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# Prayer and the ancient city: Influences of urban space

An introduction

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## 1. Prayer status quo

Prayer is a central field of research in disciplines that examine ancient religion and culture and the resulting textual and religious traditions.<sup>1</sup> With a special focus on textual tradition, prevailing scholarship in these disciplines, whether classics or biblical studies, opted for traditional historical-critical approaches to understand and analyse the texts in classic form-critical and lexical categories,<sup>2</sup> thereby unfolding a rich typology of prayers referring to literary forms, intentions and the places in which they are performed.<sup>3</sup> Such prayer types and

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<sup>1</sup> The abundance of works cannot, of course, be represented here. We therefore want to reference the exhaustive bibliographies of studies on Greek and Roman prayers, edited by Freyburger, Pernot 2008; 2013; 2016. For the studies of Christian prayer, see with an emphasis on the NT Gebauer 1989; Cullmann 1994; Longenecker 2001; Neyrey 2001; Löhr 2003; Ostmeier 2006; Tukasi 2008; van der Horst 1994; idem 2008; Klein/Mihoc/Niebuhr/Karakolis 2009; Osborne 2010; Sandnes 2016; Neumann 2019; with an emphasis on Jewish-Christian contexts see Newman 1999; Leonhardt 2001; Löhr 2003; Ehrlich 2004; Penner/Penner/Wassen 2012; Matlock 2012; Egger-Wenzel/Reif 2015; Newman 2018; Heger/Lange/Noam/Levinson 2019; with an emphasis on the Lord's prayer: Neumann 2019; Ridlehoover 2020.

<sup>2</sup> For Rome, among various contributions, see for instance Champeaux 2010; Guittard 1995. A ground-breaking study on prayer terminology was undertaken by Benveniste 1969, 233–254. Probably the most comprehensive work on expressions of the sacred is Fugier 1963. For Christian prayers see Ostmeier 2006; see for further studies also the lexicon articles by Balz 1980, 94–95; 1981, 858–861; Bertram 1964, 719–722; Conzelmann 1973, 350–405; Greeven 1935, 39–42, and 1959, 759–767.

<sup>3</sup> Given such an approach and given the abundance of prayers in tragedies, the material of those tragedies, Euripides above all, dominates studies on Greek prayer (for an extensive study on Euripides' prayers see Langholf 1971; Pace 2010; Pinheiro 1994). The Homeric works, epos and hymns, caused a similar abundance of works on prayer (e.g. Karanika 2017; Calame 1994; Cheyns 1988). Comprehensive works on Greek prayers are Pulleyn 1997; Aubriot-Sévin 1992. A very concise and still fresh approach is offered by Scheer 2001.

genres range from petitionary prayer, intercessory prayer,<sup>4</sup> communal prayer or liturgical prayer to meditative prayer, healing prayer and many more, all performed in their respective (sacred) spaces and places,<sup>5</sup> such as temples, shrines, (house-)churches or synagogues. Against the backdrop of this preoccupation with form and place, scholarship tends to forget about all the prayers that have been performed beyond these ‘sacred’ spaces such as temples, these contexts, and at times even beyond these forms and types.<sup>6</sup>

For New Testament studies, the work of Klaus Berger was particularly ground-breaking in this respect. He identifies prayers as a “collective genre” (*Sammelgattung*) and questions that prayers elude formal definition: Prayer can thus become an element of numerous genres. Simon Pulleyn took a similar path for Greek prayers; he not only questions the notion of individual prayer genres but even questions a comprehensively valid definition of prayer in writing, “One can see how undesirable it is, in order to arrive at a definition that will serve in all cases, to strip away precisely those details which give each prayer-tradition its individuality. Surely we ought to be doing the reverse.”<sup>7</sup> In contrast, research on Jewish prayer rather addresses the history of genres, or more specifically prayers, as witnesses and media of “scripturalisation” and as “a subcategory of and the general retrieval of biblical and classical sources and the flourishing of biblical interpretation in Second Temple Judaism.”<sup>8</sup> Of central importance are liturgical texts from Qumran, the liturgy of the Second Temple traditions and prayers of synagogue services. It is controversial whether the roots of liturgical prayer can be located in the temple cult itself, or whether it emerged later as a substitute for the sacrificial system.

In terms of action, prayer is most commonly defined as (one-sided) verbal communication with God or heavenly beings.<sup>9</sup> In contrast to modern positions, a deity can, therefore, be addressed in prayer and can be influenced so that he

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<sup>4</sup> The main focus for an intercessory prayer is a prayer on ‘behalf of others.’ In the New Testament, we find a distinction between ‘to pray for’ (*προσεύχεσθαι περι*) and ‘to ask for’ (*δείσθαι περι*). See for further considerations: <https://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/fuerbitte-nt/ch/536b209799d934530988df95ac61fea3/>

<sup>5</sup> A critical and encompassing overview over all forms and dimensions of prayer as well as over the various scholarly attempts to ground and define this phenomenon and its forms needs a book series rather than a footnote. A reference to the excellent and multi-authored lexicon article in the RGG<sup>4</sup> (483–507) might be sufficient at this point. See also the conceptually different typologies of Foster 1992 and Ladd, Spilka 2013, 43–61, both representing a shift from rather theoretical, and therefore from rather theologically inspired forms and types of prayer to rather empirical types of prayer.

<sup>6</sup> This observation challenged scholars in Greek and Roman religion to widen the scope of research beyond those contexts (Kindt 2012; Rüpke 2011).

<sup>7</sup> Pulleyn 1997, 13.

<sup>8</sup> Newman 1999, 206.

<sup>9</sup> See Dan 9; Tob 11:14; Gen 17.

or she intervenes by acting. The cardinal prayer terms in the Old Testament in this regard are אָמַר (to speak [with God]), בָּקַשׁ (to seek [God]), שָׁאַל (to ask [God]). Some terms also emphasise a lamenting or thanking attitude of prayer, such as קָרָא (to call), צָעַק (to shout), חָנַן (to be gracious [in qal and hitp.]), יָדָה (to thank, to praise [hif.]), הִלֵּל (to praise).<sup>10</sup> Terms with similar connotations can be detected in later prayer traditions. The most frequently used terms in the Greco-Roman tradition are εὔχεσθαι<sup>11</sup>/*precari* or προσεύχεσθαι (communicating, contacting God<sup>12</sup>/the gods), both expressing a personal request. Further expressions of attitudes are those of προσκυνεῖν/*supplicare* (to supplicate),<sup>13</sup> δεῖσθαι (to please; but also be needy, want<sup>14</sup>; the verb is also used for requests to humans), *gratulari* (to give solemn thanks), *vocare* (to call) or (*ad*)*orare* (to venerate). Some terms have other connotations in different Greek contexts: for example, αἰτεῖν (ask/request), which can refer to a claim of money in POxy. 54.15 and is used in an active sense as prayer with the lips and in a medial sense as prayer in the heart (Jas 4:2–3),<sup>15</sup> κρούειν (knock [on the door]),<sup>16</sup> ἐπικαλεῖν ([act./pass.] to call, invoking the deity), which is often used in inscriptions, papyri and Greek literature such as Plutarch Tib 16 in a medial sense, where it has a juridical connotation<sup>17</sup> and is similar to *provocare* (call forth), βοᾶν (scream out, let out a yell), κράζειν (caw, shriek, groan with a rough and loud voice) and κραυγάζειν (to call out).<sup>18</sup>

Whereas all these terms seem to support a definition of prayer as an oral act ‘directed at God,’ developments in New Testament studies and the study of Greco-Roman religions foreground an understanding of prayer in the context of the mutual relationship between gods and men, respectively a relationship, indeed a communication between believers, Christ and God. Thus Paul can exhort believers to unceasing prayer.<sup>19</sup> This is not contradicted by the fact that prayer requests remain unfulfilled. In early Christian literature, the claim that Christians are “essential worshippers” (“wesenhaft Betende”) is on the rise.<sup>20</sup> For the contexts of Greek prayers, Simon Pulleyn stated the simple fact that “Perhaps all that mattered was that both god and man recognised that they were in a relationship of χάρις (grace/favour).”<sup>21</sup> The reciprocal relationship

<sup>10</sup> Miller 1994, 32–34.

<sup>11</sup> This is used in biblical sources often in contexts of the cult. At the Jerusalem Temple as e.g. in Acts 18:18; 21:23.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Matt 6:9; Luke 11:1; 18:10; 20:47.

<sup>13</sup> This is to differentiate between the individual act of supplicating and the extraordinary festivals called *supplicationes*. On the latter, see Février 2009; Hickson 2004; Halkin 1953.

<sup>14</sup> For this connotation, see 4 Macc 2:8; Job 17:1.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Matt 7:9; Luke 11:10; John 16:26; the Codex Bezae changed this term in ἐρωτάω.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. TestJob 6:4; Matt 7:7–8; Luke 11:9–10; 12:36.

<sup>17</sup> See Acts 25:11, 12, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. John 1:15; 12:13; 11:43 and more often.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Thess 5:17; Rom 12:12.

<sup>20</sup> Ostmeier 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Pulleyn 1997, 13.

between worshipper and deity, notably crystallised into the idea of *pietas* as expressed in various prayer terms,<sup>22</sup> was also a very crucial aspect in the study of Roman religion and its prayers.<sup>23</sup> Whereas the Christian discourse quickly preferred *orare* as the main signifier of prayer and thus as a direct translation of εὐχέσθαι,<sup>24</sup> the ‘pagan’ Roman world also knows numerous variations and specifications of those and other expressions, such as *deprecari*, *imprecari*, or *advocare* and *devocare*.<sup>25</sup> These and other variations express not only the worshipper’s attitude but also nuance vis à vis communication, a communication that is essentially defined by a human seeking to persuade a superhuman being, which makes Greco-Roman prayer a matter of rhetoric rather than expressions of theologically coherent concepts.<sup>26</sup> Probably the best expression of such reciprocal and, above all, internalised relationship can be found in Hinduism. Whereas ‘prayer’ is generally formulated as a request (*prārthanā*) directly addressed to the god or goddess, the most common way of daily praying is the *pūjā* (‘worship’), during which a deity is treated like a guest, a child or a king: water is offered to wash the feet as well as rinsing the mouth; fresh clothes and fragrance as well as food are offered to the deity.<sup>27</sup> Taking the above together, the act of prayer can thus be described as “a vehicle for human-divine communication.”<sup>28</sup>

In contrast to the major parts of the Greco-Roman and New Testament tradition, prayers in the Hebrew Bible are essentially poetically arranged (in *parallelismus membrorum*), so that they are not spontaneous oral expressions, but rather stylistic, traditional and literary texts, similar to Greek and Roman festive hymns (*carmina*), which are poetic masterpieces.<sup>29</sup> In Islam there are three different terms: ritual prayers, personal prayers and mystical prayers, all of which have their basis in the Qur’an, and to which Muhammad’s tradition of prayer can be traced. Muhammad’s prayers are based on ecstatic inspiration by the Holy Spirit (Q. 16:102; 26:192–4), nightly visions as well as intermediate beings like angels (Gabriel; Q. 2:97–8; cf. 66:4) or the prophets like Noah and

<sup>22</sup> King 2003, 292–307.

<sup>23</sup> For the Roman case, reciprocity was widely acknowledged (e.g., as the *commercial* character of Roman religion) and frequently embedded into the ritualistic, indeed legalistic framework that seeks for a *pax deorum* (generally see Champeaux 2001; Versnel 1981, 56–58). Expressions like *vota solvere* seem to carry that connotation. The Roman discourse tends to frame this logic into terms of avarice and corruption (Patzelt 2018a, 46–60).

<sup>24</sup> On the early transformation of *orare* towards an independent *verbum petendi* that does not require any form of *precari* anymore, see Szantyr 1971, 2–12; Wagenvoort 1980, 197–199.

<sup>25</sup> An exhaustive list is provided by Appel 1909, 63–68.

<sup>26</sup> Goeken 2010; Spina 2008; Pernot 2006.

<sup>27</sup> On prayer and *pūjā* see Wilke 2005; Bühnemann 1988. Though on *pūjā* in Jain worship, Humphrey, Laidlaw 1994 theorised the internalised experience and the modes of ritualisation towards it.

<sup>28</sup> Ehrlich 2004, 3–4.

<sup>29</sup> See Guittard 2007. On Greek hymns see for instance Bremer 1981. On Roman song see also Habinek 2005.

Moses. As already before in Judaism, there is rhythmicising prose in the Qur'an, which is sometimes interrupted by phrases that are more likely to be demonic whispers. In the Muslim tradition *Ṣalāt* (noun; occurs 78 times; usually with the definite article) and the verbum *ṣallā* are central and probably not based on the Qur'an, but 'common Semitic,' as outlined in Hekmat Dirbas' contribution. Sometimes it is mentioned in conjunction with *alā*, an eulogy that connotes a blessing: here it is God's own prayer.<sup>30</sup> Further expressions are *rukū' wa sjudū* (bow down and prostrate yourselves),<sup>31</sup> or *tasbīḥ* or *subḥāna llāhi* (mentioned 41 times in the Qur'an).<sup>32</sup> There is also the term *muṣallā*, the space of prayer, which is used, though only once,<sup>33</sup> for the central shrine in Mecca or also in Medina.

Such rhythmic prose makes us aware that prayers are not just about texts and textual signifiers. They are also about vocals and physical expression. In more recent times, studies are dedicated to such nonverbal elements in the language of prayers such as the *Tefillat HaAmidah* (תפילת העמידה), which is recited standing with feet closely together: "Although undeniably a fundamental component, the text in and of itself only gives a partial expression of the whole. Just as there can be no living human communication without nonverbal elements – bodily gestures, facial expressions, some distance between the participants, voice, attire, and so on – no active religious dialogue (as opposed to its literary form) can proceed in the absence of these elements."<sup>34</sup>

As for the gestures, most prayers keep to similar archetypes.<sup>35</sup> Roman, Greek, New Testament and early Christian evidence documents an attitude of an upright standing posture with arms raised and hands open,<sup>36</sup> in Jewish contexts also sometimes a folding of hands; texts in which the worshipper is proselytised are rarely found.<sup>37</sup> While Jewish prayers are distinguished by a triangle over the chest,<sup>38</sup> the act of kneeling, spinning, and dancing seems rather ubiquitous in all

<sup>30</sup> E. g. in Q. 33:43.

<sup>31</sup> Q. 22:77.

<sup>32</sup> E. g. in Q. 12:108; 21:22; 23:91; 27:8; 28:68; 30:17; 52:43; 59:23.

<sup>33</sup> Q. 2:125.

<sup>34</sup> Ehrlich 2004, 231. This observation is crucial for the study of prayer as rhetoric (Pernot 2006).

<sup>35</sup> For the study of prayer through archetypes of action rather than through the study of literary genre the publication of Marcel Mauss' work on prayer (Mauss 1909) can be seen as a hallmark. His model corresponds well with Georg Appel's (1909) work on that topic (on this interrelation, see Deremitz 1994, 142–150). As for similar approaches on Greek prayer, see Aubriot-Sévin 1992. The archetypal approach had ground-breaking results in theorising religious action in general. A work worth mentioning here is Humphrey, Laidlaw 1994.

<sup>36</sup> In the Old Testament, this is mostly articulated by עמד in 1 Kgs 8:22; Ps 28:2; Exod 17:11; see Keel 1996, 287–290. New Testament e.g. Luke 1:10; Mark 11:25; polemical: Matt 6:5–6. For Rome see Patzelt 2018a, 96–123; 209–213; Sittl 1890, 174–199. For Greece Pulleyn 1997, 188–195; Versnel 1981. For a comparison of all traditions, see Ohm 1948.

<sup>37</sup> Gen 24:26; Exod 34:8

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. Gen 24:26; Exod 34:8.

prayer traditions.<sup>39</sup> The prayer of the Qumran community, for instance, is essentially characterised by prostration.<sup>40</sup> This also applies for Hinduism, which developed a very special form of prostration over the centuries: lying ‘like a stick’ (*danḍavat*), during which the whole body is on the floor in a contemplative, level gesture (abdomen on the ground), with the hands above the head (*añjali* posture). This prostration is repeated, sometimes turning into an ascetic practice, especially on pilgrimages, where pilgrims circle the shrine of the goddess or deity prostrating (instead of walking). Unlike early Christians, who raised their arms during prayer, the most common prayer gesture of the Hindus was and is the folding of the hands (*añjali*).<sup>41</sup> In Biblical and Greco-Roman contexts such prostrations are sometimes accompanied with repentance and mourning clothes (tearing of clothes and scattering of ashes on the head) to emphasise the emergency,<sup>42</sup> but special prayer garb such as a cloak or Tefillin are only found in post-Biblical times. Further recurring elements of cult prayers are music and sacrifices. On a linguistic level, prayers of Greco-Roman and early Christian times share a tripartite structure of prayer consisting of *invocatio*, *pars epica* / *argumentum* and *preces*.<sup>43</sup>

Studies in Second Temple Judaism, early Christianity, classics, and Hinduism are also closely integrated into the social and cultural contexts of the respective cities with which and between which individual religious groups and their leading figures communicate.<sup>44</sup> Especially the study of ancient Roman and Greek prayers is also considerably pre-occupied with spaces and places of prayer and the formalised, one might say quasi-liturgical, prayer forms these places epitomise.<sup>45</sup> These spaces are commonly differentiated into public, cultic and private space. The topography of prayer thus ranges from official ritual events, such as

<sup>39</sup> Sittl 1890, 174–199.

<sup>40</sup> see for example CD XI,22: the prayer house was called the ‘House of prostration.’

<sup>41</sup> See Wilke 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Josh 7:6; Jer 3:9. As for Rome, we know these actions as mourning gestures that are deployed in religious and non-religious contexts likewise to achieve the above-mentioned effect (Degelmann 2018; Flaig 1997).

<sup>43</sup> This structure originates from Karl Ausfeld’s study on Greek prayers (1903) and has been widely adopted for all forms of ancient prayer. For a summary for Rome, see Fyntikoglou, Voutiras 2005, 158–160. A rather differentiated picture on that tripartite structure is drawn by Aubriot-Sévin 1992, 218–233; cf. Langholf 1971, 51–65. On the adaptation of this structure by early Christianity see Rouwhorst 2018. On various aspects of liturgy of prayer, see Bitton-Ashkelony, Krueger 2017.

<sup>44</sup> Weissenrieder 2017, 2018.

<sup>45</sup> Guittard 2007; Champeaux 2010; 2001; Newman 1999. In contrast to studies on Roman prayers, studies on Greek prayer sometimes emphasise the lack of authority beyond cultic prayers and therefore highlight the individual’s capacity to pray whenever they want and whatever they want to pray for. They, however, point to the authority of tradition and context that may or may not require a prayer in the form the cultural context suggests (Scheer 2001; Pulleyn 1997, 156–168).

the Vestalia, Ludi Megalenses or the Panathenaea, to the various prayers of local cults, cults in the neighbourhoods (*vici*) and all the various cultic practices in hundreds of households. Just as in any household, each cult developed its own set and sequences of ritual acts and its own knowledge, most of which is preserved in priestly archives or sacred laws.<sup>46</sup> Scholars of ancient prayers, whether Greek, Roman or any form of ‘Oriental’ prayer<sup>47</sup> strictly speaking, developed an idea of prayer that is intrinsically tied to the place where it is performed. Knowledge, practice and perception are therefore limited to and indeed contained in the very area where the prayer is performed, just as they are associated with a culture-specific set of values, ideas and beliefs commonly conceptualised, though recently criticised, as ‘state religion,’ ‘civic religion,’ or ‘*polis* religion.’<sup>48</sup> The reference to *private* in these studies does not therefore indicate any sole individual praying. It refers to the head of a household – of a *domus* or οἶκος – who performs a ritual deed on behalf of the members of his household.<sup>49</sup>

In contrast to many approaches in Greco-Roman antiquity, a distinction between private and public prayer is hardly meaningful in the case of Jewish prayer. Jewish prayers have usually been spoken in community. Individuals in prayer are mentioned, such as royal, priestly or even prophetic functionaries. However, they are always at the service of the community, and their prayers are held in ‘we-style.’ This does not mean, however, that there was no difference between private prayer practice and ritual prayer practice. How does this relate to the *Sitz im Leben*? While in the monarchic era (ca. 1000–587 BCE), private and official prayers in the temple exist side by side while showing similarities in form and content, in the exile period (587–520 BCE), this only applies to Jerusalem. In the post-exile period, the doctrine of the Scriptures is gaining influence: prayers that were formerly ritualistically bound are now reflected theologically. Scholars argue that psalm prayers have now become part of the ‘learning material’ of the teaching houses (see, for example, Sir 51:23). In this context, one may even suspect that sacrifices have been replaced by prayers (see here Ps 50:14–15; 51:19).<sup>50</sup>

Recently, ideas of ‘tradition’ and ‘orthopraxy’ in classics, ancient Near Eastern studies, and biblical studies have come into question<sup>51</sup> and have been replaced by more complex concepts from the cultural and social sciences to better investigate

<sup>46</sup> Early studies of sacred law and pontifical books by Rowoldt 1906; Rohde 1936. Rather recent and rather critical are Rüpke 2003; Scheid 2006.

<sup>47</sup> On the problematic concept of ‘oriental’ religion, see Witschel 2012.

<sup>48</sup> Scheid 2015; Sourvinou-Inwood 2000a, b. The ground-breaking approaches on that idea were Wissowa 1912 and Dumézil 1966. Critical voices against these concepts have been raised by Rüpke 2011; Kindt 2009; Bendlin 2000; Woolf 1997.

<sup>49</sup> See Ando, Rüpke 2015, 1–4.

<sup>50</sup> Zenger 2008, 367.

<sup>51</sup> Kindt 2012; Rüpke 2011; Scheer 2001.



religious practices in terms of embodiment, performance, emotions and agency<sup>52</sup> – recently even female agency.<sup>53</sup> Approaches to emotions and experiences, however, have to face the difficulty that even today some scholars analyse prayers within their own experience of God.<sup>54</sup> The study of sanctuaries more and more considers these spaces as vivid places of religious innovation and change rather than rigorous mechanical execution.<sup>55</sup> All these studies debate ancient religions as *lived* rather than merely *executed*. This is not to say that they do not acknowledge the importance of authoritative literature and rituals scripts, yet they do not subject religious practice and belief to this narrow framework of formalised and authoritatively prescribed religion. They rather consider these scripts and writings as expressions and products of an ongoing religious discourse that causes change rather than stagnation, that involves innovation rather than tradition only. While spaces, and especially sanctuary spaces, have become increasingly important factors in these approaches to religion,<sup>56</sup> the factor of spatiality has not. And certainly not the urban factor in spatiality. Not least, the study of prayer was only marginally affected by these new approaches.

## 2. Urban theoretical framework

Taking its lead from the spatial turn in scholarship, this volume is methodologically an attempt to include these factors into the study of prayers of ancient religions. A comprehensive theoretical approach to this end is outlined by Jörg Rüpke and Emiliano Urciuoli in the first chapter of this volume. While Rüpke and Urciuoli unveil the co-production of religious practice and urban space in its

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<sup>52</sup> E. g. Patzelt 2018a; Koll 2007; Deremitz 1994. For cognitive approaches to ancient prayers see Chalupa 2010; 2014. In a ground-breaking study, Hendrik Versnel (1981) once undertook the task to identify a prayer mentality of ‘the common man.’ Other approaches, such as that of Simon Pulleyn (Pulleyn 1997, 156–195), aimed at the prayer’s *Sitz im Leben*. One of the first coherent attempts to uncover emotionality and emotions in prayer has been undertaken by Heiler 1923. On Greek prayer, see Scheer 2001, 56. On Greek religion and emotions see Chaniotis 2013. As for Roman prayers the idea of emotionality has been widely rejected (Scheid 2015, 113–124). Recent approaches, however, sought to prove the opposite (Bendlin 2006; Patzelt 2018a). On emotions in ancient Jewish prayers, see Reif, Egger-Wenzel 2015. For the ancient Near East see Stein 2019. More philosophical approaches highlight the contemplative effects on prayer (recently Pachoumi, Edwards 2018; Timotin 2017).

<sup>53</sup> Karanika 2017.

<sup>54</sup> Werline 2006, XVI; Harkins 2015, 300f. The exception seems to be found in the study of Roman prayers. Georg Wissowa (1912) elaborated the juridical-laden concept of ‘state religion’ in order to oppose such approaches, in those days most famously expressed by Friedrich Schleiermacher. Yet recent approaches to emotions and experiences in Greco-Roman religions and their prayer sufficiently escaped from these traps (Panagiotidou 2017; Czachesz 2015).

<sup>55</sup> Szabó 2018.

<sup>56</sup> Schmidt-Hofner, Ambos, Eich 2016; Paliou, Lieberwirth, Polla 2014; Wiemer 2014; Laurence, Newsome 2011.

complexity, further contributions by Ute Hüsken and Yair Lipshitz strengthen and complement Rüpke's and Urciuoli's outline in further cornerstones of this volume. These cornerstones involve the imaginary or idealised city space as well as a notion of prayer as performance, which is more fluid than hieratic and, as Lipshitz says quoting Diana Taylor, "generates, records and transmits 'knowledge'"<sup>57</sup> rather than unilaterally depending on such knowledge. Based on these theoretical considerations, indeed theoretical cornerstones, this volume aims to replace the hitherto customary focus on the forms and semantics of prayers with a more valid model which understands prayers as performances that are embedded and embodied in urban space as well as its imaginations of space. The idea, and therefore the vision, of this volume and its contributors, as exhaustively expressed in Rüpke's and Urciuoli's contribution, may be summarised as follows:

### *2.1 The intrinsic logic of the city: the mutuality of urban space and prayer*

Taking into account Lefebvre's influential spatial conceptualisation,<sup>58</sup> people not only have the opportunity to use a given architectural space and thus to reproduce past dependencies of pre-structured space (*l'espace perçu*). Humans have the potential to question those readings of spaces and to give them a new meaning (*l'espace vécu*, cf. thirdspace).<sup>59</sup> Spaces, in this point of view, are neither natural nor architectural. They are sites of production of spatial practices and spatial imagination. Spaces in this view are entirely embodied. Space and human body (and mind) form a mutually dependent and interacting dialectic.

This co-production of space and human practice and belief is particularly meaningful for the context of urban spaces and contains further explosiveness, for it implies a co-production, indeed co-dependence of urban space and the religious practices it entails. Even though every space and place in the connected network which we refer to as a city cultivates its own practices and perceptions, the network in its entirety has a significant impact on all these single spaces and places. The multitude of spaces, not least due to the topographical density of cities, overlap in such a way that they cause "coherent stocks of knowledge and forms of expression."<sup>60</sup> This is to say, the interlacing spaces of a city cultivate a city-specific reference system. This reference system largely informs the urban dweller's practices and beliefs – his or her *habitus* and *doxa* in the words of prevailing praxeologist approaches. Therefore, a research group around Martina Löw coined the idea of cities having their own *habitus* and *doxa* that inform the

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<sup>57</sup> Taylor 2003, 21.

<sup>58</sup> Lefebvre 1974.

<sup>59</sup> Soja 1996.

<sup>60</sup> Löw 2012a, 310. Cf. Löw 2011b.

*habitus* and *doxa* of the urban dwellers and vice versa.<sup>61</sup> This is what they refer to as an intrinsic logic of the city.<sup>62</sup>

Yair Lipshitz' contribution, "Urban space and the praying body: Ancient legacies and performative reactivations in contemporary Jerusalem," specifies, on a theoretical level, this intrinsic logic with regard to prayer, when he explores how contemporary performance art can serve as a conduit for knowledge and inquiry regarding ancient traditions of prayer and the city. Through the analysis of two performance pieces that were recently shown in Jerusalem and that reactivate traditions of Jewish prayer in the cityscape, the paper traces the echo of rabbinic legacies from late antiquity regarding the praying body and its relation to space. The notions of a fixed space that functions as a site for prayer and fluid space that is conjured through bodily gestures highlight the countless dynamics through which the praying body charts and disrupts the borderlines between the sacred and the secular in the topography of the city. As Lipshitz points out, the body's relation to the spatial environment in which acts of prayer are performed impacts the interplay between prescription and performance.

In this view, cities are no mere containers of forms of prayer and the respective religious knowledge. They have to be presumed to be catalysts that give rise to forms of prayer. They become places of diversity and innovation, as social geography and sociology frequently point out.<sup>63</sup> Catherine Hezser's approach to the "Caesarea Maritima, Greek prayer, and rabbinic Judaism" proves this point. Coming from the observation that Caesarea Maritima served as a 'bridge and meeting point' between Jews in Palestine and the Diaspora, Hezser examines the changing rabbinic attitudes toward prayer and Bible reading in Greek. She points out that late antique Caesarean rabbis were responsive to "Diasporic" conditions within the urban centres of Roman-Byzantine Palestine, as they were willing to make certain concessions to the often wealthy, Greek-speaking Jews who lived in the city, catering to the "Diaspora within" Roman Palestine. These strategic decisions had long-lasting influences on the performance of prayer in these urban centres.

Taking this lead on diversity and innovation in interconnected spaces, Gerard Rouwhorst's study on the "Formation of a Christian liturgical prayer tradition" examines the complex forms of mutual interaction between Christian communities and their urban environment. Rouwhorst draws a picture of new prayer forms being developed in the urban basilicas that may be considered as the centres of transformation-oriented ecclesial strategies. Being shaped and formed by the urban environment and its dense spatial arrangements, architectonically and socially speaking, these forms merged with other forms of prayers. The praying

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<sup>61</sup> Apart from herself e. g. Berking 2008.

<sup>62</sup> Lee 1997.

<sup>63</sup> Held 2005; Matthiesen 2008; Berking 2008.

of people from different urban and extra-urban backgrounds, from the centre and periphery, therefore, not only originated the liturgical Eucharist prayer but also other forms of interconnected and mutually dependent forms of prayer, such as monastic prayers. None of them were strict. All of them were hybrid.

Speaking of hybridity, Maik Patzelt's "Urban approach to the prayers in Rome" discloses the hybrid character of personal prayers apart from public ritual or liturgical contexts. By examining the *urban* condition rather than the *civic* condition of Roman prayer, he unveils the *habitus* and *doxa* of the urban dweller with regard to prayer. To this end, he highlights the city's cultural and religious diversity and how this diversity facilitates an accelerating interplay of numerous social networks, ideas and practices that all imprint on the prayers of the urban dwellers in the ancient city of Rome. As he points out, the urban dwellers fabricated a, in Löw's words, "coherent stock of knowledge and forms of expression" that organised the diversity of spatial practices and spatial perceptions that cumulate in individual prayer performances.

In his paper "Toward a topography of the sacred in urban space: Places of religious performance at Ephesos," Alexander Sokolicek aims at understanding the ambiguity and fluidity of urban space under the aspect of factual historical and archaeological data. As he points out, the act of worshipping in a polytheistic society binds different social groups and subgroups which use urban space. The different natures of religious performance as articulated in processions, worshipping, prayers and so on may use the same urban space but shape the space according to the particular need. In this sense, Sokolicek considers sacred architecture as an agent ("Actor-network theory").

Valentino Gasparini's contribution invites the reader to focus on the quarries of *marmor Numidicum* at *Simitthus* (Chemtou, Jendouba Governorate, Tunisia) and to conceptualise prayer from a different angle. Ancient quarries were places where accidents frequently endangered the survival of workers and consequently the efficiency of the lucrative activity of extraction. The author suggests considering the theonyms after which some of the local workshops were named as a micro-strategy of coping and risk management, enacted by the *procuratores* in charge of the extraction of the marble to invoke the divine protection and relieve the stress due to a context of high uncertainty and danger. Moreover, the analysis of the local urban layout (inglobing the two distinct juridical entities of the Roman colony and the imperial property of the quarries) provides an excellent example not only of religious plurality and bricolage but also of dynamics of sacralisation and negotiation between 'civic' and 'lived' religion (viz. 'urban' religion).

## 2.2 *The power of imagined spaces: challenging and producing spatial routines of prayer*

As Ute Hüsken, Barbara Schmitz and other contributors in this volume make unmistakably clear with reference to recent urban spatial models of Martina Löw and her colleagues, urban spaces and their intrinsic logic are not limited to their co-production of prayer and space. An intrinsic logic also acknowledges the effective idea(s) people have about a city (e.g. imaginative places, imagined communities, heavenly cities). These ideas and imagined spaces can effectively guide the spatial imagination and, thus, become real parts of the city and its spaces. That is, such an idea is expressed in spatial practices that in turn shape the urban space and its meanings. In other words, imagined spaces such as the city of God shape those projections and interpretations of spaces that are meaningful for religious practices.

Ute Hüsken's methodologically instructive study on "The urban life of South Indian gods" points out that authoritative writings are essential means to shape the recipients' spatial perception. The value of such writings is, therefore, not in their purpose of guiding practice directly. Instead, they design a literary world, an idea of a city and its imagined urban spaces that in the end has an effect on prayer performances. Just like a compelling novel, these writings are supposed to change the recipient's minds and help them re-read the space around them, that is, help them construct and act within new spaces. Jan Stenger's approach to "Re-educating spatial habits" unveils exactly this manipulation of practice and perception within a wider competitive frame. Stenger's contribution examines the significance of urban space in Chrysostom's pedagogy and demonstrates that space, as produced by habitual practices, is deployed as an instrument of the Christianisation of the classical polis. He shows that Chrysostom, while disapproving of the routines that make the city an environment that is hostile to true Christian life and harmful to the individual, attempts to convey the new spatial routines, indeed new regime to the congregants to eliminate inequality and inhumanity imprinted on urban space. This new spatial regime is intended to transform the classical city into a Christian community.

Florian Wöller's contribution on "The praying city as 'Colonnades'" complements Stenger's approach to Chrysostom's attempts to remap the minds of his readers. As Wöller points out, when describing street processions through Antioch, Chrysostom habitually wrote that the whole city "turned into one church," using this epitome of the city of Antioch as a rhetorical device to shape the urban space according to his ideal of a Christian metropolis. For Libanius, on the other hand, according to Wöller, Antioch reached its fullest realisation in its colonnade streets. The Antiochenes in prayer, who moved through the colonnades in street processions, were, according to Libanius, affected by this epitome

of the classical city “cast in stone,” so much so that they prayed in communion with their forbearers from ideal times long ago.

A further view on a new spatial regime that is intended to transform the classical city into a Christian community is offered by Harry O. Maier’s contribution on “The prayer of 1 Clement.” Instead of opposing prevailing spaces and their ideals, as John Chrysostom usually does, Maier points out that 1 Clement moulds a new perception, indeed *aspiration* of urban reality and its everyday environment by equating civic and ecclesiastical order and creating homology between cosmic and imperial authority. The letter “creates and places its audience in textual worlds to persuade it to pursue one set of practices over another,” as he writes. In applying spacetime and timespace configurations, the letter appropriates civic ideals to shape a new religious identity that makes sense in its larger urban environment.

As these approaches on early Christianity point out, imagined spaces and city ideas, whether in narrative or dramatic form, images or architecture, evoke processes of grouping and differentiation that involve the negotiation of spatial imagining and sometimes lead to open competition. This especially holds true for early Muslim communities. In his contribution “Prayer in an early Muslim city: The case of Medina” Hekmat Dirbas focuses on the symbolic construction of the city and how this construction informs communal prayer as being a significant identity marker for the Muslim community in Medina. In a comparative linguistic and semantic analysis of the use of the term ‘medina’ in late antiquity sources (Christian Aramaic and Samaritan traditions) and the Qu’ran, Dirbas suggests that Medina was seen as a ‘utopian’ space versus the ‘corrupted’ city of Mecca and the other municipalities in Arabia. The main argument is that communal prayer, being informed by this idea of the utopian city, served as a significant identity marker for the Muslim community in Medina – a community that sought to realise this utopia by performing communal prayer, by rapidly establishing mosques and by appropriating new practices that allowed Muslims to express a break with the aspects shared between them and other monotheistic religions (i. e., Judaism and Christianity).

In her contribution “Pater sancte: Imaginaires of Jerusalem in the Vetus Latina Luke,” Annette Weissenrieder focuses on the opening of Luke’s version of the Lord’s Prayer, which begins with a simple “father!” followed by “hallowed be thy name.” Some important Old Latin manuscripts, however, have a reading not previously mentioned and discussed: Instead of the well-known “our father” or “father,” these manuscripts give “holy father” (*pater sancte*). Why did these manuscripts change the appellation “father” or “our father” into “holy father”? One plausible answer can be found in prayers to the Roman emperors. One of these is in the *Argonautica* of Valerius Flaccus, who offers a prayer to the emperor Vespasian. Fulfilling a prophecy of Jupiter,

Vespasian has secured power over the borders of the Roman Empire. By the address *pater sancte*, Valerius uses a phrase reserved for the gods and transfers it to a living person, the emperor. And he uses it at the time of the military successes of Titus, Vespasian's son, who contributed to his father's success by destroying Jerusalem in 70 CE. Valerius' use of *sanctus* suggests that power can only be achieved through military superiority. Several ancient sources mention that Vespasian took the purple curtains from the Jerusalem temple along with the Menorah and the Torah to Rome and displayed them in the triumphal procession in Rome in June 71 CE.

### 2.3 *The representation of the city in the discourses about prayer*

Given the importance of urban space in the formation of practice and community, it is not surprising that the city itself becomes the object of a normative discourse on prayer. In her paper "Urban spaces and prayer in the Book of Judith," Barbara Schmitz examines how the intrinsic logic (*Eigenlogik*) of Jerusalem as an urban centre that had been developed in the long history of biblical reflection is taken up in the Book of Judith and is put into question by establishing a new and fictive urban centre, Bethulia. Applying a narrative methodology (Leitwort-technique), Schmitz discloses the construction of urban space and its intrinsic logic in the Book of Judith and thereby traces the transmutation of a story-world toward an actual world. She, in other words, discloses the praxeological structure of a city as being woven into the structure of storytelling. Unlike Chrysostom, the Book of Judith does not provide a new blueprint to re-enact. Written as it is, the book criticises the politics of contemporary time in a fictional novel.

Nadine Ueberschaeer's contribution "Prayer and the city in the Gospel of John" traces John's presentation of the city in relation to prayer. Unlike in the Book of Judith, in the gospel the intrinsic logic of Jerusalem is no blueprint for writing a critical story. Instead, John uses Jerusalem's urban reality and thus its primary architectural feature, the temple, to transcend this very feature and the city as a whole, and therefore all social and religious foundations that made the city the city his recipients knew. In other words, John creates an image that transcends geographic spaces and directly leads to the creation of the kingdom of God, which is realised in a metaphorical, relational and social dimension taking place in the community of the Father, Son and believers.

Stefan Schorch's approach to "The emergence of Samaritan prayer between urbanisation and anti-urbanism" unveils the contrary approaches to urban imaginaries. He describes and analyses the anti-urban feature of Samaritan religion and prayer, which developed in the framework of ongoing debates about city and urban spaces. Although the daily life of Samaritans was deeply interwoven with the city and its urban networks, the theology reflected in the early Samaritan prayer texts as well as in further Samaritan sources exhibits

an apparent inclination towards anti-urbanism and the construction of Mount Gerizim as a pristine holy landscape, while ‘city’ at the same time becomes a productive metaphor that refers to temporal space.

In her paper on “Prayer at the threshold of the city in the *Lives* of Rabbula and Barsauma,” Cornelia B. Horn focuses on prayer and urbanity in Syriac-language hagiographies of the fifth and sixth century. From her analysis of the hagiographical work *Life of Barsauma*, Horn unfolds a picture according to which prayer was not so prominently an affair of public life in the city. When the city space appeared on the horizon of consciousness, according to Horn, it was again more often or more prominently the heavenly city or the Jerusalem above, instead of the busy and crowded urban space below, which required and attracted attention. When prayers understood as purely spiritual acts were performed outside liturgical spaces, they did not need or desire the public spaces of a city, for these spiritual practices did not require any urban backdrop or representation.

Based on all of these different approaches and their perspectives, all contributions concur that prayer is not a mere expression of form. A spatial approach to prayer follows Yair Lipshitz’ main line of argument that prayers are “ephemeral by nature” and “existing entirely in the present of its enactment,” a present that is invented and shaped by urban space. From this point of view, this volume has a deep understanding of the most recent non-theological and non-philological approaches to prayer. These approaches consider prayer as follows:

“Prayer is a discursive art in which capacities central to our human experience with language come together with respect to a supersensory, superordinate, supernatural reality, typically imagined in the form of culturally significant otherworldly audiences – divine beings with whom human beings enjoy rich, complex relationships.”<sup>64</sup>

The issue of prayer and urban space is therefore even more complex and requires a “multidimensional approach” to prayer<sup>65</sup> that not only encompasses space and practice but also most of the culture and culturally imprinted agents, which, according to the human agents, also include divine agents.<sup>66</sup> The contributions compiled in this volume provide various tools for this complex embeddedness of prayer into the social, cultural, and thus spatial reality that we know of as the ancient city. The editors of this volume, therefore, offer stimulating reading that might lead to new discussions about the nature and character of prayer in ancient societies.

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<sup>64</sup> FitzGerald 2012, 2.

<sup>65</sup> Foster 1992; Ladd, Spilka 2013.

<sup>66</sup> Schjoedt et al. 2009, 329–331.



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