

## Way Of The Ascetics

*Way Of The Ascetics* The way of the ascetics is a profound spiritual path that emphasizes discipline, renunciation, and inner purification. Rooted in various religious and philosophical traditions, the way of the ascetics seeks to transcend material attachments and attain higher states of consciousness or enlightenment. Whether practiced in the context of Buddhism, Christianity, Jainism, Hinduism, or other spiritual systems, asceticism offers a disciplined approach to spiritual growth that can lead practitioners toward inner peace, wisdom, and ultimate liberation. In this article, we will explore the core principles, practices, historical significance, and benefits of the way of the ascetics, providing a comprehensive overview for those interested in understanding or adopting this spiritual path.

**Understanding the Essence of the Way of the Ascetics** Asceticism involves a deliberate choice to detach oneself from worldly pleasures and comforts to focus on spiritual development. The essence of this path is self-control, simplicity, and a deep commitment to spiritual ideals. It often requires rigorous discipline, meditation, fasting, and renunciation of possessions or social ties. The goal is to purify the mind and body, reduce distractions, and foster a direct connection with the divine or ultimate reality.

**Historical Roots of Ascetic Practices** The practice of asceticism dates back thousands of years and appears in many ancient cultures and religions:

- Hinduism:** Ascetics known as *sannyasis* or *yogis* undertake rigorous austerities and meditation to attain *moksha* or spiritual liberation.
- Buddhism:** The Buddha himself practiced extreme asceticism before discovering the Middle Way, emphasizing moderation.
- Christianity:** Monks and hermits have historically practiced ascetic disciplines to deepen their spiritual life and serve God.
- Jainism:** Known for its strict adherence to non-violence and self-discipline, Jain ascetics often renounce worldly life entirely.

Understanding these diverse origins highlights the universal appeal and significance of ascetic practices across cultures and eras.

**2 Core Principles of the Way of the Ascetics** The way of the ascetics is guided by fundamental principles that inform their practices and worldview. While specific details may vary, the following core principles are common across most ascetic traditions:

- Self-Discipline and Restraint** At the heart of asceticism is rigorous self-control. Practitioners aim to regulate desires related to food, sleep, pleasure, and social interactions to prevent distractions from spiritual pursuits.
- Detachment and Renunciation** Ascetics often renounce material possessions, social status, and worldly attachments, viewing these as obstacles to spiritual progress. Detachment helps cultivate inner freedom and focus.
- Purification of Body and Mind** Physical austerities, fasting, and cleanliness rituals are employed to purify the body, while meditation and contemplation purify the mind, fostering clarity and serenity.
- Humility and Simplicity** A humble lifestyle devoid of excess and vanity helps practitioners cultivate humility, essential for spiritual progress.
- Focus on Inner Transformation** Rather than external achievements, the primary goal is inner transformation—achieving self-realization, enlightenment, or union with the divine.

**Practices Employed in the Way of the Ascetics** Ascetics engage in a variety of disciplined practices that support their spiritual goals. These practices are designed to foster discipline, clarity, and spiritual insight.

- Fasting and Dietary Discipline** Fasting is a common ascetic practice used to discipline the body and enhance spiritual awareness. Some ascetics may abstain from food entirely for extended periods, while others follow strict dietary restrictions.
- Meditation and Prayer** Regular meditation helps cultivate inner silence and focus on higher consciousness. Prayer often accompanies meditation, serving as a means of communion with the divine.
- Vows and Celibacy** Many ascetics take vows of celibacy to conserve energy and focus on spiritual pursuits. Vows may also include vows of silence, poverty, or obedience.
- Physical Austerities** Practices such as fasting, breath control (*pranayama*), bodily postures, or even physical hardship like walking barefoot or living in solitude are used to strengthen discipline and purify the body.
- Study of Sacred Texts** Ascetics often dedicate significant time to studying spiritual scriptures, philosophy, and teachings to deepen their understanding.

**Types of Ascetics and Their Paths** Different traditions offer various paths within the way of the ascetics, each with unique practices and goals.

- Monks and Nuns** Monastic communities are common in Buddhism, Christianity, and Jainism. Monks and nuns live in monasteries, following strict routines of prayer, meditation, and work.
- Hermits and Recluses** Some ascetics choose solitary living, retreating into nature or remote areas to deepen their spiritual practices without external distractions.
- Transformative Pilgrimages** Pilgrimages to sacred sites are often part of ascetic discipline, symbolizing spiritual journey and devotion.
- Lay Ascetics** Not all ascetics renounce entirely; some live as lay practitioners, incorporating ascetic disciplines into daily life.

**4 Benefits and Challenges of the Way of the Ascetics** Adopting an ascetic lifestyle can offer profound benefits but also presents significant challenges.

- Benefits**
  - Inner Peace:** Discipline and detachment reduce mental agitation and foster serenity.
  - Clarity and Focus:** Minimizing distractions sharpens spiritual insight and concentration.
  - Self-Realization:** Deep inner work can lead to enlightenment or liberation.
  - Resilience:** Physical and mental austerities build resilience and perseverance.
  - Compassion and Humility:** Living simply fosters humility and compassionate understanding of others.
- Challenges**
  - Physical Hardship:** Fasting, bodily austerities, and solitude can be physically taxing.
  - Social Isolation:** Renunciation may lead to loneliness or misunderstanding by others.
  - Psychological Strain:** Discipline can sometimes lead to mental stress or frustration.
  - Misinterpretation:** External appearances of asceticism can be misjudged or misunderstood.

Successful practitioners often balance discipline with compassion and patience, recognizing the importance of inner motivation.

**Modern Interpretations and Applications** While traditional ascetic practices are often rigorous, modern spiritual seekers adapt these principles to contemporary life.

- Minimalism and Simple Living** Many adopt

minimalist lifestyles, reducing possessions and distractions to cultivate focus and contentment. *Mindfulness and Meditation* Modern mindfulness practices draw from ascetic meditation techniques, helping individuals manage stress and develop clarity.

*Environmental and Ethical Living* Ascetic principles inspire eco-conscious behaviors and ethical consumption, aligning material simplicity with spiritual values.

*Balancing Material Life and Spiritual Goals* Contemporary practitioners often seek a middle path, integrating spiritual disciplines into daily routines without complete renunciation.

*Conclusion: Embracing the Way of the Ascetics* The way of the ascetics offers a timeless path toward inner transformation, emphasizing discipline, renunciation, and spiritual focus. Whether practiced through rigorous austerities or simplified living, it provides a profound means of transcending worldly attachments and realizing higher truths. For those seeking deeper meaning beyond material pursuits, exploring the principles and practices of asceticism can lead to a more centered, peaceful, and enlightened life. Embracing this path requires commitment and sincerity, but the rewards—inner peace, wisdom, and liberation—are invaluable. As history demonstrates, the way of the ascetics continues to inspire countless individuals across cultures and generations in their quest for spiritual fulfillment.

*Question/Answer* What is the main focus of 'The Way of the Ascetics' by Vasily Zenkovsky? The book explores the spiritual practices, philosophies, and ascetic traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Christian monks and ascetics, highlighting their pursuit of spiritual perfection and divine union. How does 'The Way of the Ascetics' differ from Western Christian ascetic practices? While Western Christian asceticism often emphasizes penitence and individual salvation, 'The Way of the Ascetics' emphasizes communal monastic life, hesychasm (inner quietness), and mystical prayer as central to Eastern Orthodox spirituality. What are some key spiritual disciplines discussed in 'The Way of the Ascetics'? Key disciplines include prayer (especially hesychasm), fasting, vigil, humility, and spiritual contemplation, all aimed at achieving purity of heart and divine union. Why has 'The Way of the Ascetics' gained renewed interest in contemporary spiritual discussions? Its insights into disciplined prayer, mindfulness, and inner tranquility resonate with modern seekers looking for authentic spiritual practices and ways to deepen their inner life amidst chaos and distraction.

6 Can 'The Way of the Ascetics' be applied outside monastic contexts? Yes, many of its principles—such as prayer, humility, and disciplined living—can be adapted for laypeople seeking spiritual growth and mindfulness in everyday life. What role does 'The Way of the Ascetics' play in understanding Eastern Orthodox mysticism? It serves as a foundational text that explains the mystical practices, spiritual goals, and inner experiences of Orthodox ascetics, providing insight into their contemplative approach to faith. Is 'The Way of the Ascetics' suitable for those interested in Christian mysticism? Absolutely, it offers profound insights into the mystical prayer practices, spiritual discipline, and inner transformation central to Christian mysticism within the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

*Way of the Ascetics* In the vast landscape of spiritual pursuits and philosophical traditions, the Way of the Ascetics stands out as a profound and disciplined approach to achieving inner purity, self-realization, and liberation from worldly attachments. Rooted in ancient practices and philosophies, this path emphasizes austerity, self-control, meditation, and ethical living. As an expert examining this discipline, it is essential to understand its core principles, historical development, methodologies, and contemporary relevance. --- *Understanding the Essence of the Way of the Ascetics* At its core, the Way of the Ascetics is a lifestyle dedicated to renunciation, discipline, and spiritual discipline. The term "ascetic" derives from the Greek *askēsis*, meaning exercise or training, emphasizing rigorous practice aimed at cultivating virtue and spiritual insight. *Key Characteristics:*

- **Self-Discipline:** Strict regulation of desires and impulses.
- **Renunciation:** Abstaining from worldly pleasures, material possessions, and sometimes social interactions.
- **Meditative Focus:** Regular meditation and contemplative practices.
- **Ethical Conduct:** Commitment to moral principles such as truthfulness, non-violence, and humility. This way is not merely about self-denial but about transforming the individual inwardly, stripping away superficial layers to reveal a deeper, more authentic self.

--- *Historical Roots and Evolution* *Ancient Origins* The practice of asceticism dates back thousands of years, appearing independently across various cultures and religions:

- **Hinduism:** Ascetic practices are integral to many spiritual paths, exemplified by sages like the Rishis, who practiced severe austerities to attain spiritual insight.
- **Buddhism:** The Buddha himself practiced extreme asceticism early in his quest before adopting a balanced Middle Way.
- **Jainism:** Asceticism is central, with monks engaging in rigorous fasting, renunciation, and non-violence.
- **Christianity:** Desert fathers and monks embraced solitude, fasting, and prayer to pursue closeness to God.
- **Islam:** Way Of The Ascetics 7 Sufis practiced asceticism through fasting, prayer, and detachment from worldly desires.

*Development Through History* Over centuries, ascetic practices have evolved, influenced by cultural contexts and spiritual goals. Monastic traditions in Christianity, Buddhist monastic codes, and Jain ascetic regimes exemplify diverse expressions. In India, ascetic traditions flourished with figures like Mahavira, the 24th Tirthankara of Jainism, and various hermits and yogis who sought liberation through austerity. The emphasis remained on reducing attachment and cultivating inner discipline. In the West, asceticism often took the form of monastic vows, fasting, and solitude, shaping Christian monastic orders like Benedictines and Carthusians. --- *Core Practices and Principles* The Way of the Ascetics encompasses a broad spectrum of practices aimed at fostering spiritual growth. While specific customs vary among traditions, certain foundational principles are common.

- **Physical Discipline** Ascetics often adopt physical austerities to discipline the body and mind:
- **Fasting:** Limiting food intake to control desires.
- **Severe postures:** Prolonged meditation in specific poses.
- **Sleep deprivation:** Occasionally used to enhance focus.
- **Physical austerities:** Such as wearing coarse clothing or enduring harsh environments.

**Mental and Emotional Control** Controlling thoughts and emotions is central to ascetic discipline:

- **Meditation and Contemplation:** Regular practice to cultivate mindfulness and inner silence.
- **Vows of Silence:** To minimize unnecessary speech.
- **Detachment from worldly attachments:** Reducing emotional dependence on possessions or relationships.

**Ethical and Moral Conduct** Ascetics abide by strict codes:

- **Non-violence (Ahimsa):** Avoiding harm to all living beings.
- **Truthfulness (Satya):** Speaking and living truthfully.
- **Non-possessiveness (Aparigraha):** Avoiding greed and material accumulation.
- **Humility and Simplicity:** Leading a modest lifestyle.

**Community and Solitude** While some ascetics live in communal monasteries, others prefer solitude to deepen their Way Of The Ascetics 8 practice. Both approaches serve to minimize worldly distractions. --- *Types of Ascetic Practices* The Way of the Ascetics manifests in various forms, tailored to individual temperaments and spiritual goals. *Monastic Asceticism* Practiced within organized communities, monastic ascetics follow prescribed routines, vows, and communal discipline. Examples include Buddhist monks, Christian monks, and Jain monks. *Features:*

- Structured daily schedules
- Collective

rituals - Vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience Hermitic Asceticism Solitary practitioners seek silence and isolation in remote locations, emphasizing personal discipline and direct communion with the divine or nature. Features: - Long periods of solitude - Minimal material possessions - Self-imposed hardships Yogic and Meditative Asceticism In Indian traditions, yogis and sages incorporate rigorous meditation, breath control (pranayama), and physical austerities (tapas) to attain spiritual awakening. Features: - Specific austerities (tapas) - Focused meditation practices - Use of mantras and visualizations --- Benefits and Challenges of the Way of the Ascetics Benefits Adherents and scholars identify numerous spiritual and psychological benefits: - Inner Peace: Reduced mental agitation and emotional turbulence. - Self-Mastery: Enhanced control over impulses and desires. - Clarity of Mind: Improved focus and insight. - Detachment: Freedom from material dependencies. - Spiritual Awakening: Accelerated progress toward enlightenment or self-realization. Challenges However, this rigorous path is not without difficulties: - Physical Hardships: Fasting, sleep deprivation, and environmental hardships. - Social Isolation: Potential loneliness or estrangement. - Risk of Extremism: Excessive austerity can harm health or lead to fanaticism. - Psychological Strain: Maintaining discipline requires strong mental resilience. It is vital for practitioners to balance discipline with compassion, moderation, and Way Of The Ascetics 9 awareness of personal limits. --- Contemporary Relevance and Adaptations In modern times, the Way of the Ascetics has influenced various spiritual and wellness movements, emphasizing mindfulness, minimalism, and self-control. Modern Spiritual Movements Practitioners adopt ascetic principles through: - Mindfulness Meditation: Borrowed from Buddhist traditions. - Minimalism: Living with fewer possessions. - Fasting and Detoxes: As health and spiritual tools. - Retreats and Silent Meditation: To deepen inner focus. Challenges in the Modern Context Adapting ascetic practices today involves navigating: - Material Abundance: Overcoming consumer culture. - Time Constraints: Balancing discipline with daily responsibilities. - Health Concerns: Ensuring practices are safe and sustainable. - Cultural Appropriation: Respecting traditions and origins. Many contemporary practitioners view asceticism not as self-punishment but as a means to attain clarity, purpose, and authentic living amid modern chaos. --- Conclusion: The Enduring Value of the Way of the Ascetics The Way of the Ascetics remains a compelling and transformative approach to spiritual development. Its emphasis on discipline, renunciation, and ethical living offers a pathway to transcend superficial desires and attain profound inner peace. While it demands rigorous commitment and resilience, the potential rewards—self-mastery, enlightenment, and liberation—are timeless. In a world increasingly driven by material pursuits and instant gratification, the ascetic path serves as both a challenge and an inspiration. It reminds us that true fulfillment often arises not from external possessions but from inner discipline and spiritual depth. Whether practiced through ancient monastic routines or modern minimalist lifestyles, the principles of the Way of the Ascetics continue to guide those seeking a meaningful and enlightened existence. asceticism, spiritual discipline, renunciation, self-denial, meditation, purity, austerity, monasticism, humility, fasting

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way of the ascetics is a rich compact introduction for modern readers to the eastern christian spiritual tradition that has been an inspiration to millions for centuries these compassionate and insightful reflections on self control and inner peace are meant to lead the readers to fuller union with god the author makes a generous selection of succinct yet profound extracts from the spiritual fathers and provides an illuminating commentary and practical applications for daily devotion he tempers austerity with common sense warmth and even humor as he urges us on our journey toward god written for lay persons living fully in the world as much as for clergy way of the ascetics is an excellent resource for daily meditation authentic spiritual guidance and a revitalized religious life book jacket title summary field provided by blackwell north america inc all rights reserved

the ascetic tracts of 7th century writer isaac of nineveh isaac the syrian provide a wealth of material to better understand early christian asceticism by focusing on the role of the body in various ascetic techniques such as fasting vigils and prayer as well as on the way the ascetic relates to the society a picture of asceticism as political activity emerges for isaac the ascetic was to function as something like an icon an image that showed the world the reality of god skingdom already in this life by clearly indicating the difference between god s ways and men s patrik hagman reviews the scholarly discussion on asceticism of the last three decades and then proceeds to analyse the texts of isaac to reveal an emphasis on asceticism as a practice that is at the same time performative transformative and bodily this contrasts with the long established conception of asceticism as based on a negative view of the body isaac displays a profound understanding of the way body and soul are related demonstrating how the body can be used to transform the personality of the ascetic and to communicate the change to the world without the use of words the writings of isaac offer a rare example of an extensive discussion of asceticism by a person who lived a radical ascetic life himself hagman s new study brings isaac s fresh perspective to bear on an important yet often overlooked aspect of the christian tradition

from meditation and fasting to celibacy and anchoritism the ascetic impulse has been an enduring and complex phenomenon throughout history offering a sweeping view of this elusive and controversial aspect of religious life and culture asceticism looks at the ascetic impulse from a unique vantage point cross cultural cross religious and multidisciplinary in nature these essays provide a broad historical and comparative perspective on asceticism a subject rarely studied outside the context of individual religious traditions the work represents the input of more than forty preeminent scholars in a wide range of fields and disciplines and analyzes asceticism from antiquity to the present in european near eastern african asian and north american settings asceticism is organized around four major themes that cut across religious traditions origins and meanings of asceticism which explores the motivations and impulses behind ascetic behaviors hermeneutics of asceticism which looks at texts and rhetorics and their presuppositions aesthetics of asceticism which documents responses evoked by ascetic impulses and practices as well as the arts of ascetic practices themselves and politics of asceticism which analyzes the power dynamics of asceticism especially as regards gender cultural and ethnic differences critical responses to the major papers ensure the focus upon the themes and unify the discussion two general addresses on broad philosophical and historical interpretive issues suggest the importance of the subject of asceticism for wide ranging but serious cultural critical discussions an appendix ascetica miscellanea includes six short papers on provocative topics not related to the four major themes and a panel discussion on the practices and meanings of asceticism in contemporary religious life and culture a selected bibliography and an index are also included the only comprehensive reference work on asceticism with a multicultural multireligious and multidisciplinary perspective asceticism offers a model not only for an understanding of a most important dimension of religious life but also for future interdisciplinary study in general

john of ephesus traveled throughout the sixth century byzantine world in his role as monk missionary writer and church leader in his major work the lives of the eastern saints he recorded 58 portraits of monks and nuns he had known using the literary conventions of hagiography in a strikingly personal way war bubonic plague famine collective hysteria and religious persecution were a part of daily life and the background against which asceticism developed an acute meaning for a beleaguered populace taking the work of john of ephesus as her guide harvey explores the relationship between asceticism and society in the sixth century byzantine east concerned above all with the responsibility of the ascetic to lay society john s writing narrates his experiences in the villages of the syrian orient the deserts of egypt and the imperial city of constantinople harvey s work contributes to a new understanding of the social world of the late antique byzantine east skillfully examining the character of ascetic practices the traumatic separation of monophysite churches the fluctuating roles of women in syriac christianity and the general contribution of hagiography to the study of history this title is part of uc press s voices revived program which commemorates university of california press s mission to seek out and cultivate the brightest minds and give them voice reach and impact drawing on a backlist dating to 1893 voices revived makes high quality peer reviewed scholarship accessible once again using print on demand technology this title was originally published in 1990

scholars of religion have always been fascinated by asceticism some have even regarded this radical way of life the withdrawal from the world combined with practices that seriously affect basic bodily needs up to extreme forms of self mortification as the ultimate form of a true religious quest this view is rooted in hagiographic descriptions of prominent ascetics and in other literary accounts that praise the ascetic life style scholars have often overlooked however that in the history of religions ascetic beliefs and practices have also been strongly criticized by followers of the same religious tradition as well as by outsiders the respective sources provide sufficient evidence of such critical strands but surprisingly as yet no attempt has been made to analyze this criticism of asceticism systematically this book is a first attempt of filling this gap ten studies present cases from both asian and european traditions classical and medieval hinduism early and contemporary buddhism in south and east asia european antiquity early and medieval christianity and 19th 20th century aryan religion focusing on the critics of asceticism their motives their arguments and the targets of their critique these studies provide a broad range of issues for comparison they suggest that the critique of asceticism is based on a worldview differing from and competing with the ascetic worldview often in one and the same historical context the book demonstrates that examining the critics of asceticism helps understand better the complexity of religious traditions and their cultural contexts the comparative analysis moreover shows that the criticism of asceticism reflects a religious worldview as significant and widespread in the history of religions as asceticism itself is

*the ascetic life is a dialogue between a young novice and an old monk on how to achieve the christian life the four centuries is a collection of aphorisms*

*this historic book may have numerous typos and missing text purchasers can usually download a free scanned copy of the original book without typos from the publisher not indexed not illustrated 1916 edition excerpt chapter vi philosophical asceticism in the preceding chapter it was seen how beginning in the last century before christ large numbers of people began to give themselves over to all sorts of ascetic practices from the opening of this century until the end of the pagan world such practices became ever more popular the persons who did such things however did not do them from strictly religious motives but rather from ethical ones the asceticism which has been described was a distinctly ethical asceticism two different sorts of asceticism have been found in the roman empire then one religious and largely oriental the other ethical and more distinctly greek though it too was influenced by oriental forces but there was a third sort as well which must be described before the present study will be complete in general the persons whose activities were described in the last chapter were not very philosophic persons they were not the sort who would think things through and formulate a reasoned exposition of the grounds for their conduct they were content to invoke a few general conceptions and let it go at that but at the same time there were other persons likewise interested in asceticism who were more deeply thinking these latter were profoundly influenced by the more popular asceticism which they saw about them and which was undoubtedly the determining cause of their own but owing to their character they could not rest content until they had worked out a rationale of the whole thing these more philosophic persons therefore formulated a philosophy of asceticism which stated in enduring terms the confusedly felt aspirations of the popular ascetics of their day not only do they serve to clarify this popular*

*this 2004 book is about the ascetic self in the scriptural religions of christianity buddhism and hinduism the author claims that asceticism can be understood as the internalisation of tradition the shaping of the narrative of a life in accordance with the narrative of tradition that might be seen as the performance of the memory of tradition such a performance contains an ambiguity or distance between the general intention to eradicate the will or in some sense to erase the self and the affirmation of will in ascetic performance such as weakening the body through fasting asceticism must therefore be seen in the context of ritual the book also offers a paradigm for comparative religion more generally one that avoids the inadequate choices of either examining religions through overarching categories on the one hand and the abandoning of any comparative endeavour that focuses purely on area specific study on the other*

*anthropological study of the hindu ascetics of varanasi*

*st maximus the confessor 1955 is a collection of theological works by the 1st century monk st maximus as well as interpretation by polycarp sherwood an american benedictine scholar from the 20th century including both the ascetic life and the four centuries on charity by st maximus as well as detailed research into the life and beliefs of the monk by sherwood this work includes both source material and commentary the work begins with life by sherwood a deep exploration into the life and theistic beliefs of st maximus born in 580 ce maximus enjoyed an education that prepared him for imperial service he fulfilled this goal early in his career serving as first secretary to the byzantine emperor heraclius but he soon withdrew to monastic asceticism at chrysopolis seeking a routine of solitude and thought throughout his life he traveled across the byzantine empire including present day turkey crete and parts of africa clarifying his position on important theological issues and writing his many works eventually he was drawn into one of the great christian controversies of the day the nature of christ's will maximus supported the chalcedonian interpretation which stated that christ had both a human and a divine will this was in contrast to the monothelite position accepted as canon at the time which held that christ had both a divine and human nature but only a divine will for this belief maximus was persecuted eventually his tongue was cut out and his right hand cut off so he could no longer speak or write his heresy he was then exiled to modern day georgia where he died after just a few weeks he was soon after vindicated and his position was upheld by the third council of constantinople just 18 years after his death it wasn't long before he was venerated as a saint the next section doctrine is also by sherwood and it explores st maximus' views on the nature of god as goodness itself the nature of man as a composite of body and soul and on the salvation and deification of man through the works of christ and asceticism next we reach the works of st maximus himself the first the ascetic life is a question and answer book in which a young brother asks an old wise man about the christian life and the nature of christ in the old man's simple words the purpose of the lord's becoming man was our salvation the old man answers the young brother's questions about the nature of christian love forsaking attachment to the worldly and how to devote oneself entirely to god finally the book concludes with the four centuries on charity also by st maximus this collection of aphorisms is organized into four separate centuries or collections of one hundred kept short to aid in memorization and providing subjects for prayer these sayings were presented to a father elpidius for his reading and benefit the sayings range from the simple happy is the man who is able to love all men equally to the more complex of the passions it happens that some belong to the irascible some to the concupiscible part of the soul but both are moved by means of the senses through study and prayer st maximus hoped that these aphorisms would help the reader to live a christ-like charity and grow closer to god a work for study and reflection this collection of st maximus' writings and polycarp sherwood's research and interpretation illuminates the beauty of god's love and the peace of a life of charity and forgiveness*

the call to repentance is central to the message of early christianity while this is undeniable the precise meaning of the concept of repentance for early christians has rarely been investigated to any great extent beyond studies of the rise of penitential discipline in this study the rich variety of meanings and applications of the concept of repentance are examined with a particular focus on the writings of several ascetic theologians of the fifth to seventh centuries ss mark the monk barsanuphius and john of gaza and john climacus these theologians provide some of the most sustained and detailed elaborations of the concept of repentance in late antiquity they predominantly see repentance as a positive comprehensive idea that serves to frame the whole of christian life not simply one or more of its parts while the modern dominant understanding of repentance as a moment of sorrowful regret over past misdeeds or as equivalent to penitential discipline is present to a degree such definitions by no means exhaust the concept for them the path of repentance is depicted as stretching from an initial about face completed in baptism through the living out of the baptismal gift by keeping the gospel commandments culminating in the idea of intercessory repentance for others after the likeness of christ s innocent suffering for the world while this overarching role for repentance in christian life is clearest in ascetic works these are not explored in isolation and attention is also paid to the concept of repentance in scripture the early church apocalyptic texts and canonical material this not only permits the elaboration of the views of the ascetics in their larger context but further allows for an overall re assessment of the often misunderstood if not overlooked place of repentance in early christian theology

a leading scholar of ascetical studies richard valantis explores a variety of ascetical traditions ranging from the greco roman philosophy of musonius rufus the asceticism found in the nag hammadi library and in certain gnostic texts the gospel of thomas and other early christian texts this collection gathers historical and theoretical essays that develop a theory of asceticism that informs the analysis of historical texts and opens the way for postmodern ascetical studies wide ranging in historical scope and in developing theory these essays address asceticism for scholar and student alike the theory will be of particular interest to those interested in cultural theory and analysis while the historical essays provide the researcher with easy access to a significant corpus of academic writing on asceticism

an examination of literary works spanning more than seven centuries this volume studies the ascetic hero and asceticism exploring the elusive interplay between religion politics and belles lettres in russia the first part places works including the thirteenth century kievian crypt patericon and life of avraamii smolenskii epifanii s life of sergii radonezhskii and other lives written in the north of russia in the context of crucial religious doctrines such as apocalypticism and deification the author shows how old russian literature plays a major cultural role in the continuing development of these doctrines on russian soil the second part traces a revival of the russian fascination with themes of apocalypse and perfectibility to the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries morris also documents the development of a divergence in ideological approach between russian writers who continued to view apocalypticism and deification as religious phenomena and those who used them as tools of social and political struggle works by gogol tolstoy dostoevsky chernyshevsky and gorky as well as classic novels of the socialist realist tradition are analyzed as evidence of the underlying unity of the literary manifestations of this ostensibly bifurcated intellectual tradition

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throughout the christian world women have chosen to lead disciplined lives of prayer and asceticism descriptions of early role models macrina the two palas and melanias radagunde and others by contemporaries usually men provide details of their austerities their aspirations and their relationship with the church and the world not least with male authority figures

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