some matters (notably Christological) towards Gnosticism.

Regarding point (v), what this means is that apparent echoes of *wording* from Jewish prayers to Christian must be treated with caution: the variety of forms in which, for example, the Tephillah exists, make it doubtful whether even a *standard* form of words was memorised. At the same time, the *structure* and *themes* of the traditional Jewish prayers (just like the *constituents* of the traditional Jewish services) show remarkable stability, and the references to them in the earliest rabbinical literature, from before the time when they were written down, are perfectly recognisable. Much the same is, of course, true of early Christian services and prayers, which started being written down considerably earlier. Even the caution about wording must be qualified in one respect, which is that some formulas and linguistic conventions are so regular in Jewish prayers that they had probably been habitual from very early times, and can therefore be compared with the corresponding formulas and linguistic conventions in Christian prayers.

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<sup>9</sup> Since the Jewish Christians for many years went on offering sacrifices in the Temple (Acts 21:23-26), there is every reason to suppose that, for as long as they did, they went on offering the Passover lamb and observing the Passover meal.

<sup>10</sup> The more orthodox group of the Ebionites observed both, Eusebius tells us (*Ecclesiastical History* 3:27-5), and that is just what we would expect of their Jewish-Christian predecessors. A. F. J. Klijn and G. J. Reinink dismiss Eusebius's statement (*Patristic Evidence for Jewish-Christian Sects*, Supplements to Novum Testamentum 36, Leiden, Brill, 1973, 25-28), but this seems rash. Eusebius's great learning, and the general consistency of his account of the Ebionites with other patristic accounts, entitle it to more respect.

<sup>11</sup> Whether they continued to observe the sabbath, as is sometimes supposed, must be reckoned very doubtful. The liturgical observance of the sabbath which is found in fourth-century texts from Syria and elsewhere could either be a survival or a restoration: Wilfred Stott argues cogently that it is the latter (*This is the Day, ut supra*, 51). Possibly the residual respect for the sabbath which had led Tertullian (*On Fasting* 14f.) and Hippolytus (*Commentary on Daniel* 4:20) to oppose fasting on that day, and had led others mentioned by Tertullian to refrain from kneeling on that day (*On Prayer* 23), was the basis on which the fourth-century liturgical observance of the day was erected.

## II. THE CENTRES, PATTERNS AND ELEMENTS OF JEWISH WORSHIP

Jewish worship of the first century, up to 70 AD, had three centres, the Temple, the synagogue and the home. Temple worship, based on the regulations of the Mosaic Law, was daily, and was primarily sacrificial, with additional sacrifices on sabbaths, new moons and annual holy days. Liturgical texts from the Old Testament were used with some of the sacrifices, however;<sup>12</sup> psalms were sung, different ones being appointed for the different days of the week, for the presentation of firstfruits and for festivals;<sup>13</sup> Scripture was publicly read on the Day of Atonement and at Tabernacles;<sup>14</sup> the rabbis taught at festivals;<sup>15</sup> and traditional prayers were used, which often corresponded in general to the Shema and Tephillah of the synagogue, but had certain unique features. Thus, every morning, in the course of the morning sacrifice, the priests said the Shema almost in full and a much abbreviated Tephillah (Mishnah Tamid 5:1); and after the Scripture-reading on the Day of Atonement and at Tabernacles eight benedictions were said, three of which corresponded to benedictions of the Tephillah (Mishnah Yoma 7:1, Sotah 7.7f.).<sup>16</sup> Attention is drawn by the Mishnah to various verbal and formal peculiarities of the Temple prayers over against those of the synagogue, even where they otherwise corresponded closely, which show that Temple-prayer, though intimately related to that of the synagogue, had a significant measure of independence.<sup>17</sup> This is not surprising when one remembers that the most ancient Jewish prayers (those prescribed in the Old Testament) were first used in the Tabernacle or Temple,<sup>18</sup> that the

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<sup>12</sup> See note 3.

<sup>13</sup> See note 3.

<sup>14</sup> See Mishnah Yoma 7:1, Sotah 7:7f., and cp. Deut. 31:10-13.

<sup>15</sup> See Lk. 2:46f., and cp. the practice of Jesus in Mat. 21:23; Mk. 14:49; Jn. 7:14, 28; 8:20, 18:20.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Heinemann has plausibly suggested that these eight benedictions were one of the earlier series out of which the eighteen of the Tephillah had been compiled, and that another such series was the seven which are substituted for the eighteen in the synagogue on sabbaths and festivals (*Prayer in the Talmud: Forms and Patterns*, Studia Judaica 9, Berlin, De Gruyter, 1977, 218-221, 226-29). One would not expect a *shorter* series (the first three and last three of the eighteen, with a special one in between) to be substituted on sabbaths and festivals, and the theory that this is an older tradition would explain the anomaly.

<sup>17</sup> Thus, the divine name was used without paraphrase in Temple prayers, they regularly ended 'for ever and ever' or 'from everlasting to everlasting', the response to them was 'Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever', and the Aaronic blessing was not broken up with Amens (Mishnah Berakoth 9:5; Yoma 3:8; 4:2; 6:2, Sotah 7:6, Tamid 7:2).

<sup>18</sup> Namely, the prayers listed in note 3, together with the high priest's confession on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:21), the traditional text of which is given by the Mishnah (Yoma 6:2).

public reading of Scripture originated in and around it (Deut. 31:10f; 2 Kings 23:2; Neh. 8:1-18), and that the duty of teaching the Law was originally imposed upon the priests and Levites (Lev. 10:11; Deut. 17:11; 24:8; 33:10; Hos. 4:6; Hg. 2:11; Mal. 2:5-7 etc.): so that all the elements of synagogue worship – prayer, Scripture reading and teaching – had a Temple background. Consequently, though they were developed more highly in the synagogue than in the Temple, partly because the priesthood had other duties and partly because it culpably neglected teaching, the hypothesis that the synagogue arose because the Temple was distant or in ruin or simply in decline, and not independently, is much the most probable.<sup>19</sup>

Though the synagogue developed the ministry of the word and prayer more highly than the Temple, for which reason synagogues were found even in Jerusalem, it had its chief usefulness away from Jerusalem, where it enabled Jews to fulfil duties and enjoy privileges which would otherwise have been completely impossible. It enabled Jews who could not get to the Temple still to observe the 'holy convocations' of Lev. 23, that is, to assemble for worship on the days there listed, which are the weekly sabbath and the annual holy days. There was no need for synagogue services on ordinary weekdays, which were not among the prescribed 'holy convocations', and even in the New Testament period such services were exceptional. Only in the Temple, where the daily sacrifices were offered, did the people of the locality pray together daily. The Mishnah tells us that in the synagogues of some towns there were services on Mondays and Thursdays, these being days when legal assemblies met there (Megillah 1:3; 3:6-4:1); and that for two weeks in the year the lay *maamad*, or embryo congregation, corresponding to a particular priestly course, held daily services in a synagogue (Taanith 4:1-5 etc); but that is all. For the rest, the constant references to sabbath-day services, and to no others, that we find in first-century literature, speak for themselves.<sup>20</sup> Of course, the synagogues in some places may have been open on weekdays for individuals who wanted to use them, but this is quite another matter than holding regular, organized services of a corporate kind there. It seems,

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<sup>19</sup> For a recent discussion of the origin of the synagogue, see H. H. Rowley, *Worship in Ancient Israel* (London, S.P.C.K., 1967), 213-229.

<sup>20</sup> See Lk. 4:16-27; Acts 13:14-43; 15:21; Philo, *De Vita Mosis* 2:216; *De Specialibus Legibus* 2:62f.; *Quod Omnis Probus Liber Sit* 80-82; *De Vita Contemplativa* 30-33; *Hypothetica* 7:12f.; *De Legatione ad Gaium* 156f; Josephus, *Antiquities* 16:43, 164; *Against Apion* 1:209; 2:175. Only in Philo's account of the Essenes do we read that instruction is given 'at all other times' as well as on the sabbath (*Quod Omnis Probus* 81), and this is explained by the Essenes' communal life. For further discussion, see *This is the Day*, *ut supra*, 151, and the literature there cited.

consequently, to be a serious misconception on the part of Joseph Heinemann to take Jesus's rebuke to the Pharisees for 'loving to stand and pray in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men' (Matt. 6:5) as an attack on the synagogue services.<sup>21</sup> It probably has nothing to do with the sabbath-day services, in which Jesus, as Luke tells us, regularly took part (Lk. 4:16), but applies rather to the prayers of the individual on weekdays. The reference to 'the corners of the streets' sufficiently indicates this. Jesus is not rebuking corporate prayers but individual prayers prayed in public, for purposes of ostentation. It is true, as Heinemann says, that when Jesus drew up a model prayer for his disciples, he drew up a much shorter and simpler one than the Tephillah, probably in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew, and akin in character to Jewish private prayers of a non-statutory kind,<sup>22</sup> but this is a very different thing from opposing corporate prayer in principle. The Lord's Prayer itself, though taught in Matthew in the context of private prayer (Matt. 6:5-15), has proved quite adaptable for corporate use also, and, in view of its constant employment of the first person plural, was probably intended to be adapted for this purpose. Moreover, like the Tephillah for the Jews, it is for Christians their statutory prayer.

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The sabbath-day services of the synagogue were four in number. Morning Prayer, Additional Prayer, Afternoon Prayer and Evening Prayer, at each of which the Tephillah was used (Mishnah Berakoth 4:1). Three of the services corresponded to the three hours of *daily* prayer by individuals, which were based on Ps. 55:17 and Dan. 6:10, 13 (and so upon the daily course of the sun), and two of which seem also to have been linked, at an early stage, with the two hours of daily sacrifice in the Temple; while the fourth service was linked with the additional sacrifice of the sabbath, and was known by the same name (*musaph*, addition). The connection of prayer with the evening sacrifice is made clear in the Old Testament (Ezra 9:5ff.; Dan. 9:20f.): already, it seems, prayer was

<sup>21</sup> *Prayer in the Talmud*, 191f.; 'The Background of Jesus' Prayer in the Jewish Liturgical Tradition', in *The Lord's Prayer and Jewish Liturgy*, ed. J. J. Petuchowski and M. Brocke (London, Burns & Oates, 1978).

<sup>22</sup> *loc cit.* By contrast, the Shema and Tephillah, though they could be used individually as well as corporately, were *statutory* prayers—the prescribed means for fulfilling the obligation of thanksgiving and petition. Heinemann concedes that the Lord's Prayer has similarities to the Kaddish, which is not a private prayer, but since its antiquity is not entirely certain, this cannot be stressed. It does not really affect the contrast with the Tephillah to point out, as G. J. Bahr does, that Jewish and Christian prayer-texts were fluid, and that the Lord's Prayer could be and was paraphrased at much greater length ('The Use of the Lord's Prayer in the Primitive Church', in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 84, 1965, 153-59). The fact remains that the basic texts of the Tephillah are immensely longer and more complicated than those of the Lord's Prayer, which could be comprised within a single one of the eighteen benedictions of the other.



not only directed towards the Temple (1 Kings 8:29, 35, 38, 42, 44, 48; Dan. 6:10), as the place prayer would be heard, but especially at the hours when sacrifice was due to be offered there for God to accept. In the intertestamental literature and the New Testament, we read of prayer being made at the time of the offering of incense (Judith 9:1ff.; Lk. 1:10)—the evening incense in the former case, though the incense was offered both morning and evening, at the same hours—in the morning and ‘between the two evenings’—as the morning and evening sacrifice (Ex. 29:39, 41; 30:7f.; Num. 28:4, 8). In the first century, the incense was offered in the actual course of the ritual of each of the daily sacrifices (Mishnah Yoma 3:5). Since Evening Prayer was so closely related to the evening sacrifice, and Additional Prayer to the additional sacrifice, there is every reason to think that Morning Prayer was similarly related to the morning sacrifice, which was apparently offered at the fourth hour of the day, or 10.00 hrs. (Mishnah Eduyoth 6:1). This relationship, however, made the old noonday hour of prayer (Ps. 55:17) look anomalous, since no sacrifice was offered at that hour, and by the first century it seems to have completely lapsed (assuming that Peter’s prayer at noon in Acts 10:9 is a coincidence). What is more, the evening sacrifice, which had originally been offered at sunset,<sup>23</sup> had by this period been moved forward to the mid-afternoon, about the ninth hour of day, or 15.00 hrs. (Josephus, *Antiquities* 14:65; Mishnah Pesahim 5:1). Practical reasons have been suggested for this change, but it may rather have been due to an interpretation of ‘between the two evenings’ similar to that of the Essenes, who took it to mean from 14.00 hrs. onwards (Jubilees 49:1, 10-12). The hour of prayer had moved with the offering, as we can see from Acts 3:1; 10:3, 30, and hence the institution of Afternoon Prayer. This move, however, had tended to make *Evening* Prayer anomalous, like the old hour of prayer at noon, and the Mishnah consequently concedes that the evening Tephillah has no fixed hour (Berakoth 4:1), while the Babylonian Talmud reports a dispute between Rabban Gamaliel II and Rabbi Joshua around the end of the first century, in which Rabbi Joshua maintains that the evening Tephillah is optional (Berakoth 27b). What probably saved Evening Prayer was that at morning and evening the Shema was said as well as the Tephillah (Mishnah Berakoth 1:1f.). The Shema could not so easily be moved to a different time of day, since it incorporates Deut. 6:4-9, which is to be said ‘when you lie down and when you rise up’, and includes benedictions which differ from evening to morning and refer to the time of day.

<sup>23</sup> This is how ‘between the two evenings’ is glossed by Deut. 16:6 (for the phrase is used elsewhere of the Passover offering), and the fact that ‘between the two evenings’ was the hour of the lighting of the lamps in the Tabernacle (Ex. 30:8) implies the same thing.

The Essenes, however, seem to have resolved the problem in their own way by reducing the daily hours of prayer from three to two, at sunrise and at sunset. This is clearly stated of the closely related Therapeutae by Philo (*De Vita Contemplativa* 27), and, in the Qumran literature, is the most probable meaning of *Manual of Discipline* 9:26-10:3; 10:10, and *Book of Hymns* 12:4-9. Whether, like the Pharisees, the Essenes had an extra hour of prayer on the sabbath, making the total three on that occasion, we do not know for certain: but the work *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* found at Qumran, and the blowing of trumpets, for the sabbath assemblies, presumably at the hours of sacrifice (*Damascus Document* 11:22f.; cp. Num. 10:2f. 10), make this likely.

74 The standard pattern of first-century Jewish worship was therefore as follows: the use of the Shema twice each day, in the morning and evening, and the use of the Tephillah three times each day, in the morning, afternoon and evening, with an additional Tephillah—which might be at any hour—on the sabbath (Mishnah Berakoth 1:1f.; 4:1). When the use of the Shema and Tephillah in the morning or evening was combined, as in corporate use it naturally was, this resulted in three daily hours of prayer, with a fourth on the sabbath. The Essenes probably reduced the number by one, using their own prayers instead of the Shema and Tephillah. However, if at the beginning of the Christian era the evening Shema and Tephillah were said privately, even on the sabbath (which is what some scholars infer from the dispute about Evening Prayer),<sup>24</sup> it means that the corporate services of the sabbath, in both traditions, numbered three.

#### *Thanksgiving and Prayer (the Shema and Tephillah)*

The Shema is earlier attested than the Tephillah, the oldest evidence for the former being the allusion in the Letter of Aristeas (Ep. Ar. 158-160) or perhaps even earlier the fragment in the Nash papyrus, which dates from about 150 BC. In this fragment the Ten Commandments are followed by the introduction to Deut. 6:4-9, the first of the readings in the traditional Shema (hence its name, which means 'Hear!'), the remaining two readings being Deut. 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41. These three passages are intended as a summary of the Law, and contain the Great Commandment, together with the rules about phylacteries on arm and head, mezuzoth on doorways and fringes on garments—the various visible reminders of the Law in daily life. Originally, however, as we know from Mishnah Tamid 5:1, these three passages were preceded by the Decalogue; and the two Talmuds tell us that it was only omitted because

<sup>24</sup> See Ismar Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (Hildesheim, Olms reprint, 192), 99f.

of 'the insinuations of the heretics', namely, that the Ten Commandments were the sole part of the Law that was revealed to Moses on Sinai (Jerusalem Berakoth 1:4; Babylonian Berakoth 12a). At the Palestinian synagogue of Old Cairo, however, the Decalogue continued to be included at least until the year 1211.<sup>25</sup> The 'heretics' in question are most likely the early Christians,<sup>26</sup> who did sometimes make a sharp distinction between the Decalogue, as the original and permanent part of the Law, and the ceremonial precepts, added only after the sin of the golden calf (Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:15:1f.; *Didascalía* 2, 26). Before the four (now three) passages from the Law come two benedictions, the first a thanksgiving for creation (adapted to the morning or evening hour, as the case may be) and the second a thanksgiving for revelation; the latter forms a natural introduction to the passages from the Law. After these passages, with equal appropriateness, comes a benediction in thanksgiving for Israel's redemption from Egypt, and finally, in the evening only, one is added as a prayer for rest.<sup>27</sup> The benedictions are mentioned in the Mishnah, by number and in some cases by name (Berakoth 1:4; 2:2; Tamid 5:1), and they are noticed in general terms by Josephus, who makes this remarkable allusion to the Shema, referring to the hours at which it is said, the passages from the Law and the benedictions (especially the third of them):

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'Twice every day, at the dawn thereof, and when the hour comes for turning to repose, let all acknowledge before God the bounties which he has bestowed on them through their deliverance from the land of Egypt: thanksgiving is a natural duty, and is rendered alike in gratitude for past mercies and to incline the giver to others yet to come. They shall inscribe also on their doors the greatest of the benefits which they have received from God and each shall display them on his arms; and all that can show forth the power of God and his goodwill towards them, let them bear a record thereof written on the head and on the arm, so that men may see on every side the loving care with which God surrounds them' (*Antiquities* 14:212f., Thackeray's translation).

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<sup>25</sup> See Jacob Mann in J. J. Petuchowski, ed. *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy* (New York, Ktav, 1970), 393f.

<sup>26</sup> For the view that these heretics are not Christians but Hellenistic Jews, see Geza Vermes, *Post-Biblical Jewish Studies* (Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity 8, Leiden, Brill, 1975), 169-177.

<sup>27</sup> English translations of these benedictions (according to the Northern French and German use) may be found in Simeon Singer, *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, first published in 1891 and often reprinted. Translations of two versions of the Tephillah may be found in C. W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office, ut supra*, 114-125. German translations are given by Strack-Billerbeck in their *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich, Beck, 1954-56 reprint), excursus 9 and 10. 'Das Shema' and 'Das Shemone-Esre'.

It is noteworthy that Josephus puts these words into the mouth of Moses, and includes them in a paraphrase of the book of Deuteronomy, which shows that he thinks the use of the Shema to be implied in the Old Testament itself and to be of extreme antiquity. Equally noteworthy is the fact that he conceives the Shema as, above all, a thanksgiving for deliverance from the land of Egypt. Sometimes the Shema is viewed as a confession of faith, because it includes the statement of the unity of God in Deut. 6:4; sometimes, following the Mishnah, it is viewed as an act of self-dedication, of 'taking upon oneself the yoke of the kingdom of heaven', because it contains the Great Commandment (Berakoth 2:2); but the most ancient characterization of it is that of Josephus, who interprets it, in accordance with its third and culminating benediction, as an act of thanksgiving for redemption.

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The Tephillah, or Amidah, or Eighteen Benedictions, is not so early attested, though it was well established by the time of the Mishnah, which states that its benedictions are eighteen in number (Berakoth 4:3; Taanith 2:2) and names individually the first three, the last three, and three others (Berakoth 5:2; Yoma 7:1; Rosh ha-Shanah 4:5; Sotah 7:7; Tamid 5:1). The earliest rabbis whom the Mishnah mentions as discussing it lived at about 100 AD, when Rabban Gamaliel II ruled that it was to be said daily (Berakoth 4:3f., 7), and a baraita in the Babylonian Talmud records that it was drawn up according to its present arrangement at about that date (Berakoth 28b-29a). We have already noted Heinemann's plausible suggestion that it was compiled from earlier series of benedictions (see note 16), and it would be rash to assume that prior to this time the three traditional hours of daily prayer were observed in a completely different manner. However, it is clear from the New Testament that it was still possible in the earlier part of the first century for individual teachers—and especially for teachers with prophetic claims, like John the Baptist and Jesus—to draw up their own tephillah for their disciples to use (Lk. 11:1-4).

The word 'tephillah' simply means 'prayer' (the alternative title 'amidah' referring to the 'standing' position in which it was said), and, if the Shema is the great thanksgiving of the ancient Jewish liturgy, the Tephillah is its great petitionary prayer. Today it consists of nineteen benedictions, not eighteen, apparently because in Babylonia, where the Jewish liturgy was given its final form, the fourteenth benediction was divided into two.<sup>28</sup> It is striking that a petition should take the form of

<sup>28</sup> See Heinemann, *Prayer in the Talmud*, *ut supra*, 22, 67, 224-26. A comparison with the Palestinian form, printed from a Cairo Genizah MS. by Solomon Schechter, makes this likely: for the Palestinian text, see Petuchowski, *Contributions to the Scientific Study of Jewish Liturgy*, *ut supra*, p. 377f., and for a translation, C. W. Dugmore, as cited in

benedictions—of blessing the Lord. The first three and penultimate benedictions do, in fact, consist of praise and thanksgiving, and not of petition, but the remaining benedictions are petitionary, and only justify their title because they close with a sentence blessing God that he does in fact give the particular benefit (forgiveness, the fruits of the earth, the restoration of Israel, or whatever it may be) for which the benediction has asked. One cannot avoid the conclusion that the Tephillah is an example of a pious but highly stylised mode of prayer.

Interpolated into the Tephillah are certain important passages of Scripture. Before the last benediction, the theme of which is peace, comes the Aaronic blessing from Num. 6:22-27, as the Mishnah mentions (Rosh ha-Shanah 4:5; Megillah 4:3, 5; Tamid 5:1). Also, as a congregational response to the third benediction, the theme of which is God's holiness, the Kedushah is used. This is a series of verses beginning with Is. 6:3, first mentioned in Tosephta Berakoth 1:9, and also used with the first morning benediction of the Shema, the theme of which is the glory due to God for his creation.

Apart from the benedictions said by individuals on weekdays and by congregations on the sabbath, there were also the benedictions said in families and among friends at meals and similar domestic occasions. Graces at meals were practised both by the Essenes and by the Pharisees. Josephus speaks of grace being said for the gift of life both before and after Essene common meals (*War* 2:131); the Qumran literature speaks of grace before meals (*Manual of Discipline* 6:3-8; *Messianic Rule*, 1 Q Sa. 2:17f.); while the book of Jubilees gives an example of a grace in which God is blessed for his creation after a meal (Jub. 22:6). The Letter of Aristeas quotes a petitionary grace before a meal for the continual enjoyment of God's gifts (Ep. Ar. 183-85); but in all the forms given in the Mishnah (Berakoth, chs. 6 and 7) God is blessed, and not just for the meal in general but for particular foodstuffs, for bread and for wine, each in a separate benediction, so that the meal would be punctuated by a number of graces, as at the miraculous feedings in the gospels, and the Last Supper. If three or more men were present, the meal concluded with a more elaborate grace over 'the cup of the blessing', called the 'Common Grace' or the 'Three Benedictions'. These three benedictions, as we know from other rabbinical sources, blessed God for the food, thanked him for the land and prayed for his mercy upon the people of Israel and the city of

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note 27. The new benediction against heretics (see note 1), which has sometimes been supposed to explain the Babylonian number, occurs in both versions as benediction 12, and may have been an adaptation of an earlier benediction rather than an addition to the prayer.

Jerusalem.<sup>29</sup> The opening biddings to the Common Grace in the Mishnah envisage that very large numbers may sometimes be present, and Heine-mann supposes these forms to have originated in the meals of the Pharisaic haburoth — groups of Pharisaic 'associates', who were willing to eat together from time to time because they had all undertaken to tithe their foodstuffs scrupulously and to observe strictly the rules of ceremonial cleanness.<sup>30</sup> A similar procedure would, however, be followed at any formal meal,<sup>31</sup> and this included (allowing for certain peculiarities) the Passover meal, which in the first century was held by the pilgrims in a borrowed room of a Jerusalem house, their numbers having grown too great to be accommodated any longer by the Temple courts. A passover-company consisted of those who could consume one lamb, which might mean one or more families, or else a group of men like Jesus and his disciples, since it was, strictly speaking, only incumbent upon males to go up to Jerusalem for the Passover (Ex. 23:17; 34:23; Deut. 16:16). Back at home, the chief meal of the week was the evening meal at the beginning of the sabbath, the evening meal being the chief meal of the day (the other being breakfast, between about 10.00 and 12.00 hrs.)<sup>32</sup> and the sabbath being the festive day. At this meal, already in the first century, a benediction was said over a cup of wine, both for the wine and for the day, as the discussions between the first-century Pharisaic schools of Shammai and Hillel show (Mishnah Berakoth 8:1-4), and another important event at about the same hour was the lighting of the sabbath lamp (Mishnah Shabbath 2:6f.), the kindling of fire being prohibited after the sabbath had begun. A blessing for light was said at the close of the sabbath the following evening, when the restriction on kindling ended and the day of the creation of light, Sunday, began. This benediction also was already in existence in the first century, when it was discussed by Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel (Mishnah Berakoth 8:5f.).

### *The Ministry of the Word*

In all this, we have said nothing about the reading of the Scriptures and teaching, which existed both in the home from day to day and in the synagogue on the sabbath, and are the features of sabbath-day worship

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<sup>29</sup> See Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (English translation, London, S.C.M., 1966), 110, following Finkelstein. A fourth benediction was later added.

<sup>30</sup> 'Birkath ha-Zimmun and Havurah-Meals', in *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 13 (1962), 23-29. For the importance of common meals (*sundeipnon*), even among the Jews of the Dispersion, by the first century BC, cp. Josephus, *Antiquities* 14:214f.

<sup>31</sup> See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentur (ut supra)*, excursus 24, 'Ein altjüdisches Gastmahl'.

<sup>32</sup> See Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus, ut supra*, 44-46.

mainly stressed by the first-century sources.<sup>33</sup> In the home, they were unregulated, except by the injunctions and exhortations of the Old Testament to read and meditate continually in God's Law (Deut. 17:19; Josh. 1:8; Ps. 1:2; 119:97) and to teach it to one's children (Gen. 18:19; Deut. 6:7; 11:19; 32:46; Ps. 78:4-7); and the two first-century references that we have to private Bible-reading are both in the context of the teaching of children by their parents (4 Macc. 18:10-19; 2 Tim. 3:15).<sup>34</sup> In the synagogue on the sabbath, Bible reading and teaching mainly took place at Morning Prayer, and to a lesser degree at Afternoon Prayer, but had no part in Evening or Additional Prayer. This inevitably made Morning Prayer (which also included both the Shema and the Tephillah, not just the latter) the most important service of the sabbath. The basic item was the reading of the Pentateuch, which is attested by the New Testament, Philo and Josephus,<sup>35</sup> and which was read from sabbath to sabbath according to a set order, interrupted only at the seasons of certain holy days (Mishnah Megillah 3:4-6) It appears from the Babylonian Talmud (Megillah 29b) and later evidence that the whole Pentateuch was read in 3 to 3½ years.<sup>36</sup> A reading from the Prophets was added on sabbaths and major holy days (Lk. 4:16-20; Acts 13:15, 27; Mishnah Megillah 4:2), which was chosen according to its suitability to the lection from the Pentateuch, and was not originally a prescribed passage (Lk.

<sup>33</sup> In every one of the references to the sabbath-day worship of the synagogue collected in note 20, except two of those from Josephus, the theme is Scripture-reading and teaching.

<sup>34</sup> If Timothy was brought up by his Greek father and Jewish mother in the town where Paul found him living, and where apparently he was well known (Acts 16:1-3; 20-4), it was one in which there is not known to have been a synagogue; so it was very likely his mother who taught him the Scriptures.

<sup>35</sup> Note esp. Acts 13:15; 15:21; Philo, *Hypothetica* 7:12f.; Josephus, *Against Apion* 2:175. There is, in addition, the synagogue inscription from before 70 AD discovered at the Ophel, Jerusalem, which states that the synagogue there had been built 'for the reading of the Law and for the teaching of the commandments' (see E. L. Sukenik, *Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece*, Schweich Lectures, London, British Academy, 1934, 69ff.).

<sup>36</sup> As Heinemann shows, the theory of a standard cycle of readings lasting exactly 3 years—whether beginning in Nisan, as Adolph Büchler argued, or in Tishri, as Jacob Mann argued—is contrary to the mediaeval evidence that, even at that date, Palestinian practice varied, and that the cycle might last up to 3½ years ('The Triennial Lectionary Cycle', in *The Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 19, 1968, 41-48). Charles Perrot ingeniously conjectures that there was both a precise 3-year cycle beginning in Tishri and a 3½ year cycle beginning in Nisan and Tishri alternately, as well as other customs (*La lecture de la Bible dans la synagogue*, Hildesheim, Gerstenberg, 1973, ch. 7). Perrot holds that the 1-year Babylonian cycle which displaced these Palestinian schemes was devised in the second-century AD (173f.). Such recent investigations really make nonsense of the lectionary theories developed, as a supposed background to the gospels, by a succession of New Testament scholars from R. G. Finch to Michael Goulder.

4:16-20; M. Megillah 4:10). At Afternoon Prayer, a portion of the Pentateuch lection for the next sabbath was read, but no reading from the Prophets was added (M. Megillah 3:6-4:1). With the exception of Psalms and Esther (used at Purim), the Hagiographa was not read at all: it is mentioned by the Babylonian Talmud as a peculiarity of the Jews of Nehardea that they included a reading from the Hagiographa at Afternoon Prayer (Shabbath 116b). One of the reasons given for this omission is significant: 'because of neglect of the beth ha-midrash' (Mishnah Shabbath 16:1). The 'beth ha-midrash' is the 'house of exposition': exposition originally followed the readings at Morning Prayer in the synagogue itself (Lk. 4:20-27; Acts 13:15-41), and a separate hall was later built for this purpose. The exposition might well continue, with inevitable interruptions for the midday meal and other services, throughout the rest of the day (Philo, *Hypothetica* 7:13). Josephus, likewise, quotes evidence from a pagan observer that the Jews appeared to spend the whole sabbath-day in the synagogue (*Against Apion* 1:209).

80 The synagogue ministry is a subject in itself.<sup>37</sup> By the first century, as was remarked earlier, the synagogue had become a more important teaching-centre than the Temple, and the teaching-duties of the priests had largely been taken over by others. These others were the elders, lawyers, teachers of the Law, scribes (Scripture-experts) or rabbis, as they are variously called in the New Testament. They had studied the Law and the traditions under more senior rabbis, as Paul did under Gamaliel I (Acts 22:3), and probably—in view of New Testament Christian practice—it was already customary for their teacher afterwards to ordain them, by the laying-on of hands. They would then become recognised teachers in the synagogue of the locality where they lived, and would be called upon by the rulers of the synagogue to expound on the sabbath at Morning Prayer, though the rulers could alternatively call upon visiting teachers to do so (Acts 13:15). The only element in the synagogue service which required a priest was the pronouncement of the Aaronic blessing during the Tephillah, for which a priest was necessary in order to conform to Num. 6:23. The synagogue service of Palestine had also a high degree of congregational participation. Quite apart from the congregational Amen's and other responses, any male might apparently be called upon to read the Hebrew Scriptures, supply the Aramaic translation, or recite the Shema or Tephillah: even a minor, a blind man or a man in rags was not wholly excluded from these privileges (Mishnah Megillah 4:4-8).

<sup>37</sup> Especially important on this subject is Julius Newman, *Semikhah* (Manchester, The University Press, 1950). On the first-century Jewish priesthood, see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (English translation, London, S.C.M., 1969), ch. 8.