CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Survey of Research

The introduction to the section on the Divine Office in the most recent edition of *The Study of Liturgy*[1] has a definition of the office that neatly encapsulates present-day understanding of this liturgical form. It says: 'The divine office ... may be defined as a pattern of non-sacramental services to be celebrated or recited at intervals during the day (and night)'. This seemingly unexceptional statement begs the questions as to whether (a) the exclusion of any concept of sacramentality, and (b) the obvious bias towards what has been called the 'sanctification of the day', can leave us with a correct hermeneutical principle for understanding the concept of prayer at set times of day and night.

The modern Western, and to a certain extent, Eastern, concept of sacramentality has tended to narrow it down to seven, or even only two, ecclesial acts. This medieval development grew out of a desire to make ever more precise distinctions between 'the sacraments of the new covenant and the broad "sacramental realm" of natural sacraments, Old Testament sacraments, consecrations resembling sacraments, and blessings'.[2] An older understanding of sacraments was much broader; Hugh of St Victor (+ 1142) even included the sign of the cross and the 'opening of the hands in charity' as sacraments, and, unsurprisingly, concluded that the sacraments were too many to number.[3] God is not tied to certain specific acts but rather there are many potential ways in which 'ritual activity symbolizes the presence and activity of God in the faith of the Church'.[4]

The narrowing tendency has never taken over completely in the Christian East, as Bishop Kallistos (Ware) has said: 'we must never isolate these seven from the many other actions in the Church which also possess a sacramental character'.[5] Similarly, Christos Yannaras points out that 'The whole life of the faithful, every turn of his life, is a preparation for participation in or an event of participation in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, in the refashioning of life.'[6] Alexander Schmemann

[1] Eds Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold SJ and Paul Bradshaw (London: SPCK, 1992), p. 399.

[2] H. Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), p. 52.

[3] See my 'The Sacraments and Evangelisation', *The Month*, CCLIV, #1503, 2nd ns **26**, #3 (March, 1993), 121–25, quoting *PL* 176, col. 475.

[4] John Baldovin, 'Liturgical Presidency: The Sacramental question', in Baldovin, *Worship: City, Church and Renewal* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1991), pp. 115–34, 121.

[5] Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (new edn, London: Penguin, 1993), p. 276.

[6] *Elements of Faith* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1991), p. 133.

was anxious not to reduce the whole of liturgical life to the Eucharist, nor to extend the concept of sacrament too widely,[7] but while respecting his concern, we shall maintain that there is, in liturgical forms at evening and morning, an *act* which is at least quasi-sacramental. Most recently, Bishop Hilarion (Alfeyev) has shown how, as late as the thirteenth century, Eastern theological thought was unconcerned about the number of the sacraments.[8]

This leads to the second presupposition, that the offices are more or less arbitrary attempts to Christianize day and night, whereas we shall try to show that the rhythm of day and night, or rather, night followed by day, is fundamental to the whole concept of prayer at particular hours.

The daily symbols of night and day are basic to any symbolic understanding of reality. The cycles of birth and death, winter and summer may be encapsulated in the daily passage from light to darkness, through that darkness, and back again to light. Mircea Eliade, speaking of initiatory symbolism said: 'initiatory death is often symbolized, for example, by cosmic night, by the telluric womb, the hut, the belly of a monster'.[9]

Symbols were essential to the expression of Christianity from its very beginning, and symbols are recognized rather than created: 'They grow out of the individual or collective unconscious and cannot function without being accepted by the unconscious dimension of our being.'[10] Human beings symbolize their relationships with each other, the task of those who explore symbolism is to identify the symbolic ways, not to invent them. Symbolic phenomena interpret context, and not the other way round; symbols in fact throw light by which we may discern the true nature of reality.[11]

We shall stress the dynamic of the office from the beginning of the night to the full light of day, because it ensures that the celebration of daily prayer enables participation in the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection. In the chapters on the traditions of daily prayer, we will first explain their structure, then examine the scriptures they use and how they use them, and finally how the meaning of these services is explicitated in hymn and prayer texts. This method demonstrates the interplay between ritual, visual action, the scriptural proclamation and the *lex orandi*, and is inspired by the work of David Power on sacraments.[12]

[7] *Introduction to Liturgical Theology* (London: Faith Press, 1966), p. 34.

[8] *The Mystery of Faith* (Eng. trans., London: DLT, 2002), p. 131.

[9] *Rites and Symbols of Initiation* (Eng. trans. W.F. Trask, New York: Harper & Row, 1958), pp. 14–15.

[10] Dan Sperber, *Rethinking Symbolism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 49.

[11] Ibid., p. 117.

[12] David Power, *Sacrament: The Language of God's Giving* (New York: Crossroad, 1999), pp. 99–100.

Research on the Subject

A number of books have examined the history of the daily office in recent years, and have advanced the discussion well beyond the works of older scholars. One of the earlier scholars, Batiffol concluded that the order of evening, night and morning offices was the origin of daily prayer,[13] a vigilial form that spread from weekly to festal, and ultimately to daily, use. Jules Baudot[14] and Suitbert Bäumer[15] again also mainly examined Western, and particularly Roman, forms in a similar way.

A major development in the understanding of the Divine Office and its history was Anton Baumstark's positing of the now common distinction between the 'cathedral' and 'monastic' offices.[16] For Baumstark, the cathedral rite comprised only two services, at morning and evening, with a vigil on Saturday to Sunday night. These services used only a small number of psalms, chosen for their suitability for the time of day; whilst monastic prayer became characterized by the use of the whole psalter in course, from 1 to 150, in some set period of time, most often, a week. Monastic offices were multiple; Terce, Sext and None became communal, and forms of prayer late at night, midnight (distinct from the pre-dawn vigil) and at the first hour (Prime), became part of the daily *cursus*.[17]

Baumstark's principles of comparative liturgy became the framework for modern scholars, a first wave of whom included Juan Mateos,[18] whose findings became widely influential. Mateos summed up his view of the nature of the office in an English-language article. Emphasizing the popular nature of the 'cathedral office', he enumerated the now familiar elements: a typical morning office of cathedral type had psalm 50 to open it, then psalm 62, an Old Testament canticle, hymn, a New Testament canticle accompanied by incense, the praise psalms and prayer. The evening office comprised a lamp-lighting ritual, evening psalm or psalms, evening incense and prayer.[19]

[13] Pierre Batiffol, *Histoire du Bréviaire Romain* (Paris: 1893), Eng. trans. Atwell Baylay (London: 1898), p. 36.

[14] *The Roman Breviary: Its Sources and History* (Eng. trans., London: 1909), see esp. pp. 27–9.

[15] Suitbert Bäumer OSB, *Histoire du Bréviaire*, 2 vols (Paris: 1905) [translation of *Geschichte des Breviers* (Freiburg, 1895)], pp. 52–3.

[16] French edn 1940, Eng. trans. *Comparative Liturgy* (London: Mowbrays, 1958).

[17] Ibid., pp. 112–15.

[18] E.g., J. Mateos, 'L'office du soir: ancienne structure et realisations concretes', *Revue du clergé Africain*, **19** (1964), 3–25; 'L'office dominical de la Résurrection', *Revue du clergé Africain*, **19** (1964), 263–88; and 'Quelques aspects Théologiques de l'Office du matin', *Revue du clergé Africain*, **20** (1965), 335–49.

[19] J. Mateos, 'The Morning and Evening Office', *Worship*, **42** (1968), 31–47.

Mateos' popular articles of the 1960s accompanied a time of liturgical change everywhere, but he did not convince the revisers of the Roman offices in 1964.[20] They, and many others, followed the path of what Stanislaus Campbell has called 'eclectic traditionalism' which justified reforms by isolated precedents;[21] and clearly distrusted liturgical scholarship.

The Orthodox scholar Alexander Schmemann alerted the West to the findings of older Russian scholarship and was convinced that Vespers and Matins were commonly celebrated in the third century and did not have a monastic origin.[22] Other writers also popularized these views about the origin of and importance for the modern church of the ancient cathedral office.[23]

It was increasingly recognized that prayer at the beginning and end of the day is common to most religious traditions, including Judaism, and as with other Christian acts of worship, such as baptism and the Eucharist, many efforts were made to try and establish Jewish origins for Christian daily prayer.[24] However the idea that we can trace a direct line between synagogue worship and that of the early church is now largely abandoned.[25] Jewish scholars also were increasingly pointing out the dearth of evidence for a recognizeable synagogue service at the time of Christ.[26] The tradition of twice daily prayer in Christianity does not seem to have direct Jewish roots.[27]

[20] Stanislaus Campbell, FSC, *From Breviary to Liturgy of the Hours* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 79ff.

[21] Ibid., p. 251. Use of the Mozarabic rite to justify New Testament canticles, but see my *Daily Prayer in Christian Spain* (London: Alcuin / SPCK, 2000), ch. 11.

[22] *Introduction to Liturgical Theology*, op. cit., p. 66.

[23] See e.g., William G. Storey, 'Public Worship: The Liturgy of the Hours', *Worship*, **49** (1975), 2–12; idem, 'The Liturgy of the Hours: Cathedral versus Monastery', *Worship*, **50** (1976), 50–70. A good summary of the two kinds of office is George Guiver, *Company of Voices* (London: SPCK, 1988), p. 56.

[24] E.g., C.W. Dugmore, *The Influence of the Synagogue upon the Divine Office* (London: Alcuin Club / Faith Press, 1964), and R. Beckwith, *Daily and Weekly Worship: Jewish to Christian* (Bramcote: Alcuin / GROW Liturgical Study 1, 1987), esp. pp. 35–8.

[25] See e.g., W. McKinnon, 'On the Question of Psalmody in the Ancient Synagogue', in *Early Music History*, **VI** (Cambridge, 1986), 159–91.

[26] See e.g., Paul F. Bradshaw and L.A. Hoffman (eds), *The Making of Jewish and Christian Worship* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), esp. Stefan C. Reif, 'The Early History of Jewish Worship' on pp. 109–36. Heather A. McKay, *Sabbath and Synagogue* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994) presents the evidence against there being any form of Synagogue worship service in the first centuries of the Common Era.

[27] Paul Bradshaw, in *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship* (London: SPCK, 2002) sums up modern Jewish and Christian scholarship on the subject, esp. pp. 23–46.

There has, as in the definition quoted at the beginning of this Introduction, been a tendency to define daily offices as simply times of prayer, rather along the lines of an ascetic exercise, twice daily.[28] Baumstark's distinction between 'cathedral' and 'monastic' offices now only seems supportable from the fourth century, the earliest stage from which we have much evidence for the existence of twice-daily public prayer. Paul Bradshaw summarized evidence from an earlier period for prayer three times during the day and once during the night, which may well have been private or at least domestic. For the first two or three centuries the apostolic injunction to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5.17) seems to have been influential, but possibly in a largely domestic context.[29] Bradshaw concluded by suggesting that the twice daily pattern may have arisen from practical convenience, or as a conscious desire to replicate the practice of the Temple, and notes that previous examination had tended to ignore the importance of prayer in the night for many Fathers.[30]

In his recently revised work, *The Search for the Origins of Christian Worship*, Bradshaw seems even less willing to go beyond stating a number of features that do seem to be common at morning and evening prayer services; for example, psalms 148–50 and the *Benedicite* in the morning, and a hymn of light, such as Φως ἱλαρόν, and either psalm 140 or 103. He sums up the daily cathedral office as 'the Church gathered for prayer, exercising the royal priesthood by offering a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on behalf of all creation and interceding for the salvation of the world'.[31] The question that Bradshaw asks and which remains unanswered, is how it happened that a scheme of three, probably domestic, prayers in the day and one at night became almost universally two major public services, vespers and matins, in the early or mid-fourth century.[32]

Robert Taft's contribution to this debate has taken the theology of daily prayer seriously as a constituent element of the offices, as he says: 'Evening and morning, at the setting and rising of the sun, the Church is reminded of Jesus' passover from death to life.'[33] He does, however, still seem to see morning and evening as more or less arbitrary times for prayer. He concludes:

> Per se there is no special mystical significance about morning and evening as times of prayer. They are the beginning and end of the day, and so it was

[28] E.g., L. Duchesne, *Christian Worship: Its Origin and Evolution* (London: SPCK, 1927), pp. 448–9.

[29] In *Daily Prayer in the Early Church* (London: Alcuin / SPCK, 1981), pp. 47, 50–1.

[30] Ibid., pp. 150–1.

[31] Ibid., pp. 171–8.

[32] Ibid., pp. 175–6.

[33] R. Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours in East and West* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1986), p. 28.

perfectly natural to select them as the 'symbolic moments' in which we express what ought to be the quality of the whole day.[34]

From what has been said above, it should be clear that the present author feels that there *is* a particular significance to the 'hinge moments' of the day, a significance recognized, rather than arbitrarily selected.

Taft sums up much of what can be known of the evolution of the structures of the offices both in East and West. He has also established the structures that undergird the still extant traditions, but we are still left unclear as to why *these* structures, and no others, have survived or have been discovered.

Taft ended his work with an attempt to establish a theology of daily prayer.[35] He stressed the transformation of time into event, the daily victory of light over darkness, and suggested some ways in which that is symbolized. However, Evensong in this seems only a thanksgiving after work at which light gives way to darkness and penance, with little sign of eschatological hope that comes only next morning.

A number of recent authors have examined the divine office from a more philosophical or theological point of view.[36] Andrea Grillo speaks of a sacramental ethos and sacramental ethics in connection with the Liturgy of Time, but seems more concerned with rhythm in Christian life than the rhythm of time itself.[37] Renato de Zan emphasizes the evening to evening thrust of Jewish prayer being replaced by that of Roman secular society.[38] This collection shows how wide the discussion is, but does not greatly advance the argument.

Taft concentrated on the morning and evening offices, and did not include the vigil in his structure, perhaps seeing it as either purely monastic, or as an event of the cathedral office tied to Sundays and feasts, and in both cases rather separate from the basic morning and evening structure. He went a long way towards demonstrating that daily offices are liturgical acts of prayer, but is somewhat vague as to just how this is so.

The tendency to treat the morning and evening offices as the hinges of the day, in accordance with the documents of Vatican II, often seems to lead commentators to attempt to fit those services into a single ideal shape of introduction, Word of God, and prayers.[39] The problem with

[34] Ibid., pp. 347–8.

[35] 'Towards a Theology of the Liturgy of the Hours', ibid., pp. 331–65.

[36] E.g., in *Liturgia delle Ore: tempo e rito* (*BEL Subsidia 75*, Roma: Edizioni Liturgiche, 1994).

[37] 'Problematiche attuali della preghiera nel ritmi del tempo', ibid., pp. 45–88.

[38] 'Il tempo della preghiera nel Nuovo Testamento', ibid., pp. 89–106, 103.

[39] See introduction to the Society of St. Francis, *Celebrating Common Prayer* (London: Mowbray, 1992), p. 11.

this shape is not that it is false so much as misleading, for it suggests that the two 'hinge offices' function in more or less the same way as each other, but at different points of the day. The edificatory element of the Word of God tends to dominate the core of this type of daily prayer, leaving little room for either service to function as a genuine liturgical act. Just as there is a rite involving a water-bath at the centre of baptism, and another involving a simple meal of bread, the staple of temperate climes, and wine, a sign of festivity, at the centre of the Eucharist; then, we contend, there are the moments of sunset and sunrise which are at the centre of the *acts* of evening and morning prayer. It is the ritualization of these moments that gives rise to forms of evening and morning prayer, which need then to be conceived as actions of at least a quasi-sacramental nature.

How this Book Will Approach the Subject

In the chapters that follow we will first briefly examine the biblical and patristic evidence for the symbolic importance of light and darkness, and for prayer at night. No one disputes that daily prayer was called for by the Bible and the Fathers, and the authors already mentioned have marshalled the evidence succinctly and completely.[40] Here we intend only to explore whether any special importance is given to prayer in the night, and further, the centrality of the theme of light overcoming the darkness.

The next chapter will examine the Church Orders, and, after a brief survey to set the historical context, the following six chapters will examine the offices of the Christian East, noting the common structures and theological outlook that they can be said to share. Three chapters will then examine the Western offices and see how far they share the same concerns.

The conclusion will examine whether there is a function or moment that is being ritualized in evening and morning prayer, and whether this provides an hermeneutical principle for comprehending the liturgy of daily worship. This conclusion will suggest that Batiffol's proposal of the primacy of vigil prayer in the development of the daily office was fundamentally sound. From this it will follow that the thrust of daily prayer is from night to morning and not from morning to night. 'First Vespers' is in fact the evening service that begins the liturgical day – as remains the case in the liturgical practices of all the Eastern churches. The watch for, and in anticipation of, the Lord's return is the fundamental rationale of the daily office.

[40] See e.g., Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, op. cit., pp. 1–46, and Taft, op. cit., pp. 3–11.

Finally, as regards nomenclature, the concept of 'vigil' implies being awake and on watch, not sleeping,[41] as does the Greek αγρυπνία.[42] Carlo Marcora described several kinds of vigil,[43] some lasted all night, but most were for a part of the night, very often the early morning before light. In general, we will use the word 'vigil' for any service or part of a service celebrated after Vespers and before Matins. We will always speak of Vespers as a service intended for sundown, while Matins is at sunrise or thereabouts.

[41] See e.g., Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary* (●xford: Clarendon, 1896).

[42] E.g., G.W.H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (●xford: Clarendon, 1961).

[43] *La Vigilia nella Liturgia* (Milan: *Archivio Ambrosiano VI*, Milan, 1954), esp. p. 62.

CHAPTER 2

From Evening to Morning: Biblical and Patristic Symbolism

The Old Testament and Early Rabbinic Judaism

The first scriptural text in which the symbolism of night and day illustrates our argument is Genesis 1.5: 'God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.' It is the creation of light and dark that allows for the creation of day, itself created out of darkness. As Von Rad puts it:

> Every night, when the created world of forms flows together into formlessness, chaos regains a certain power over what has been created. (Many of our evening hymns know how to express impressively the creaturely feeling of dread toward the night.) And every morning ... something of God's first creation is repeated.[1]

There is a difference between Genesis and 'the accepted Jewish practice of connecting the day-time with the previous night, that is the custom of regarding sunset as the starting-point of the day'.[2]

The cultic law commands a light to be kept burning through the night:

> You shall further command the Israelites to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the light, so that a lamp may be set up to burn regularly. In the tent of meeting, outside the curtain that is before the covenant, Aaron and his sons shall tend it from evening to morning before the Lord. It shall be a perpetual ordinance to be observed throughout their generations by the Israelites.
> (Exodus 27.20–21)

The concern that the light be kept burning, actively tended by the Aaronic priesthood, throughout the night, may be seen as a form of vigil. The command is repeated in Leviticus 24.2–3:

> Command the people of Israel to bring you pure oil of beaten olives for the lamp, that a light may be kept burning regularly. Aaron shall set it up in the

[1] G. von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (London: SCM Press, rev. edn, 1972), pp. 52–3.

[2] Umberto Cassuto, *Commentary on Genesis, vol. I* (Eng. trans., Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1961), p. 28.

> tent of meeting, outside the curtain of the covenant, to burn from evening to morning before the Lord regularly; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations.

Sacrifice was to be offered daily, morning and evening:

> Now this is what you shall offer on the altar: two lambs a year old regularly each day. One lamb you shall offer in the morning, and the other lamb you shall offer in the evening ... And the other lamb you shall offer in the evening, and shall offer with it a grain offering and its drink offering, as in the morning, for a pleasing odour, an offering by fire to the Lord.
>
> (Exodus 29.38–9, 41)

In addition to this twice-daily animal sacrifice there was to be a daily offering of incense:

> You shall make an altar on which to offer incense; you shall make it of acacia wood ... Aaron shall offer fragrant incense on it; every morning when he dresses the lamps he shall offer it, and when Aaron sets up the lamps in the evening, he shall offer it, a regular incense offering before the Lord throughout your generations.
>
> (Exodus 30.1, 7–8)

Bearing in mind the subsequent history of daily prayer in the Christian church, it is interesting that this offering of incense is connected with the dressing of lamps in the morning, and again at night.

The daily sacrifice was organized on the basis of reckoning the day from morning to morning, but as Cassuto pointed out, regulations that connect the night to the preceding day, 'offer no difficulty to our hypothesis. On the contrary, they tally with our explanation, for all the laws relating to the sacrifices were framed to accord specifically with the conditions obtaining in the Land of Canaan.'[3] So which is the earlier? Reckoning the day to start in the morning, or at night?

H.R. Stroes summed up the biblical evidence in an article in 1966,[4] and tentatively concluded that the civil reckoning of pre-exilic Israel was from morning to night, and the cultic from evening to evening. Other scholars argue strongly for a pre-exilic morning to morning reckoning. The custom of the Sabbath light on the evening preceding the Sabbath, presumed old by the Mishnah, has no biblical origin. Also, the light was perhaps lit the night before to avoid kindling a light on the Sabbath and thereby infringing the

[3] Ibid., p. 30.

[4] 'Does the Day begin in the Evening or the Morning?', *Vetus Testamentum*, **16** (1966), 460–75.

day of rest.[5] The Mishnah is however clear that, e.g., 'The *one day* spoken of in the law of *It and its young* means the day together with the night that went before.'[6] Similarly, tractate Berakoth asks about the time of recitation of the evening *Shema'* and goes on to ask the same question of the morning recitation,[7] implying that evening comes first.

The New Testament

New Testament evidence for services of prayer is hard to come by, let alone considerations as to how the day was conceived to begin and end. Geoffrey Cuming examined the evidence and wondered whether there was worship every day, or only on Sundays. He tried to identify some elements of early Christian prayer as found in the letters of Paul; psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. He also noted that 'It is clear that much prayer took place at night, sometimes taking the form of an all-night vigil.' However, content and structure remain entirely obscure and, he says; 'Certainly there is no hint of a night office.'[8]

Taft's overview of New Testament texts on prayer mostly refers to private prayer, but he also mentions the Christian habit of imitating Jesus' practice of praying at night, and the idea of watching for the coming bridegroom that was implied in such practices[9]. A classical text for prayer at night is Acts 16.25: 'About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.' This accords with staying awake to watch in Mark 13.35: 'Therefore, keep awake, for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn.' Remaining awake and watchful is a theme in Matthew, e.g., 24.42; 'Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.'

The eschatological theme is illustrated by the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: Matthew 25.6: 'But at midnight there was a shout, 'Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." and 25.13: 'Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.' The bridegroom's midnight arrival becomes a commonplace of early Christianity; waking and praying, or staying awake, in order to watch for the coming Messianic bridegroom. We note the

[5] J.Z. Lauterback, 'The sabbath in Jewish Ritual and Folklore', in *Rabbinic Essays* (Cincinnati, 1951), pp. 437–70.

[6] *The Mishnah*, trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press: 1933, reprinted 1991), p. 522, Hullin 5.5.

[7] Ibid., p. 2, Berakoth 1 & 2.

[8] 'The New Testament Foundations for Common Prayer', *SL*, 10, (1974), 88–105.

[9] Taft, Op.cit., 5–11.

eschatological interest again in the garden of Gethsemane: Matthew 26.40–41: 'Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' There appears to be an apocalyptic side to this exhortation, not just a concern for the avoidance of sleep.[10] The importance of the night watch cannot be doubted and it cannot be limited to an annual Easter observance.

The night watch was part of the eschatological outlook of early Christians. On the other hand there must have been nights when a vigil would have been impossible because of work or other commitments. For example; 'On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight' (Acts 20.7). On this occasion, quite possibly because of the incident involving Eutyches' fall from the window, the assembly is prolonged: 'Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left' (Acts 20.11). It is possible that Eutyches' survival galvanized all present into a watchful night of thanks and eschatological expectation, for life had overcome death.

Perhaps the best New Testament example of a symbolic treatment of light and darkness is the prologue of John's Gospel; e.g., 1.4–5: 'in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.' We need not see a sort of Zoroastrian dualism here, the symbolism is used to illustrate an ethical dualism, similar to the struggle between children of light and of darkness spoken of in the Dead Sea scrolls.[11] Symbols have a great evocative power and a multi-facetedness that invites participation. The watch in the night, the natural passage into and out of darkness may illustrate basic Christian truths. This then may be the starting-point for understanding the nature and purpose of Christian daily prayer.

Patristic Symbolism

Around 96 CE, Clement of Rome, in chapter 24 of his first letter to the Corinthians, said, 'Day and night declare to us a resurrection. The night sinks to sleep and the day arises; the day [again] departs, and the night comes on.'[12] From the natural phenomenon of the sun's rising and setting, its dying and

[10] E.g., David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New Century Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids Eerdmans / London: & Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1972), p. 342.

[11] J.N. Sanders and B.A. Mastin, *The Gospel according to John* (London: A. & C. Black, 1968), p. 74.

[12] (Ante-Nicene Christian Library I, Edinburgh: 1867), pp. 25–6; hereafter ANCL.

coming to life, Clement argues for the reasonableness of the death and resurrection of Christ. The sun and daylight are symbols of life, and the night a symbol of death, or even, as in another author, of ignorance.[13]

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 117) spoke to the Romans of his coming martyrdom as the path to resurrection life in Christ, which he calls 'pure light'.[14] Around 131 the *Epistle of Barnabas* described the Christian ethical way of life as 'The Way of Light'.[15] Clearly it was common for early Christians to describe the redemptive work of Christ, and its working out in the world, in the imagery of light and darkness.

Other second-century authors used similar imagery. Justin Martyr in his dialogue with Trypho (100.4) spoke of Christ as the day,[16] and Melito of Sardis, in his *On Pascha* uses such imagery a good deal. Melito's sermon was for an integrated celebration of the passion, death and resurrection of Christ, probably a Quartodeciman Passover. He makes great use of the contrast between light and dark, life and death; in stanza 68 Christ is 'he that delivered us from slavery to liberty, from darkness to light, from death to life'[17] and this he was able to do for 'he is the first-born of God, ... who tinted the light, who lit up the day, who divided off the darkness'. The mention of the first-born recalls the death of the Egyptian first-born described earlier by Melito, in a passage that makes much of the plague of darkness, 'a darkness that could be grasped and death grasping'. Into this darkness of death Christ goes 'sacrificed at evening and buried at night' but he emerges declaring: 'I am your life, I am your light, I am your salvation.'

Melito was active around 160–170 and it is clear that for him, the symbolism of light and life, darkness and death, evoked meaning. David Power cites Susanne Langer saying that the primary purpose of symbols is in their 'power of formulating experience, and presenting it objectively for contemplation, logical intuition, recognition, understanding'.[18] Natural symbols such as day and night have undeniable power, as is obvious in the writings of such as Melito, because the symbolism provided the formulation of experience of which Langer speaks.

In a fragmentary sermon on baptism Melito described the sun as 'baptized' each day. For the sun sets, as if into the waters, and rises in glory: 'Though one

[13] Hermas, *The Shepherd* (ANCL I, Edinburgh, 1867), pp. 414–15.

[14] *Epistle to the Romans* (ANCL I), p. 215.

[15] (ANCL I), p. 131.

[16] See *PG* 6, 709.

[17] All quotes from S.G. Hall (ed.), *On Pascha* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979).

[18] D.N. Power, *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1984), p. 68.

and the same, he rises for men as a new sun, tempered from the deep, purified from the bath; he has driven off the nocturnal darkness, and has begotten bright day.'[19] Melito again draws upon natural symbols to order reality and to enter into its significance. Further, whereas in *On Pascha* he dealt with light and darkness as symbolic of the resurrection of Christ at Easter, in this fragment he appears to speak of a daily experience of renewal of the sun's rays, and of the risen life of Christ in his people. A people who enter that life by baptism once, but live it every day.

Third-century writers are better known and more numerous, and also provide many examples of the imagery of light and life, darkness and death. Origen, in first half of the third century, is an important exponent of the theme, identifying the Sun of Righteousness in Malachi 1.2 with Christ who is a new day for believers.[20] In his treatment of Sunday, the Lord's Day, Origen spoke of Christians feeding on the 'flesh of the Word' which was their Passover, the old Passover having been eaten not only in the evening but in 'the evening of the world that you might nourish yourselves on the flesh of His Word, you who are always evening until the morning comes ... so, too, you shall rejoice and be glad in the morning, that is in the world to come'.[21] The imagery has taken on a new and more complex aspect, Origen extends the darkness theme to include Christians waiting in the darkened evening of this world for the glorious light of the world to come, called elsewhere 'spiritual day'.[22]

Clement of Alexandria described dawn as an image of the day of birth, which was a reason for turning east to pray, to greet the sun as a natural symbol of the new life of the risen Christ in which his people are to share.[23] In the *Stromata* Clement also described Christ as the day,[24] and in the *Paedogogus*, night is a metaphor for ignorance.[25] Sleep does not exclude watchfulness, 'Wherefore we ought often to rise by night and bless God. For blessed are they who watch for him, ...'.[26] Enlightenment was, for Clement, the gift that brought one from the darkness of ignorance of Christ to His glorious light. The Divine Light could be reached through baptism,[27] a light attained when turning from the darkness of death and sin, and rejecting

[19] Fragment 8b, *On Pascha*, op. cit., p. 73.

[20] Homily on Exodus VII, *PG* 12, 347.

[21] On Genesis, Homily X. *PG* 12, 218.

[22] Lampe, op. cit., *hemera* (John 32.2), p. 606.

[23] *Stromata* VII.7, in *PG* 9, 461.

[24] 6.16, *PG* 7, 376–7.

[25] *Paed.* I.6, *PG* 8, 280ff.; II.9, *PG* 8, 489ff.

[26] *PG* 8, 492–3, English, ANCL I, p. 241.

[27] *Protrep.* 12, *PG* 8, 240–1. C. Mondésert (ed.), *Le Protreptique* (*SCH 2*, Paris: 1949).

Satan.[28] These writers clearly saw the primordial symbols of light and darkness as ways by which the reality of the Christian's passage from death to life in baptism, and in other aspects of ecclesial life, was actually communicated.

The *Acts of Judas Thomas*, early third century, exists in two recensions, Greek and Syriac, and it is impossible to establish how much of the text is original, and how far the group which produced it was part of mainstream Christianity of the time.[29] The apostle Thomas is depicted as baptizing at night and breaking the bread of the Eucharist when the morning light comes. The imagery of light over darkness is a feature of the work, e.g.: 'Come out from the darkness, that the light may receive you!'[30] Not a particularly helpful document on its own, it does show that pattern nocturnal baptism and morning Eucharist, possibly on a Sunday, were known to its compilers. For the present study, light in the night, and longing for the eternal day are the themes to be borne in mind.

The Fathers of the fourth century on are very numerous and so only a small selection of their writings on these topics will be instanced. Basil (c.330–379), in the *Hexaemeron*, was concerned to avoid any suggestion that talk of light and darkness could admit a sub-Christian dualism of the type found in many of the Gnostic writers. He vigorously opposed any suggestion that darkness was a self-contained evil power in permanent mortal combat with the power of Good, identified with God. In these catechetical homilies on the first chapters of Genesis, Basil said: 'The first word of God created the nature of light; it made darkness vanish, dispelled gloom, illuminated the world and gave to all beings at the same time a sweet and gracious aspect.' He then stressed the natures of light and darkness, day and night, as incapable of mixing, and quoted Genesis that there was evening and morning, the first day; evening being the boundary common to day and night.[31]

Basil regarded both day and night as created by God, primordial darkness was simply the absence of God's light. At the end of the homily on Genesis, Basil, carried away by his own eloquence, hastened to conclude with prayer:

> But, while I am conversing with you about the first evening of the world, evening takes me by surprise, and puts an end to my discourse. May the Father of the true light, Who has adorned day with celestial light, Who has made the fire to shine which illumines us during the night, Who reserves for us in the peace of a future age a spiritual and everlasting light, enlighten your hearts in the knowledge of truth, keep you from stumbling, and grant that '... you may walk honestly as in the day.' Thus shall you shine as the

[28] *Paed.* I.6, *PG* 8, 280ff.

[29] Bradshaw, *The Search*, op. cit., pp. 107–8.

[30] See e.g., W. Schneemelcher and E. Hennecke (eds), *The New Testament Apocrypha* (London: Lutterworth, 1965), pp. 456–8.

[31] Basil, *Hexaemeron*, trans. Blomfield Jackson (Oxford: 1895), pp. 51–107, Homilies II.7 & 8.

> sun in the midst of the glory of the saints, and I shall glory in you in the day of Christ, to Whom belong all glory and power for ever and ever. Amen.[32]

The prayer sums up the symbolism outlined above. The darkness approaches but the 'fire' (perhaps a lamp or lamps?) remains to symbolize the presence of Christ whose power can and will overcome the darkness of sin and death. The prayer of thanks for the light is also prayer for protection throughout the threatening darkness of the night, in which God's faithful people are to walk honestly as if in the day. The faithful may always look beyond the oncoming night to the new day symbolizing the everlasting day.

The imagery of light and darkness is also found in Basil's treatise *On the Holy Spirit*. As, for example, in Clement of Rome and Clement of Alexandria, darkness may symbolize ignorance: 'Those that are confined in the darkness of ignorance He enlightens: for this reason He is true light.' The Spirit is 'light perceptible to the mind' supplying light for the search for truth. The Spirit is the only power enabling us to see the brightness of God. We again find the idea of God's eternal day, the spiritual day mentioned by Origen, recurring in Basil who speaks of: 'the day which knows no waning or eventide, and no successor, that age which endeth not nor groweth old'.[33]

The writer known as Denys the Areopagite, appears to have flourished in Syria about the turn of the fifth / sixth centuries.[34] We shall use the translated edition of his works by Colm Luibheid and Paul Rorem.[35] The contrast between darkness and light is very important to this influential author, and although he did not comment explicitly on Vespers and Matins, the ideas expressed throughout his works allow us to see something of the importance of light and darkness in his theology.

De Divinis Nominibus often expresses knowledge of the divine in terms of light or illumination. Light is a sign of the divine goodness and beneficent enlightenment; 'Light comes from the Good, and light is an image of the archetypal Good.' In this, the sun symbolizes the divine goodness, and the light of God enlightens the mind and expels dark error and ignorance: 'It clears away the fog of ignorance from the eyes of the mind and it stirs and unwraps those covered over by the burden of darkness.' And further on: 'But light itself is always light and illuminates the darkness.'[36]

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid., 2 50, VIII.19, IX.22, XXVI.64, XXVII.66.

[34] A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London: Chapman, 1989), p. 14.

[35] *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York / Mahwah: Paulist Press, 1987).

[36] 4.4, 4.5, 4.24 in ibid., pp. 74, 75, 91–2.

In the *Mystical Theology* a song to the Trinity sings of the overwhelming light of the mystery of God's word being poured out;[37] and in the Celestial Hierarchy light makes known mysteries by symbols because God is truly light, the cause of being and seeing.[38] Not surprisingly, baptism is understood in part as a passage from darkness to light; the candidate avoids the 'dark pits of ignorance', is immersed to represent Christ's three days and nights in the tomb, and then 'clothed' in light; in fact baptism is the gift of illumination.[39]

While Denys makes no explicit reference to liturgical celebrations of time, he employs the image of the growing morning light to illustrate the natural round of the day and night as fundamental symbols; symbols by which the Christian may enter into the mystery of Christ, and come to true illumination and the face to face knowledge of God who is light, the light that banishes darkness.

Eastern Fathers seem to demonstrate a greater willingness to envisage the world in symbolic terms. Baptism is often referred to as 'enlightenment', and the newly baptized are described as 'lights in the world' by Gregory Nazianzen, for they are witnesses in all they do to the light of Christ.[40] However, Western authors are not lacking who describe the rationale for daily prayer in similar terms. Ambrose speaks of the light / dark, death / life symbolism:

> let us anticipate the sunrise, let us hasten to its beginning beforehand, let us say: behold, here I am. The Sun of Justice wishes and waits to be anticipated
>
> ... Be sure to anticipate this sun which you see ... If you anticipate this sun before it rises, you receive Christ the giver of light.

Ambrose uses the same imagery as employed elsewhere; the new Sun of Righteousness from Malachi, night as a time to have hope in Christ the light, Christ himself as symbolized by the light of the new day. In the same work Ambrose speaks of the morning light shining in times of darkness for those who meditate on the words of God.[41]

The wide use of the light and life, darkness and death pairs of symbols has its most obvious place in the sermons and writings of the Fathers that refer to some form of daily prayer. But even where no such references exist, there is still a consistent use of symbolic language and concepts over a period of some three hundred years, often in places far apart from each other. This language is, not

[37] 1; ibid., p. 135.

[38] 1 and 13, ibid., pp. 145–6, 178.

[39] 2.III, and 3.I, ibid., pp. 206–8, 210.

[40] *Oration on the Holy Lights XX*, trans. C.G. Brown and J.E. Swallow (Oxford: 1894), pp. 352–9.

[41] *Expositio ps.118, 19, 22, 30, 32* cited in Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, op. cit., p. 142.

surprisingly, closely associated with Easter and with baptism, but is also used more widely.

Patristic and Other Testimony to the Existence of Prayer Services in the Evening and in the Morning

Some of the earliest mentions of liturgical worship are associated with the night, especially Easter night. Very early evidence for evening worship combined with a meal, may also be found. Pliny's famous letter to the Emperor Trajan, c.112, lists the following activities by Christians: on a particular day (we may reasonably assume Sunday) they met before daybreak to sing a hymn to Christ as to a god, and to bind themselves to ethical behaviour by an oath. After this they met again to share ordinary food, and this latter practice was given up by Pliny's command.[42] It seems unlikely that Christians would forego the Eucharist, which may have been included in the morning assembly that started before it was light. The common meal may have taken place in the evening of the same day, but that is not explicitly stated. Since Pliny is extremely vague over times, he may not have known when this evening assembly for a common meal took place – it could have as easily preceded as followed the Sunday morning assembly. One must, however, stress that this is pure hypothesis.

Many early mentions of daily worship, or worship at particular times are to do with various kinds of nocturnal vigils. Most citations of this kind have been made available through the works of Carlo Marcora, Robert Taft and Paul Bradshaw. No attempt at greater detail will follow as so much has already been done, but we will attempt to identify some salient features.

A possible early piece of evidence for prayer at night may be found in the *Shepherd of Hermas*, in which the seer finds himself spending a night sustained by the word of God; clearly a reference to a night spent in prayer.[43] Tertullian, who seems to have regarded prayer in the night as the normal act of a good Christian,[44] describes what appears to be a Christian version of the 'symposium'. This was a meeting for prayer and food in the evening: 'After the washing of hand and the lights, some person may stand up in the midst and sing to God some scripture or hymn of their own devising.'[45] The context also makes clear that participants return home that night, so this is not an all-night

[42] Pliny (the Younger), *Epp. X (ad Traj.)*, xcvi; in H. Bettenson, *Documents of the Christian Church* (London: Oxford University Press, 1943), pp. 4–5.

[43] Op.cit. (fn.13), ibid.

[44] *Apologeticum* in *ANCL XI* (1869), p. 121.

[45] *PL* 1, 477.

vigil. Clement of Alexandria says that 'He who has the light watches',[46] and requires turning to the east in prayer 'since the dawn is an image of the day of birth'.[47] These various early Christian practices can all be explained by the pervasive symbolism of light / life as opposed to darkness / death.

An important practical result of this imagery is the frequency with which we encounter night vigils. Some examples are clearly intended to refer to private devotional practices, but others such as the Easter or baptismal vigils mentioned above, are obviously public, congregational acts of the whole church in a particular place.

Cyprian said: 'let us who are always in Christ, that is, in the light, not cease praying even in the night. Let us, most beloved brethren, who are always in the light of the Lord ... compute the night as day'.[48] These words could be referring to private prayer, but could equally well refer to public acts of worship.

Bradshaw quoted Origen's *de Oratione* 12 concerning prayer at morning, midday, evening, and night, and observed that the reference to evening prayer quotes psalm 140.2, the psalm verse that was to prove most influential in the development of the evening office of the next century.[49] This reference may possibly be to a public assembly, but the context does not seem to indicate this; the reference to night prayer appears to be to a pious custom of rising in the night for private prayer rather than repairing to church.

John Chrysostom (c.347–407) frequently commented on liturgical matters. Around 390 he taught his Catechumens a rationale for daily prayer:

> Be very diligent in coming here early in the morning (*orthron*) to bring prayers and praises (εξομολογησεις) to the God of all, and to give thanks for the benefits already received, ... and so pass the time of day as one obliged to return here in the evening to give the master an account of the entire day and to ask pardon for failures ... Then we must pass the time of the night in sobriety and thus be ready to present ourselves again at the morning praise (εηξομολγησιν).[50]

We note the prayer for forgiveness of sins in the evening, the exhortation to pass the night in sobriety (but not necessarily in prayer), and the greater emphasis on thanksgiving and praise in the morning. Another catechism names

[46] *Paedogogus 2.9* in ANCL I (1867), pp. 240–3.

[47] *Stromata VII.7*, in *PG* 8, 461.

[48] *PL* 4, 542 and T.K. Carroll and T. Halton, *Liturgical Practice in the Fathers* (Wilmington, DW: Glazier, 1988), p. 10.

[49] Bradshaw, *Daily Prayer*, op. cit., pp. 48–9.

[50] Taft, *The Liturgy of the Hours*, p. 42, cf. A. Wenger (ed.), *Jean Chrysostome, Huit Catéchèses Baptismales inédites* (Paris: Cerf, *Sources Chrétiennes* 50, 1970), pp. 256–7.

the evening and morning stars in that order, and sees the morning light as embracing the light of all others, including the evening.[51]

In his commentary on psalm 140, Chrysostom says that it is chanted daily in the evening; 'as a salutary medicine and forgiveness of sins', and, referring to verse 2, the evening sacrifice is seen as fulfilling a Levitical precept to worship at the beginning and the end of the day. There is no indication that incense or lights were used ceremonially at this time.

Chrysostom also commented on psalm 62: in the morning 'it kindles the desire for God, and arouses the soul and greatly inflames it, and fills it with great goodness and love'. He quotes the first words and explains the psalm as the words of a soul on fire for God, and says: 'Where there is love of God, all evil departs; where there is remembrance of God there is oblivion of sin and destruction of evil...'.[52] This fits in well with what we find later in Syrian sources, an explanation of this psalm that does not actually stress keeping vigil so much as thirsting for God.

Although Chrysostom mentions only one evening and one morning psalm, there is no explicit statement that those were the only psalms or canticles used at these services; perhaps these were amongst the few elements that were stable at this early stage. Another stable element was some kind of intercession. Chrysostom, in his commentary on 1 Timothy 2.1, talks of daily worship and daily supplications to be offered evening and morning.[53]

Bishop of Cyr, east of Antioch, Theodoret was an historian and native of Antioch who flourished in the mid fifth century. Night vigils are mentioned as existing in the mid fourth century in his *Church History* II.24, while in the *Philothean History* 30.1 there is clear indication that the Cathedral service of Morning Prayer began at cockcrow,[54] and evening services exist as well. In his *Questions on Exodus* 28, Theodoret mentions the offering of incense and the lighting of the lamps, so ceremonial use of incense now seems to be common. Taft notes that Ephrem may also refer to the ceremonial use of incense when speaking of 'an oblation of incense' in his *Carmina Nisibena* 17.4,[55] but Ephrem may be more connected to the emergent East Syrian tradition (see later).

The argument as to whether the prayer practices were private or not is, to an extent, beside the point, which is that prayer at various points of the day and the night was a desirable thing for devout Christians to do. The rationale behind this practice of prayer was closely connected with the light / life, death / darkness motifs. Rising in the night to pray is easily the most difficult thing to

[51] III.4, Wenger, 152.

[52] Taft, op. cit., pp. 42–3.

[53] Ibid., p. 44, *PG* 62, col. 530.

[54] All references from Taft, *Liturgy of the Hours*, pp. 47–8.

[55] Ibid., p. 48.

do, but is seen to be important as it is a way of proclaiming the reality of Christ as the eternal light and day, whose power can never be overcome by darkness and sin.

At the end of the fourth century and at the beginning of the fifth, we find Jerome strongly recommending the practice of nocturnal prayer, even two or three times a night. He seems to be counseling private vigils, which are, as he says, normal amongst the Egyptian monks, in addition to their communal services of prayer. However, not only were such communal services known to take place in monasteries, they are probably alluded to as taking place in non-monastic churches as well. Jerome also knew of occasional public vigils. Unfortunately abuses were now connected with this practice, and some wished to abolish such vigils or confine them to Easter. This all may be in Jerome's attack on Vigilantius who, in spite of his name, as Jerome was quick to point out, was obviously opposed to these celebrations.[56]

That vigils were common and widely accepted is shown by Eusebius of Caesarea's history, written earlier in the fourth century. When he came across Philo's description of ascetics spending part of the night in prayer, he believed him to be describing all early Christians. That this is unlikely is not so important as the fact that Eusebius saw this as a normal thing for Christians to do, to meet together for prayer at night.[57] Athanasius in his *Apologia pro fuga sua 34* described the intrusion of hostile Arian soldiers at a vigil he was celebrating with his people;[58] this would appear to have been the normal prelude to a 'Synaxis', probably a Sunday or Festal Eucharist.

Vigils were also common in Neo-Caesarea at the time of Basil; though it seems that he, or somebody close to him, must have introduced changes which he had to defend to some of the clergy. They were probably rejecting innovations in the liturgy itself, rather than the actual concept of a vigil.[59] The most important vigil was of course that of Easter, when as Gregory Nazianzen said, the candles of the newly baptized were 'illuminating the night with our crowded fires, formed after the fashion of that great light'[60] (i.e., the Trinity from which all light derives its being). This shows that the original symbolic rationale for praying at night, seeing the night as turned to day by the light of Christ, had not been lost. Gregory Nazianzen also knew other kinds of vigil, he referred in another oration to 'nightlong stations'.[61] His best-known expression

[56] *Letters 22, 107 and 109*, trans. W.H. Fremantle (Oxford: 1893), pp. 37–8, 193, 213.

[57] *PG* 20, 180–184.

[58] *Historical Tracts of St Athanasius, Library of the Fathers* (Oxford: 1873), p. 206.

[59] *Letter 207, to the Clergy of Neo-Caesarea* (in Wace and Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 8, Oxford and New York, 1895, pp. 246–8).

[60] *Oration 45.2* (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers 7, p. 423).

[61] *Oration 42.26* (ibid., p. 394).

of the rationale is probably that found in the funeral oration for his father, in which he speaks of 'Easter, the queen of days, the brilliant night which dissipates the darkness of sin, upon which with abundant light we keep the feast of our salvation'.[62]

At a later date, between 513 and 518, we have the evidence of Severus of Antioch.[63] He mentions the evening office in passing in homily 37, and also in hymn 319: 'To thee, O Christ, I offer a sacrifice of praise at the hour of evening.' There are fifteen hymn texts for the evenings. The first contains the words 'direct my steps in thy paths and guide me' (quoting psalm 72.2), the tenth 'repenting at the hour of evening', and the next 'Our spiritual sacrifice we offer to thee, Christ at the hour of evening.' The twelfth contains 'Direct and guide us Lord [that we may] with pure heart present an acceptable sacrifice of thanksgiving'. The themes are typically vesperal, repentance, evening offering of prayer (possibly connected with incense),[64] and prayer for divine guidance and protection.

The night office is mentioned in homily 41, as held before cockcrow, and the more devout laity might attend. Severus may have introduced a Sunday night gospel reading, he mentions it in homily 77, and he also wrote hymns to accompany the Gospel. The Sunday night must refer to Saturday to Sunday, and the reference to introducing gospel readings at the weekly resurrection vigil (perhaps in imitation of Jerusalem) may suggest that there was no such gospel reading in the vigil of Apostolic Constitutions, a probably Antiochene document.

Of 23 morning hymns in *PO* 7, the eighth contains the words: 'Lord in the morning I sing to thee, and ask for life'. The next reads: 'In the nights I have lifted up the hands to the heights of thy sanctuaries ... But now also in the day admit me, O God my saviour, to walk in the glorious light of thy holy commandments'. The eleventh appears to see the morning service as a sacramental act: 'The bright ray of the service has washed me well from my iniquity ... and rendered dark night a glorious day of light in my mind'. We might especially note in this last, the recollection of psalm 50, as well as the clear theme of new light freeing from the darkness of sin and death.

Jean Tabet supports the likelihood of Jerusalem influence on Severus, and quotes some of his verses. For example, 'You who honour the light and holy night of the Resurrection by vigil and fortitude, ... you are sons of the light ...' and 'In the night of the holy Sunday of resurrection, clothed and

[62] *Oration 18* (in *PG* 35, 1017).

[63] For all that follows on Severus see G. Cuming, 'The Liturgy of Antioch at the Time of Severus (513–518)', in J. Neil Alexander (ed.), *Time and Community: In Honor of Thomas Julian Talley* (Washington, DC: Pastoral Press, 1990), pp. 83–103. Texts of Homilies in *PO* 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 22, 23, 25, 26, 29, 35–8 (Paris: 1908–), Hymns in *PO* 6, 7 (Paris: 1911).

[64] The fourth prayer cites psalm 140.2.

enlivened in light, I awake from sleep'.[65] Another strophe 'Our spirit arises early ... Be among us as we early honour Thy Resurrection', alludes to the Isaiah 26.9 canticle: 'My soul yearns for thee in the night', the beginning of a canticle frequently used in the night offices of East and West. Coupled with this is Severus' idea that the resurrection takes place when the light begins to appear, and thus, at cockcrow, the overnight fast ends and the paschal joy of Sunday begins.[66]

Another practice at the offices is found in Severus' Homily 32: 'That is why, every Sunday, we lead you to the baptistery with a celebration, praise, prayer, and supplication, so as to recall these covenants made with God.' The baptismal procession was to remind people of their status as 'sons of light' who must live as such. This visit may have been controversial, since Severus criticizes those who say that the baptistery should only be open once a year, for baptism. When it took place is not clear, but it is an interesting ritual reinforcement of the baptismal theme, perhaps to stir up and inspire a people now mostly baptized in infancy. Visits to the baptistery in connection with evening and morning offices become more common as we shall see.

Conclusions

From the biblical material adduced above we may conclude:

The reckoning of the day from evening to evening (in, e.g., Leviticus 23.32) is a very early tradition, upheld by the Mishnah and exemplified by the ancient (non-biblical) tradition of the Sabbath eve lights. It is found in the account of Paul at Troas (Acts 20), and in the complex discussions about the passion and the observance of Passover.

2 A nocturnal watch was known to the Jewish priesthood for the purpose of tending the lights (Exodus and Leviticus). The New Testament took this much further and prayer at night was popular (Acts 16 and Acts 20). This pattern of praying at night is associated with eschatological readiness (e.g., the wise and foolish bridesmaids in Matthew 25), and resonates with the powerful imagery of the prologue to John's Gospel. The light burning through the night may well be a distant ancestor of Christian evening light ceremonies.

[65] *L'Office Commun Maronite* (Kaslik, Lebanon: Bibliothèque de L'Université Saint-Esprit, 1972), pp. 217–23.

[66] Ibid., p. 222.

3 The Temple had twice-daily sacrifices at morning and evening, but no clear shape, other than a preference for praying at night, can be discerned in the New Testament.

Patristic writings show that:

1 The symbolism of light overcoming darkness was a powerful image of the risen Christ in, e.g., Melito, Origen and Clement of Alexandria.
2 In Basil this symbolism is closely tied to the hour at which he preaches, and he uses the coming of night to exhort the people to see God's light guiding them into the eternal light. In Basil and other writers, it is clear that the symbolism of light overcoming darkness is not just confined to Easter.
3 Some of the earliest evidence for Christians gathering for prayer is connected with the night. Tertullian spoke of an assembly late at night, and Cyprian stressed the importance of praying at night though he may have had private prayer in mind.
4 By the late fourth century, John Chrysostom expected twice-daily public services of prayer at morning and evening. When commenting on psalm 62 he spoke of that longing for God which is characteristic of vigil prayer.
5 Chrysostom and Severus both gave a rationale for evening and morning prayer; evening prayer is concerned with repentance and the evening offering, also with seeking divine protection. The morning office moves from longing for God to thanksgiving for the presence of the risen Lord at sunrise.
6 The most frequent kind of vigil appears to have been celebrated at cockcrow, as a watchful preparation for the rising sun representing the risen Christ.