**Byzantine Liturgy**

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### Gregory Collins, OSB

Gregory Collins was born in Belfast in 1960. He studied at Queen’s University Belfast, gaining a doctorate in Byzantine Studies in 1991. He made Solemn Profession at Glenstal Abbey in 1994. Following ordination as priest in 1995, he studied Depth Psychology at the Jung Institute in Zurich. Between 1998 and 2002 Father Gregory was Headmaster of Glenstal Abbey School, after which he spent six years teaching Orthodox Theology and the History of Theology at the Benedictine university of Sant’ Anselmo in Rome. Since returning to Glenstal, Father Gregory has had a varied ministry of writing and preaching retreats. Among his publications are The Glenstal Book of Icons (Dublin: Columba Press, 2002) and Meeting Christ in His Mysteries: A Benedictine Vision of the Spiritual Life (Dublin: Columba Press, 2011)

1. Introduction to the Philokalia.
2. Meaning of the word.
3. “Love of the attractive,” the kalos (as distinct from the good, agathos).
4. Philokalia published by St. Nicodemus of Mount Athos, the “Hagiorite” (a monk of Mount of Athos). Hagion + horon = holy mountain.
5. Content.
6. A collection of Orthodox writings from the 4th to 14th century, including such names as St. Anthony of Egypt (or ascribed to St. Anthony). All of the writers are monks. Monasticism is central. The Orthodox Church is a “monasticized church.” At my institution, we professors occasionally criticize the seminary’s spiritual formation as “too monastic.” I’ve always understood this as a pre-occupation with Holy Hours and fasting, with liturgical correctness, a preoccupation with sexual ascesis?

But now I think that we may also be critical of monasticism in the way that Collins criticizes it – critical of Orthodoxy’s deference to authority figures, critical of Orthodoxy’s unwillingness to dialogue, critical of Orthodoxy’s chauvinism and envy? The students say, “I came to the seminary to have a spiritual life, and I find that the seminary is overly academic.” They claim that they want, in addition to the Eucharistic liturgy and morning and evening prayer, more time for private prayer. I think this is a sign of their immaturity, but you seem to suggest that Orthodoxy’s shortcomings.

1. The Four.

* Evagrius (4th century), founder of spiritual theology.
* Maximus (7th century),
* Simeon the New Theologian ( century).
* Gregory Palamas (century). Great mystical writer.

1. Evagrius Ponticus.
2. The two dimensions of the spiritual life. All life moves through cycles and stages.
3. The Dimensions. Praxis or *praktike*. This has to do with ascetical activity. Ascesis is the Greek word for training. Ascesis is what an athlete does. In the spiritual life, there are practices. It is what you do, not what you think about.
4. Fasting.

* Fasting has almost disappeared in the Catholic Church, even in monasteries, except for charitable fasting.
* There was (1) liturgical fasting, to prepare for feasts, such as the Dormition fasts, Holy Cross, and Lenten Fast; and (2) ascetical fasting was developed by monks in the Egyptian desert for training the body away from habits of gluttony.
* In Orthodox monasteries, there is an alternation between fasting and feasting. Self-control has everything to do with the spiritual life. The desert fathers emphasize fasting more than sexual abstinence.
* Orthodox Lent begins with strictness, then it lightens up, and then becomes more strict in Holy Week. The monks did not eat meat and only drank watered wine. Roman Catholics associated the failure to fast with sin. George Carlin: “How many people are doing time in purgatory on the ‘meat rap’?”

1. Vigilance. There will be vigils in the parish church at Athens. Lay people will participate in the vigils of the monastery. The goal is attention – attention to the spiritual life, and concern about “waking up.”

* Most of the time we are drugged by preoccupations of daily life, consumerism, advertizing culture, and spiritual torpor. John the Baptist calls us to wake up. “Oh that today you might listen to his voice: harden not your hearts” (Psalm 44).
* Sobriety and *Nepsis*. The Fathers of the Philokalia are the “neptic” fathers – the ones who are awake.

1. Prayer. Orthodoxy does not distinguish between liturgical and private prayer. In the Latin Church, we separated (1) prayer from theology (Balthasar wanted to put prayer and theology back together) and separated (2) liturgical prayer and private prayer.

* At Glenstal Abbey, monks used to receive Communion sparingly.
* When an Orthodox Christian prays privately, he uses liturgical prayer.
* When Collins was a student in Athens, his flat opened out on the street. One Greek Holy Week, some workmen were paving the street and singing the hymns. When did we last hear “Alma redemptoris mater” from Catholic workmen in Ireland?
* At the Greek College in Rome, southern Italians study to be Orthodox priests. They sing the hymns without a book.
* In Catholicism, private piety and liturgical piety may be coming back together. The new translation is “gobbledegook Cranmerisms.”
* In Ukrainian Orthodoxy, they do not believe that there is a radical division between clergy and laity (unlike the clericalized liturgical movements in the USA). At times, Gregory criticizes Orthodoxy for its separation of men and women. But at other times, e.g., in his extolling of Ukrainian Orthodoxy, he celebrates Orthdoxy for not being clericalized.

1. Reading.

* *Lectio divina* is *meditatio*, which comes from a Greek word *meletan*, “to chew.” The monks did not “think,” they “ruminated.” In the Benedictine monastic world, monks ruminate or meditate.
* Benedictine spiritual father in the middle ages wanted to return to the older tradition of “murmuring” the Scriptures. Ignatius of Loyola did not believe in an abstract intellectual activity. Is Collins saying that the piety of study is “intellectual,” “abstract,” “study,” and “mental” (rather than bodily)?
* Catholics used to use the term “mental prayer,” implying that higher prayer rises above the body.
* Orthodox prayer includes activity: the sign of the cross, prostration. A *small* prostration has a bow to the ground and a sign of the cross. A *great* prostration includes a genuflection in which the monk puts his forehead to the ground.
* Prayer is exercise and adoration. Islam got the prostration from the Eastern Church.
* Standing in the presence of God is also a key part of Orthodoxy.
* Not “visions” but “vision,” the capacity for insight into the world.

1. Theoria. It is not enough to be practical. One has to come to “neptic simplicity,” i.e., to be *awake* and to control one’s thoughts and inner world (the *nous* or *cardia*).
2. The spiritual life requires the descent of the head and intellect to the heart. From spiritual practice and intellectual activity we move to the prayer of the heart. This is like John of the Cross.
3. Thoughts (*logismoi*) can link us to a web of unreality, such as the internet. So we need an interior asceticism.
4. The goal of the “invisible warfare” is to come to grips with your inner world. Evagrius spoke of anger against an enemy. Someone has wounded us. He prevents us from attending to God. These distractions are coming from areas of woundedness. That area of interior obsessiveness must be confronted. Pride, envy, lust, all of them stop us from seeing the real.
5. John of the Cross speaks of God “entering” the self, “deconstructing” the self. You must deal with the logismoi, the world of interior obsessiveness. A monk wants a holiday in the USA, but the monastery can only afford Europe. This does not allow reality to make its claim.
6. Aim: to reach *apathia*. It means that we are not controlled by our passions. It means recognizing that how I feel is not the immediate truth.
7. In short: contemplation means not “doing nothing” but rather “seeing deeper into reality.” If you don’t pray in a discipline way, you don’t pray. We retain the attentiveness because it disciplines us for life.
8. The Orthodox believe in the *logos*: God’s idea of each person. The goal of the spiritual life is to adjust our perspective to God’s perspective.
9. The whole world is to awaken us to be attentive to an epiphany of the presence of God.
10. Augustine came to Christianity the hard way, wrote Peter Brown, and didn’t believe in the spiritual snobbery of Pelagius: the elite can save themselves.
11. The Megaloschema – the “big habit” – is worn by Orthodox monks, who don’t eat meat. They don’t have “founders” (apart from Anthony or Pachomius). Benedict is not a “founder,” but he wrote the rule. Benedictines do not have special devotion to Benedict.

Coffee Break

1. The Jesus Prayer. It is the prayer that Jesus made, not prayer made *to* Jesus.
2. Introduction: the importance of the name.
3. Moses asks the name of God (Ex. 3:14). It was a control over God. But God does not answer Moses. “Tell them that I am who I am.” But it is not YHWH. *Ego sum qui sum*. It is not a proper name.
4. Jewish traditional guarded the divine name with reverence. Translated as *Kyrios*. So the Jews say *Adonai*. The high priest could pronounce the divine name on Yom Kippur.
5. After the destruction of the temple, there was no more “Holy of Holies,” and the divine name was not “trapped” in the temple. God chose to dwell in the Temple. When it was destroyed, the Deuteronomist regarded the name as a synonym for divine presence. Confer John 17: “I have made your effective prsence known to them, and will continue to make it known.”
6. Early Christian tradition took over reverence for the holy name: Jeshua (Yahweh will save us from our sins). In Philippians 2, Jesus was “given the name which is above all other names” – name of *Kyrios*, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” A crucified criminal, a blasphemer, condemned by the Sanhedrin and executed by the Romans, was given the name of names.
7. He was in the form of God.
8. Christ means “anointed.” He was anointed at (1) conception, (2) baptism, and (3) resurrection.
9. *Kyrios* means “Lord.”
10. The NT does not speak of “my friend” Jesus or “my brother” Jesus, but knows him as the risen Lord. The Church is not interested in “Christ after the flesh.” Bultmann reminded the church that there is no objective “Jesus,” only the “Lord” who is mediated by the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.
11. Wm. Temple (A.B. of Canterbury) said, “Who would bother to crucify the Jesus of historical criticism?”
12. We usually think of the deification of the simple Jesus who rises to the Logos of Christ.
13. Second Temple Judaism was open to differentiation within the godhead. Jewish rabbinic monotheism is more radical than second temple Judaism.
14. The NT recognized the Lord Jesus Christ as the holy, the Lord, and the most high. But themonks recognized that it was hard to stay focused.
15. Jesus Prayer is *Monologistos*, a one-word or one-phrase prayer.
16. Examples.
17. “I have sinned as man; as God, have mercy.” As God, you are the source of mercy.
18. “God help me” and “Lord have mercy” are examples. These *monologoi* reflect the ascetical tradition in the church.
19. John of Sinai: “A man on a sinking ship does not compose long speeches; he cries for help.”
20. “God be merciful to me, a sinner.” The prayer of the Publican, but the Pharisee exalts himself.
21. Blind Bartimaeus: “Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Jesus asks, “What do you want me to do for you?” “Lord, that I may see.”
22. Monologistic Prayer calls upon the Lord Jesus for Mercy.
23. Short form: “Lord, Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

* The first version of this form is in the Philokalia, vol. 2, Life of Abbot Philemon.
* This was a spontaneous cry for help.

1. Long form: “Lord Jesus Christ, logos of the living God, through the prayers of your most pure mother and the living saints, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

* The habit makes the profession. The gift of the habit, along with a
* The spiritual father, the geron or egoumene, gives the monk or nun a monologos and a requirement for 500 repetitions and prostrations.
* You never get the name (Jesus) alone. The name is about manifesting the presence. “The word became flesh and tabernacled among us.”
* The divine presence resides in the body of Christ. Christ is supersessionist: the temple has been replaced by Jesus. Judaism is also supersessionist, in regard to the temple. It has been replaced by the Torah and interpretive community.

1. When we pray the Jesus Prayer, we are entering the body, the holy of holies, the center of oneself, God enthroned in the temple of the heart.
2. *Komvoskoinion* or *Kombologion* = prayer rope. Christians in the Middle East often have “worry beads” which evolved out of the prayer rope. Black is the color of the monastic prayer rope.
3. The one who prays sits on a low stool, breathing in on the one repetition, breathing out on the next. The Russians are skeptical of the breathing, and even the counting of the repetitions.
4. The pilgrim who wanders around Russia, reading the Philokalia. The Jesus Prayer has to be inserted into a rhythm of life. Kallistos Ware says it should be part of a morning and evening prayer regime. One can retreat into oneself and attentiveness to the presence of God.
5. The Mantra or Centering Prayer. It comes from the Hindu tradition. It is supposed to release the believer from a personal God to the impersonal.
6. All forms of contemplative repetition have the same physiological and psychological effect: calming the mind and improving one’s well-being.
7. To practice it daily is demanding, because it requires emptying, living with dryness and routine. The Jesus prayer is never chanted and never recited in common.
8. John Cassian’s *Institutes*. Cassian translated Evagrius. John Main adapted the maranatha prayer, and Laurence Freeman has also written about this kind of spirituality.
9. Maximus.
10. Simeon.
11. Gregory Palamas.