

A Reformed asceticism

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Tito Colliander began his now classic text *Way of the Ascetics* with this statement:

Faith comes not through pondering but through action. Not words and speculation but experience teaches us what God is. To let in fresh air we have to open a window; to get tanned we must go out into the sunshine. Achieving faith is no different; we never reach a goal by just sitting in comfort and waiting, say the holy Fathers. Let the Prodigal Son be our example. He *arose and came* (Luke 15:20).¹

‘Faith comes not through pondering but through action.’ The concept of ‘asceticism’ is one that is not often discussed within Protestant and Reformed circles. This is likely due, among other things, to views of the life of an ascetic as that of a recluse hidden away in a cave focused on his or her own personal salvation; this is then considered to be a distortion of human life with a confusion concerning salvation and what salvation actually is. No doubt there have been many distortions of what asceticism really is, however the practice itself has held a prominent place in the history of the church, and asceticism properly rooted in the grace of God in Christ should be considered an essential element in the classical tradition of the church.

This article will argue that ‘classical asceticism’ is rooted in and flows from the grace of God. This means that asceticism is a response to God’s love for humankind and the incorporation of human beings into the divine life by grace. Taking Colliander’s metaphor of fresh air and sunshine one step further, the air and the sun continually exist; opening the window and going outside do not change this fact. Rather, this act simply allows a person to focus more clearly on their reality. As such, asceticism is a lifestyle of focus on God in Christ. This article

will argue that asceticism in its classical form with its focus on God in response to His gracious love has a place in the Protestant and Reformed tradition. Moreover, in its focus on God's providence, faith and grace,² asceticism has much to offer the contemporary church in all her expressions.

Asceticism, then, has often been distorted in the past,³ a distortion that has arisen from a misconception as to its nature. In distorted conceptions of asceticism the focus has been on the act of self-denial itself. Distorted views like this have often arisen from erroneous conceptions of the body and materiality as evil or, at least, not the 'most real' reality. This type of asceticism was characteristic of Greek philosophy⁴ and influenced many of the more neo-Platonic of the early Church Fathers. However this view, which understood the body as 'less real' and subsequently focused on the self-denial itself, had no part in the classical tradition of asceticism. The classical view of asceticism flowed from the finished work of Christ and God's gracious love for humankind. In the classical tradition, asceticism was viewed as a response to God's love and was the natural outcome of a focus upon God by grace. An exploration of this tradition is the subject of this article.

The classical tradition of asceticism as a response to God's gracious love to humankind and as the natural outcome of a life focused upon God can be most conveniently set out by studying four figures who played a key role in the development of asceticism. First, a study of the biblical perspective as drawn out by Paul, exploring the biblical parameters which understood asceticism as a lifestyle response to God's love. Secondly, a study of the theology of Athanasius of Alexandria in order to outline the flowering of the classical tradition of asceticism in his conception of asceticism as a life focused upon God by grace. Thirdly and fourthly, studies of the work of two Scottish theologians, Henry Scougal and T. F. Torrance, exploring both the rooting of asceticism in the finished work of Christ, entailing a transformation of the mind, and how this naturally causes self-denial. This essay will conclude by drawing out a number of points of application.



Paul

The biblical view of asceticism laid the groundwork for what would become classical asceticism – the concept is prevalent throughout the Bible.⁵ The word itself means ‘work’ or ‘exercise’ and by the time of the early church, it meant ‘spiritual exercise.’⁶ The concept blossomed in the writings of the Apostle Paul and was encapsulated in his view of asceticism as (a) ‘exercise’ and (b) strength in weakness.

In Paul’s letter to the Philippians he wrote: ‘work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure’ (2:12b–13). While there is a plethora of key elements to this passage, for the purposes of this article only a few will be drawn out. First, Paul urged the Philippian Christians to ‘work out their own salvation’. This meant that, for Paul, there is indeed a human ‘work’ involved in salvation. However, by no means did Paul mean that this ‘working out’ was a way to achieve salvation. Rather, Paul immediately clarifies his words by stating ‘God [...] is at work in you’. This meant that the ultimate effecter of the work is indeed God himself and not the human person working, for God is at work *in* that person.

In 1 Corinthians 9:24–27, Paul brought out the athletic metaphor more clearly. Here Paul compared the Christian situation to a race. Christians, Paul stated, are ‘running a race’ and are to ‘exercise self-control’ like athletes. This is why, he asserts, ‘I punish my body and enslave it’ (27a); i.e., Paul practiced discipline and exercise, similar to the way athletes do, albeit for a completely different purpose. Father Joseph, the Abbot of St Gregory Palamas Monastery in Ohio, once offered a rich clarification of the difference. Father Joseph argued that the main difference is that in asceticism, unlike athletics, the work is undertaken for an ‘other-centered’ purpose. He stated:

We live in an age and in a world where self-seeking, self-gratification, and sensual pleasure of one kind or another seem to be the law [...] Everything is all about “me” [...] But through mortification and self-denial we can rise above self-interest, our own personal pleasure, and our own comfort or satisfaction.⁷

In Paul's words, Christians work 'for a crown that is imperishable'.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7–10, Paul confessed, in transparent honesty, that he had a 'thorn in the flesh' which he accepted though he wished it was otherwise. Instead, he contented himself with weakness because, he said, 'whenever I am weak, then I am strong.' Paul said that the thorn was 'given' to him to keep him from being too elated. Furthermore, Paul said he was in fact stronger in his weakness. Perhaps this was due to the humility he gained from the humbling thorn. Regardless of the reason, Paul rejoiced in his weakness and the strength he gained through it. For Paul, then, asceticism was in many ways a lifestyle in which hardship and weakness were not only accepted but rejoiced in because of God's providence.



Athanasius

Athanasius of Alexandria (c. 299–373) was a leader of the churches in Alexandria, Egypt. He played a major role in the theological controversies surrounding the First Council of Nicaea (325) and the First Council of Constantinople (381) and influenced the triumph of Nicene orthodoxy. In many regards, Athanasius devoted his life to defending and exploring the Christian truth that Jesus Christ is of the same *being* as the Father. Intricately connected to this, Athanasius also developed the classical view of asceticism – that it is only due to the grace of Christ that humans can respond to God's love for humankind.

Athanasius deepened the church's understanding of asceticism by emphasizing the fact that asceticism is a focus upon God by grace. In this respect, asceticism formed part of Athanasius' greater theological system, or, his understanding of the full story of the Gospel. In Athanasius' great double work *Against the Heathen* and *On the Incarnation*, the Alexandrian theologian argued that humankind was created to live a life 'towards God' by grace.⁸ For Athanasius, this life was to be a life where humans were focused upon God the Word by means of their minds and, in fact, the rest of their human person as well. However, Athanasius argued, humankind had turned away from God and focused on themselves, leading to ignorance of God and their own destruction. God's solution, said Athanasius, was to reveal Himself to humankind in the flesh of Christ⁹ to unite humankind to

God via the flesh of Christ.¹⁰

Thus, for Athanasius, God created humans to live a life focused toward God by the grace of the Word. This focus upon God naturally entailed a lack of focus upon self. In other words, natural human life was, for Athanasius, simply a ‘God-ward’ life or a life ordered around God. The Fall radically distorted this life. God’s work in Christ, however, *re-ordered this life*.

For Athanasius, ‘asceticism’ was simply this God-ward life lived out in the now fallen and redeemed world. In his work *The Life of Anthony*, he unpacked what he saw as the ideal Christian ascetic life. In this classic text, Athanasius painted Anthony as the ideal Christian and explored what the life of all Christians ought to look like. In the words of John Behr:

The movement that Athanasius portrays in *On the Incarnation*, of the Word coming into our world by taking a body as his own, as his own instrument, in order to ensure victory over death for those who are his body, is continued in the *Life of Anthony*, in terms of the appropriation of Christ’s victory, making it one’s “own,” in the intense struggle with the devil that such appropriation entails. In this *Life* there is no “flight from the body,” but rather a concrete engagement in the body and for the body.¹¹

Granted, Anthony left the city and went out into the Egyptian desert to work out his own life in Christ. This was simply Anthony’s way of living out the ascetical life in his own context, however he could have done it in a variety of other contexts. The essence of Anthony’s life was that he had ‘his mind filled with Christ’¹² and he was ‘filled with the Spirit of God’¹³ for Anthony was, by grace, living a life toward God guided by the Word and according to nature.¹⁴ Rather than being abused by Anthony, his body was healthy, being used in the way that God intended.¹⁵

Throughout the entire text, Athanasius described Anthony’s life as ‘the triumph of the Saviour in Anthony’. For Athanasius, then, while all was still completely from the side of God, who was always ‘*the One doing*’, salvation (and asceticism) came by cooperation with God’s

grace.¹⁶ Each victory in Anthony's life was not the triumph *of* Anthony but a 'triumph of the Saviour in Anthony.'¹⁷ It was never Anthony's victory but Christ's victory in Anthony, a concept reminiscent of Paul's letter to the Philippians.



Scottish theology: Thomas F. Torrance and Henry Scougal

In the work of two Scottish theologians, T. F. Torrance (1913–2007) and Henry Scougal (1650–78), the understanding of classical asceticism deepened further. Torrance's theology was characterized by an intense focus upon Christ and Christ's vicarious life; his theology of asceticism was no different. For Torrance, therefore, asceticism was completed by Christ and worked out in humans. Thus, the Christocentric nature of asceticism already laid out by Athanasius was further expanded by Torrance.

In the theology of Henry Scougal, on the other hand, the natural outcome of asceticism as a life of self-denial was more fully developed. Scougal deepened the church's conception of a God-centered way of understanding self-denial.



Thomas F. Torrance: transformation of the mind

In the theology of T. F. Torrance, asceticism and all aspects of sanctification were rooted in Christ. Relying upon Irenaeus of Lyons, Torrance contended that it is essential to maintain that in Christ the whole human person is healed, saved, and sanctified. As Torrance stated in his lectures:

it was that Jesus had taken what Irenaeus spoke of as our leprous humanity upon himself, but that instead of becoming a leper himself, he healed and transformed our 'leprous' human nature and restored it to be like the flesh of a newborn child.¹⁸

Torrance saw Irenaeus putting forth the view that the entirety of Christ's life was saving and sanctifying. This was a life culminating in the cross. For Torrance this meant that the entire life of Christ was saving and so, in classical theology, there was an intricate connection

between the Person and the Work of Christ. This meant that what Christ did on the cross and throughout his whole life was internal to his Person.¹⁹ Irenaeus himself stated:

[Christ] therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age [...] a youth for youths [...] and thus sanctifying them for the Lord.²⁰

All of this means that salvation must be understood to have occurred within the Person of Christ.

For Torrance, the completed work of Christ was worked out in each human person by means of the transformation of their minds to the mind of Christ. In Torrance's words:

To know God and to be holy, to know God and worship, to know God and to be cleansed in mind and soul from anything that may come between people and God, to know God and be committed to him in consecration, love and obedience, go inseparably together.²¹

Torrance contended that according to the Church Fathers only through 'the leap forward' of the awakened mind could truth be known – a leap forward gained by corporate, pious, godly living.²² For Torrance, the ascetical and godly aspects of theology were the most important, indeed the 'transformation and reconciliation of the mind', as he put it, were more important than academic theological knowledge.²³ For Torrance this was a transformation to the 'mind of Christ',²⁴ and was a lifelong process, the result being a keen 'theological instinct'.²⁵

The way in which the mind of humans was restructured to the reality of God was by participation in the mind of Christ, which happens by means of (a) Christ's vicarious intercession as High Priest on the one hand, and (b) human participation in this by prayer and Bible reading on the other. This is done, according to Torrance, by 'incessant prayer in offering [oneself] daily to God through the reconciling and atoning mediation of Christ'.²⁶ This was a predominant theme in Torrance's imaginative reconstruction of patristic theology, a theme garnered

from the Fathers, especially from the thought of Cyril of Alexandria. The main impetus of Cyril's argument concerning the continuing intercession of Christ is found in his *Commentary on the Gospel of John* and the *De adorazione*. As Torrance saw it, as Christ intercedes for humankind, human beings are continually being conformed to His own mind. Torrance contended that Cyril put forth the view that humankind is sanctified: 'it is as we are enabled to share with [Christ] his mind [...], our human mind [...] which has sanctified and healed in him, that we may be associated with him in his priestly presentation of himself and of us through himself to the Father.'²⁷ Torrance also contended that according to Cyril it was only by means of this *noetic* union that humankind is presented to the Father in Christ; a union already complete by means of Christ's incarnate work but applied to humankind by means of their participation in it.²⁸ This union, argued Torrance, was for Cyril the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in humankind:

It is then in pneumatological terms that Cyril understands the intimate union between us and Christ: the presence of the Mind of Christ in us and his offering of our mind to the Father, for the Spirit, he reminds us, is the Mind of Christ, and it is in the same Spirit that our mind is sanctified and lifted up through Christ into God.²⁹

This is because the Spirit is the only bond of connection between humankind and God.³⁰

As Christ intercedes for humankind on the one hand and humankind participates in this worship on the other, the Church is continually sanctified and renewed. As Torrance put it: 'That is why [people] cannot be theologians without the incessant prayer in offering [themselves] daily to God through the reconciling and atoning mediation of Christ'.³¹ For 'Through study of the holy scriptures, through meditation and prayer [theologians] tune into the mind of God incarnate in Jesus Christ, the source of all rationality until [their] own minds, healed, renewed, and sanctified in him, are instinct with his truth.'³² Thus it is through prayer and corporate worship that Christians work out their union with Christ more and more.



Henry Scougal: a focus on God naturally entails denial of baser instincts

The Scottish theologian Henry Scougal brought the classical notion of asceticism to even deeper fruition by exploring the nature of self-denial. In his classic text *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, Henry Scougal discussed what he saw as ‘true religion’, namely a ‘union of the soul with God, a real participation of the divine nature, the very image of God drawn upon the soul’, or, put more briefly, ‘a divine life’.³³ In his small but sophisticated treatise, Scougal deepened the classical understanding of asceticism by unpacking how life in God naturally entails self-denial.

Central to Scougal’s book is the distinction between ‘religion’ and ‘natural life’. For Scougal, religion is, as stated earlier, a union of God with the soul. Conversely, argued Scougal, ‘natural life’, caused by the Fall, is ‘inordinate self-love’.³⁴ Thus, the difference between the follower of true religion and the follower of wickedness is that ‘in the one divine life bears sway, in the other the animal life doth prevail’.³⁵ Put otherwise, the wicked person is driven by self-love but the lover of God is driven by the union God has enacted with their soul.

For Scougal, ‘true religion’ (the union of God with the soul) ultimately triumphs over the ‘natural life’. In his words,

Perfect love is a kind of self-dereliction, a wandering out of ourselves; it is a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dies to himself, and all his own interest, not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may please and gratify the party whom he loves.³⁶

Scougal understood that self-denial in asceticism ought not to be and, in reality, could not be the focus of the Christian. Rather, a focus on self-denial would not be much different from the inordinate focus on self that Athanasius had likewise seen as the root and outcome of the Fall. Thus, for Scougal, self-denial and self-dereliction simply naturally arise out of the love that a Christian has for God. Therefore religious exercises are ‘the proper emanations of the divine life, the

natural employments of the new-born soul³⁷ made possible only by powers already received from God.³⁸

Since there is a plethora of points of application to be drawn from this study of the classical tradition of asceticism, we continue by means of a short recap of the major points and a few brief points of application. The first main element of classical asceticism is that it must always flow from the finished work of Christ. Therefore, with Athanasius, it must be asserted that asceticism is always by grace and is the triumph of Christ in the life of a human being. With Torrance it must be asserted that asceticism has already been completed in the humanity of Christ and is applied to individual humans by means of the Holy Spirit.

The second main element of classical asceticism is that self-denial in asceticism naturally flows from love for and a focus on God. With Torrance it must be asserted that asceticism is, at its core, a transformation of the human mind to the mind of Christ. With Scougal it must be asserted that this naturally entails self-derelection.

The third main element of classical asceticism is that it is ultimately a lifestyle of self-denial and focus upon God, as opposed to simply focusing on the various acts of asceticism. With Paul and the Bible it must be asserted that asceticism, while possibly entailing intentional acts is, more than anything else, a lifestyle rejoicing in God-given strength in weakness.

There are a number of practical points of application which can be garnered from this historical exploration of classical asceticism. Firstly, it is important to develop a lifestyle of self-denial in small things. In *Way of the Ascetics*, Colliander, relying upon Ephraem the Syrian, stated ‘begin with small things’ for ‘how can you put out a great fire before you have learned to quench a small one?’³⁹ Colliander used such examples as denying oneself an extra cup of coffee, the desire to look at the clock, or to go visiting.⁴⁰ The point of this would not be to deny oneself coffee or any of the items because they are inherently evil, but rather to curb one’s will by a lifestyle of self-denial. Secondly, it is important to develop a lifestyle of an intentional spiritual life. There are a variety of Christian ‘spiritual disciplines’ which can be practiced for this purpose including fasting, study, contemplation, prayer, and scriptural meditation.⁴¹ Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly,

Christians ought to live a life of asceticism and self-denial: in doing so they will find ways of seeing strength in weakness in their personal circumstances. A great example of this is Father Arseny, an Orthodox priest who lived a life of utmost simplicity in a communist prison camp.⁴² Father Arseny rejoiced in the ascetic situation that God placed him in during his time of imprisonment and looked at the situation as an opportunity to rejoice in weakness and to serve God and his fellow prisoners in whatever way this might be possible. However, there are certainly many other opportunities for this as well. For example, the church in the Western world – particularly the church in Europe, including the church in Scotland – has seen a large decline in funds and accordingly many church buildings are being closed. Perhaps this is an opportunity to rejoice in weakness and allow God to work even more powerfully through this ‘ascetical circumstance’. Another example of an ascetical circumstance might be the homosexual debate in many of the Western Protestant churches. This is definitely a very sensitive issue and should always be approached with great care. However, what if asceticism was brought into the conversation? One wonders what might happen if classical ascetic practices such as monasticism and vows of celibacy were considered as elements in this debate. It is possible that questions about marriage and ordination of homosexual Christians might disappear altogether.



Conclusion

In conclusion, this article has argued that classical asceticism developed on the basis of the view that asceticism is a focus upon God by grace and is always a response to God’s love for humankind and the finished work of Christ. Furthermore, this article has argued that, as such, classical asceticism not only has a place in Reformed and Protestant theology but should be recovered by Protestants because it has much to offer the contemporary ecclesiastical situation. There are many contexts today in which the classical ascetical tradition, as put forward by such luminaries as Paul, Athanasius, Torrance, and Scougal, would be particularly applicable, providing significant, alternative solutions to convoluted problems.

Notes

- ¹ Tito Colliander, *Way of the Ascetics: The Ancient Tradition of Discipline and Inner Growth* (trans. K. Ferré; Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), 1.
- ² Allen sees eight aspects to Reformed theology: the Word of God, Covenantal theology, the doctrine of God and Christology, the doctrines of faith and soteriology, the doctrines of sin and grace, Reformed worship, Reformed confessions and ecclesiastical authority, and the Reformed view of culture and eschatology. R. Michael Allen, *Reformed Theology* (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2010).
- ³ There are certain examples of the desert fathers who went to extreme means to mutilate their bodies. See e.g. Norman Russell, trans., *The Lives of the Desert Fathers: The Historia monachorum in Aegypto* (London: Mowbray; Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1981). Many of the examples are inspirational but some are extreme. A more popular example of this distortion appeared in Dan Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York: Doubleday, 2003). Here, Silas, a monk, wore a metal cilice and flogged himself in penance. The scenes in the film adaptation of the book portray precisely the distortion of asceticism.
- ⁴ E.g. the famous Allegory of the Cave (see Plato, *The Republic*, VII). For Plato the world in the cave was 'unreality' and in order for the soul to enter the world of the 'really real' it had to transcend the world of the senses. For an excellent exposition of Plato's view in relation to later Christian developments see Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition: From Plato to Denys* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), particularly 1–16.
- ⁵ E.g. Jesus practiced asceticism by fasting in Matthew 4:1–11; Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–4.
- ⁶ H. G. Liddle and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon, Ninth Edition with a Revised Supplement* (ed. H. Stuart Jones; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); G. W. H. Lampe, ed., *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).
- ⁷ <http://sgpm.goarch.org/Monastery/?p=740>
- ⁸ Athanasius, *Contra Gentes*, § 2–3; idem., *De Incarnatione*, § 5.

- ⁹ Athanasius, *De Incarnatione*, § 14.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., § 54.
- ¹¹ See John Behr’s introduction to his newly-published translation of *On the Incarnation* (Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2012), 41.
- ¹² Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, § 5, e.g. in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters* (vol. 4 of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*; ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace; second series; Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1997), 197.
- ¹³ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, § 14.
- ¹⁴ Ibid.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Khaled Anatolios, *Athanasius: The Coherence of His Thought* (London; New York: Routledge, 2004), 177–87.
- ¹⁷ Athanasius, *Life of Anthony*, e.g. § 7.
- ¹⁸ Thomas F. Torrance, *Atonement: The Person and Work of Christ* (ed. Robert T. Walker; Milton Keynes: Paternoster; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 440.
- ¹⁹ See Thomas F. Torrance, “Karl Barth and the Latin Heresy”, *Scottish Journal of Theology* 39 (1986): 461–82.
- ²⁰ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, II.xxii.4; in *Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus* (vol. 1 of *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*; ed. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; rev. ed.; Edinburgh: T&T Clark; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989), 391.
- ²¹ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Exeter: Paternoster Press; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 36.
- ²² Thomas F. Torrance, *Reality and Scientific Theology* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, 2001), 84; idem, *The Christian Doctrine of God: One Being, Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 74.
- ²³ See Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–47.
- ²⁴ Thomas F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith: The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 127.
- ²⁵ Torrance, *Atonement*, 437–47.
- ²⁶ Ibid., 446.

- ²⁷ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconciliation: Essays Towards Evangelical and Catholic Unity in East and West* (Eugene, Or.: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1996), 180.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 180 f.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, 182.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 183. The Holy Spirit as the one enabling sanctification and asceticism was a common theme of the Fathers. See, for example, Athanasius, *Letters to Serapion on the Holy Spirit*, Didymus the Blind, *On the Holy Spirit*, and Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*.
- ³¹ Torrance, *Atonement*, 446.
- ³² *Ibid.*, 447.
- ³³ Henry Scougal, *The Life Of God In The Soul Of Man* (Westminster, Md.: Christian Heritage, 1996), 39.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*, 44; 46.
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 44.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 64.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 81. This was a concept already put forth by Basil the Great during the patristic era. The basic idea was that sin enslaves man into a ‘passionate’ life, driven by desire; God is dispassionate and thus union with him is necessarily dispassionate. See Basil, “An Ascetic Discourse” [Eiusdem sermo asceticus] in *The Ascetic Works of Saint Basil* (trans. W. K. L. Clarke; London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1925).
- ³⁹ Colliander, *Way of the Ascetics*, 13.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.
- ⁴¹ There are a variety of books which the interested reader could consult for direction in exploring this aspect of asceticism such as Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth* (New York: HarperCollins, 1998); Tony Jones, *The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2005); R. M. French, *The Way of a Pilgrim; and, The Pilgrim Continues His Way* (New York: Seabury Press, 1965).
- ⁴² Alexander, *Father Arseny, 1893–1973: Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father: Being the Narratives Compiled by the Servant of God Alexander Concerning His Spiritual Father* (trans. Vera Bouteneff; Crestwood, N.Y.: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1998).