The Syriac Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life

Being a Christian means learning to love with God's love. But God's love is not a warm feeling in the pit of the stomach. It has definite characteristics we learn in the course of our life, in the behavior and teaching of the early monastics, as we ponder over what we can say about God as God deals with us, and finally, as we model our own lives on what we have learned.

`Give me a word, Father', visitors to early desert monks asked. The responses of these pioneer ascetics were remembered and in the fourth century written down in Coptic, Syriac, Greek, and later Latin. Their Sayings were collected, in this case in the alphabetical order of the monks and nuns who uttered them, and read by generations of Christians as life-giving words that would help readers along the path to salvation.

How do people experience spirituality through what they see, hear, touch, and smell? Sonja Luehrmann and an international group of scholars assess how sensory experience shapes prayer and ritual practice among Eastern Orthodox Christians. Prayer, even when performed privately, is considered as a shared experience and act that links individuals and personal beliefs with a broader, institutional, or imagined faith community. It engages with material, visual, and aural culture including icons, relics, candles, pilgrimage, bells, and architectural spaces. Whether touching upon the use of icons in the age of digital and electronic media, the impact of Facebook on prayer in Ethiopia, or the implications of praying using recordings, amplifiers, and loudspeakers, these timely essays present a sophisticated overview of the history of Eastern Orthodox Christianities. Taken as a whole they reveal prayer as a dynamic phenomenon in the devotional and ritual lives of Eastern Orthodox believers across Eastern Europe, the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia.

This fourth collection by Sebastian Brock focuses on three areas: the christology of the Church of the East, with the argument that the traditional characterisation of this Church as 'Nestorian' is not only unsatisfactory, but also thoroughly misleading; the distinctive phraseology of the invocations to the Holy Spirit in the Syriac liturgical tradition, hearkening back to Jewish roots; and two important early Commentaries on the Liturgy.

In recent decades there has been a notable renewal of interest in St Isaac the Syrian, a seventh-century master of the ascetic life. This selection of short sayings is part of Dr Brock's work on a fuller, long-neglected manuscript which he is making available to English readers. Each sentence holds the mind steadily in the light of a truth about the spiritual life. St Isaac's vivid images drawn directly from nature, husbandry and general human experience speak for themselves and draw us to penitence and prayer.

From the pious to the practical, the reflections of the Fathers of the Church cover virtually every aspect of the Christian life. Noted author Mike Aquilina has compiled their ancient axioms into a concise collection of comments designed for busy, modern readers. Pray with the poetry of St. Gregory Nazianzen. Find clear direction in the practical advice of St. Jerome. And, let your heart turn toward the heavenly Jerusalem, following the 1,000 timeless treasures in The Way of the Fathers. "A power-packed collection of..."
the Fathers’ concise, clear, and challenging statements on issues still relevant to Christians today. A helpful tool, for anyone seeking to live the authentic Gospel life as understood by the first Christians."

The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies responds to and celebrates the explosion of research in this inter-disciplinary field over recent decades. As a one-volume reference work, it provides an introduction to the academic study of early Christianity (c. 100-600 AD) and examines the vast geographical area impacted by the early church, in western and eastern late antiquity. It is thematically arranged to encompass history, literature, thought, practices, and material culture. It contains authoritative and up-to-date surveys of current thinking and research in the various sub-specialties of early Christian studies, written by leading figures in the discipline. The essays orientate readers to a given topic, as well as to the trajectory of research developments over the past 30-50 years within the scholarship itself. Guidance for future research is also given. Each essay points the reader towards relevant forms of extant evidence (texts, documents, or examples of material culture), as well as to the appropriate research tools available for the area. This volume will be useful to advanced undergraduate and post-graduate students, as well as to specialists in any area who wish to consult a brief review of the 'state of the question' in a particular area or sub-specialty of early Christian studies, especially one different from their own.

A new English translation for scholars and students of church history Evagrius exerted a striking impact on the development of spirituality, of Origenism, and of the spiritual interpretation of the Bible in Greek, Syriac, and Latin Christianity. This English translation of the most complete Syriac version of Kephalaia Gnostika makes Evagrius Ponticus's thoughts concerning reality, God, protology, eschatology, anthropology, and allegorical exegesis of Scripture widely available. Features: English translation of the longer Syriac version discovered by Antoine Guillaumont Commentary provides an integrated analysis of Evagrius's ascetic and philosophical writings Extensive introduction on the importance of Evagrius and the context of his writings Presenting many texts available for the very first time, this new volume in the successful Early Church Fathers series showcases full translations of Evagrius' letters, notes on various books of the bible, his treatises and his 'chapters'. Augustine Casiday's material is both accurate and refreshingly approachable, and the work is prefaced by a solid introductory essay that presents Evagrius, his work and influences, and modern scholarship in an easy-to-understand way for beginners. For students dealing with Evagrius for the first time, they could not find a better book to begin their exploration of this figure in late-ancient history and theology.

These essays honor the memory of Juana Raasch, O.S.B. (1927-1974), one of the first Benedictine women in America to consider the subject of early monasticism by returning to the texts and sources of the early ascetical movements. A student of classical languages as well as monasticism, she researched in particular the subject of "purity of heart" in early Christian texts. Her work is a valuable resource for those interested in monastic movements or in patristic studies.

Our Righteous Father Ephrem the Syrian was a prolific Syriac language hymn writer and theologian of the 4th century. He is venerated by Christians throughout the world, but especially among Syriac Christians, as a saint. His feast day in the Orthodox
Church is January 28.

Syriac Christianity developed in the first centuries CE in the Middle East, where it continued to flourish throughout Late Antiquity and the Medieval period, while also spreading widely, as far as India and China. Today, Syriac Christians are found in the Middle East, in India, as well in diasporas scattered across the globe. Over this extended time period and across this vast geographic expanse, Syriac Christians have built impressive churches and monasteries, crafted fine pieces of art, and written and transmitted a sizable body of literature. Though often overlooked, neglected, and even persecuted, Syriac Christianity has been - and continues to be - an important part of the humanistic heritage of the last two millennia. The present volume brings together fourteen studies that offer fresh perspectives on Syriac Christianity, especially its literary texts and authors. The timeframes of the individual studies span from the second-century Syriac translation of the Hebrew Bible up to the thirteenth century with the end of the Syriac Renaissance. Several studies analyze key authors from Late Antiquity, such as Aphrahat, Ephrem, Narsai, and Jacob of Serugh. Others investigate translations into Syriac, both from Hebrew and from Greek, while still others examine hagiography, especially its formation and transmission. Reflecting a growing trend in the field, the volume also devotes significant attention to the Medieval period, during which Syriac Christians lived under Islamic rule. The studies in the volume are united in their quest to explore the richness, diversity, and vibrance of Syriac Christianity.

The Fathers of the Church, deeply-rooted in the Scriptures, have left us a rich treasure as inheritance, not only of texts, but also of manners, forms and gestures of prayer. Today, western Christianity in a special way, needs to rediscover the intimate union which must exist between prayer just as in any aspect of Christian life between theory and practice, between contemplation and practical exercise. One learns how to pray by praying, and the whole of our being is called to participate in this work: the mind, the heart, but also the body, the gaze, the senses. Fr. Gabriel Bunge, a hermit with great spiritual discernment and profound knowledge of the Fathers of the desert, presents with masterly coherence this important unity between what one believes and what one expresses in the practice of prayer: a fascinating rediscovery of the valuable treasure contained in the teachings of the Church Fathers on the practice of personal prayer.

Intentionally anonymous and lacking concrete details of historical and cultural setting-and for many years suspected of messalianism-this collection of thirty memre [discourses] has been long recognized as an important, yet understudied, work of the fourth century Syriac Church. The Liber Graduum records the ups and downs of a real Christian community and is not a theoretical projection. The author meanders through many themes, but always calls the readers back to the steps of Uprightness and Perfection. "So it is also with a person once he has lowered himself from all things that are on earth, has broken his mind night and day, who counts everyone else better than himself, has emptied himself from all he possessed and kisses the feet of his enemies. Our Lord will look upon this person's lowliness and send him the Spirit, the Paraclete, and he shall know the whole truth."(translation of the script on the cover).
A provocative meditation on the role of silence in Christian tradition by the New York Times bestselling author of Christianity We live in a world dominated by noise. Religion is, for many, a haven from the clamor of everyday life, allowing us to pause for silent contemplation. But as Diarmaid MacCulloch shows, there are many forms of religious silence, from contemplation and prayer to repression and evasion. In his latest work, MacCulloch considers Jesus’s strategic use of silence in his confrontation with Pontius Pilate and traces the impact of the first mystics in Syria on monastic tradition. He discusses the complicated fate of silence in Protestant and evangelical tradition and confronts the more sinister institutional forms of silence. A groundbreaking book by one of our greatest historians, Silence challenges our fundamental views of spirituality and illuminates the deepest mysteries of faith.

St. Symeon (942-1022), abbot, spiritual director, theologian and church reformer, was the great spiritual master of Eastern Christianity. His Discourses, the central work of his life, were preached to his monks during their Matins ritual.

"Susan Ashbrook Harvey has surely produced the definitive analysis of the role of scent in Early Christian ritual and theological discourse. This is a welcome new trajectory in the study of religion and the body."—Patricia Cox Miller, author of The Cultural Turn in Late Ancient Studies: Gender, Asceticism, and Historiography

St. Basil was one of the most popular of the Greek Fathers amongst the Syrian churches, and his De Spiritu Sancto was twice translated into Syriac. The first version, made in the late fourth/early fifth centuries, survives the three manuscripts of the fifth-seventh centuries and is edited and translated here for the first time. It is a paraphrastic text and so is of theological interest in its own right. Its biblical citations are also noteworthy. The second translation, made in the seventh century, survives only in fragments and these have been collected from florilegia manuscripts and edited in parallel with the Greek text. Introductions to the two volumes explore the Syriac manuscript traditions of this work and their significance, and investigate St. Basil’s contacts with Syriac-speaking Christians and the theology of the first Syriac version. Unusually, a detailed orthographic index of textual variants is also included.

The aim of this selection of excerpts translated from Syriac writers, mainly on the topic of prayer, is to introduce this little known tradition of Eastern Christian spirituality to a wider audience. For the reader who is unfamiliar with this tradition the General Introduction is intended to provide a brief orientation. Some supplementary information on the individual authors will be found in the introductions to each chapter.

The Path of Christianity

This book contains the daily liturgical prayers of the Malankara (Indian) Orthodox Church of the Syriac liturgical tradition. This book includes each of the canonical prayers (in verse) for the seven Hours of prayer for the seven days of the week. This is English version is a slightly modified equivalent of the Malayalam Shehimo as published by MOC Publications. This is the first in this series of specialised reference works, each addressing a specific subfield within biblical studies. Books of the Bible is in depth, with articles on all of the canonical books, major apocryphal books of the New and Old Testaments, important noncanonical texts and some thematic essays.

This Introduction aims to provide basic guidance to important areas of Syriac studies. The relevance of Syriac studies to a variety of other fields is explored. A brief orientation to the history of Syriac literature is offered, and Syriac is set within the context of the other Aramaic dialects. A thorough discussion on important tools (Instrumenta Studiorum) is presented;
topics include grammars, dictionaries, the Bible in Syriac, histories of Syriac literature, bibliographical aids and relevant series, periodicals, and encyclopedias. This Introduction should prove useful both for the student beginning Syriac studies and for scholars working in adjacent fields.

In the face of hurtful public dialogue and worldwide conflict, many Christians want to practice and experience genuine compassion. After all, centuries of Christian teachings have insisted that compassion is at the heart of the Christian life. "Love your enemies," Jesus said in Luke 6:35-36. "Do good to them. Be compassionate, just as God is compassionate." How do we become more compassionate toward others, especially our enemies? And since Jesus told us to love our neighbors as ourselves, how do we practice being compassionate toward ourselves? Join Andrew Dreitcer, codirector of the Center for Engaged Compassion, in exploring how certain Christian spiritual practices are compassion practices.

Discover how ancient as well as contemporary practices can shape your life, helping you become more compassionate in today's world. Dreitcer introduces you to the Compassion Practice, a compassion formation process that has been developed in the last decade. Each chapter includes a "Review and Practice" section to help you apply what you learned. Uncover and learn how to express your innate compassion within you, and find out how to turn your desire for compassion into a life centered in genuine, lasting compassion.

Prayer and Worship in Eastern Christianities, 5th to 11th Centuries forges a new conversation about the diversity of Christianities in the medieval eastern Mediterranean, centered on the history of practice, looking at liturgy, performance, prayer, poetry, and the material culture of worship. It studies prayer and worship in the variety of Christian communities that thrived from late antiquity to the middle ages: Byzantine Orthodoxy, Syrian Orthodoxy, and the Church of the East. Rather than focusing on doctrinal differences and analyzing divergent patterns of thought, the essays address common patterns of worship, individual and collective prayer, hymnography and liturgy, as well as the indigenous theories that undergirded Christian practices. The volume intervenes in standard academic discourses about Christian difference with an exploration of common patterns of celebration, commemoration, and self-discipline. Essays by both established and promising, younger scholars interrogate elements of continuity and change over time – before and after the rise of Islam, both under the control of the Eastern Roman Empire and in the lands of successive caliphates. Groups distinct in their allegiances nevertheless shared a common religious heritage and recognized each other – even in their differences – as kinds of Christianity. A series of chapters explore the theory and practice of prayer from Greco-Roman late antiquity to the Syriac middle ages, highlighting the transmission of monastic discourses about prayer, especially among Syrian and Palestinian ascetic teachers. Another set of essays examines localization of prayer within churches through inscriptions, donations, dedications, and incubation. Other chapters treat the composition and transmission of hymns to adorn the
liturgy and articulate the emotions of the Christian calendar, structuring liturgical and eschatological time. Fifth-century Christianity was a theological battlefield. With the Messalian heretics and their experientialist spirituality on the one side and the intellectualist school on the other, representatives of both extremes found themselves condemned by the Church. In this milieu of subjectivist notions of grace and negative anthropology, there appeared a true mystic, Diadochus, Bishop of Photike in Epiros. His is a theology whose two poles are God's grace and man's ability to cooperate with it by way of discernment of spirits. Diadochus's ability to salvage what was orthodox from the Messalians and the intellectualists proves that, rather than a reactionary, he was a true theologian capable of synthesis, open to the truth even if found in his adversary, and yet firm in his faith, unwilling to compromise. He is among the earliest witnesses of the Jesus Prayer. Diadochus is the most important spiritual writer of his century, whose influence can be found in the writings of Maximus the Confessor, Simeon the New Theologian, Gregory of Palamas, and the author of The Way of the Pilgrim. This is the first translation of his complete works in English. Cliff Ermatinger is a Chicago native and works as an associate pastor of two parishes in that archdiocese. He is the author of several books on Byzantine and Carmelite spirituality as well as one on philosophy. He has written articles for Spanish, English, and German language periodicals. Along with his priestly duties, he coaches rugby, fly fishes, and competes as a bagpiper in Highland Games throughout the U.S.

The Syriac translation of Sebastian Brock's The Teaching of the Syrian Fathers on Prayer, an anthology of writings from the Syriac tradition that focus on prayer and the spiritual life.

Prayers of the Early Church, edited by J. Manning Potts was first published in 1908. It contains a selection of prayers, arranged chronologically, and collected from many old books of prayers and devotional materials. Chapters include; New Testament Prayers (Simeon, Mary, Jesus, Stephen, Paul, Peter); Other First Century Prayers (Clement of Rome, Clementine Liturgy, Syrian Clementine Liturgy); Second Century Prayers (Polycarp, Ignatius, Liturgy of St. James, Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Irenaeus); Third Century Prayers (Old Gallican Sacramentary, Liturgy of St. Mark, Eastern Church Liturgy, Eastern Church Vespers); Fourth Century Prayers (Coptic Liturgy of St. Cyril, Ambrose, Nerses of Clajes, Gallican Sacramentary, Armenian Liturgy, Basil, Chrysostom, Augustine, Apostolic Constitutions); and, Fifth Century Prayers (Liturgy of the Nestorians, Ancient Collect, Leonine Sacramentary, Gelasian Sacramentary, Liturgy of the Blessed Apostles). Sozomen, a native of Palestine, was a Church historian who lived in the 5th century A.D. His Ecclesiastical History consists of nine books, which roughly coincide with the reign of Roman emperors. Presents the insights of St. Ephrem and Jacob of Serugh, two of the earliest representatives of the theological world-view of the Syriac church.

The most in-depth and scholarly panorama of Western spirituality ever attempted! In one series, the original writings of the universally acknowledged teachers of the Catholic, Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Jewish, Islamic and Native American traditions have been critically selected, translated and introduced by internationally recognized scholars and spiritual leaders. The texts are first-rate, and the introductions
are informative and reliable. The books will be a welcome addition to the bookshelf of every literate religious persons". -- The Christian Century
THE LATE seventh century in the Syrian Church saw the flourishing of several noted monastic writers, amongst them Shem`on, a monk of an abbey in south-west Iran. Few of his writings remain, but this homily has been preserved as a model of instruction on the solitary life. Preached at the consecration of the cell of a monk embarking on the hermit life, it clearly states the disciplines required to live this form of asceticism, as well as the difficulties and dangers that will be encountered. Through this life of stillness (hesychia), the whole person lives centred on life in the resurrected Christ and in the continuing work of the Holy Spirit in the Church and in the world.

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