

Abstract

This thesis aimed to present the concept of asceticism in the life and work of Simone Weil and Mother Marie Skobtsova. Therefore, I have devoted the first two chapters to the life of each of them and, in turn, to present their ascetic journeys in the context of their lives. In the third chapter, I compared in what ways their paths are similar and in what ways they differ. I also addressed the limits of both spiritual paths and, at the end of the thesis, how their ascetic journeys may be relevant and inspiring today.

Both women based their ascetic approach on their relationship with God, however differently they conceived of their theological backgrounds. It was this relationship that was the defining starting point and goal for both of them. For both of them, their attitude to life, and thus their ascetic approach, was to a large extent conditioned by their encounters with suffering, whether in the form of Simone Weil's persistent and unrelenting headaches or the loss of loved ones in the case of Mother Maria Skobtsova. Despite, or because of their suffering, they were both open to the suffering of others and ready to give of themselves for them in the way that was most needed amid war. This is not a question of first-rate martyrdom but of a radical refusal to compromise any political and economic power and a constant striving for the triumph of life over death, slavery, violence and destruction.

Even today, their courage to cross their borders and be open to what we can find beyond them remains inspiring and worthy of emulation. This applies both to the determination to offer help to those who are currently in need and to be welcoming of other religious backgrounds from which they may come. The case of Maria Skobtsova shows that a person does not need to get rid of one's denominational milieu, on contrary the stable background of one's original tradition may be the source of strength and determination to set off to those, who are in need, whatever their confession may be. Simone Weil may serve as an inspiration in her open and intellectually active approach to other religious traditions, and shows, that their difference is often only putative and is based more on different terminology and colourfulness of their rites than on their proclaimed essence to which they aim. Both women show through their lives and unselfish self-sacrifice, that we can find many more connecting links, than differences that we are attached to.