

## East Meets West: Consumerism and Asceticism

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- I. Preparation for a joyful life.
  - a. Christian asceticism liberates me for joy in two ways:
    - i. Provides an anthropological sound foundation to understand human life
    - ii. Provides a constellation of practical directives for human flourishing & Christian holiness
- II. Consumption & culture
  - a. Consumption and culture shape each other
- III. Human beings were created hungry.
  - a. We are by *nature* consumers
  - b. As part of our “original hunger” we engage and shape the creation
  - c. Communion with God and creation is the source of our self-understanding
  - d. Taken as a whole, eating, working, marriage and family manifest our...
    - i. absolute (ontological) dependency on God
    - ii. relative (empirical) dependency on the world of persons, events and things
    - iii. aspiration (desire) for a way of life that transcends the merely physical and functional dimensions
    - iv. enduring (even if at time, hidden) desire for God.
- IV. The spirituality of consumption
  - a. Extremes to avoid
    - i. Prodigal consumption
    - ii. Parsimonious abstinence
  - b. Ascetical consumption & the love of neighbor
  - c. A Practical Example: The Nuns of Holy Trinity Orthodox Monastery
- V. Asceticism & our economic life
  - a. Asceticism is the Christian “Third Way”
  - b. The Passions
  - c. Asceticism & communion with the Holy Trinity
  - d. Asceticism and our likeness of Christ
  - e. “From glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18)
  - f. A rhythm of personal renunciation and development
  - g. Spiritual disciplines
    - i. Prayer
    - ii. Fasting
    - iii. Almsgiving
    - iv. Manual labor
  - h. Monastic vows & economic virtues
    - i. Poverty (simplicity)
    - ii. Chastity (respect)
    - iii. Obedience (prayerful living)

iv. Stability (vocational fidelity)

VI. Conclusion

- a. Consumption & culture shape each other
- b. We are by *nature* consumers
- c. Consumerism reflects the spiritual vacuum created by the Fall
- d. Asceticism is the Christian “Third Way”
- e. No asceticism, no freedom, so no free market

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