PSYCHOLOGY AND THE SPIRITUAL FATHER

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INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with the relationship between a father and his son — a special father and a special son, a spiritual father, or staretz, and his spiritual son. This relationship has formed the basis for monasticism in the Eastern Churches for many centuries. Examining the precise nature of this relationship and its validity as judged by the findings of modern psychology will be the purpose of this paper.

As we begin our discussion of this special relationship, it will be well to keep in mind several interesting questions. Is it possible that the staretz of old, acting solely out of his religious convictions and personal experiences, was in fact using many of the psychological principles which it has taken so many centuries to systematize into a science? Is it possible that these simple peasants of old were able to look into the very depths of another man, thereby helping him in achieving maturity and perspective in his adult life? Does this type of relationship, intimately concerned as it is with the ultimate realities of life and the relationship of a human being with his God, relate in fact to good psychology?

Today it is stylish to look ever ahead. Much has been, and is being written about the new horizons which lie ahead to be conquered and appreciated. Perhaps it is time, then,

to look back at the sunsets of past centuries to attempt to re-discover the last rays of light shining forth from them, in the hope that these rays will illumine for us the horizons we all seek to reach. These past ages will speak out to us with a precision, often clouded and foggy, seemingly shaken by waves of new and radical thought, yet presenting some eternal ideas about this age and this generation.

Our discussion will be concerned essentially with a Father, One who started everything; a second who brought forth a particular life in the form of a man; finally, a third, who perfects the son to enable him to return to his ultimate Father in a dynamic cycle of silent splendor. Closely allied with this, we shall see a creature reaching out of himself and touching, in a very human way, the very depths of divinity.

The point of this study is not to delve deeply into any particular point of this complex institution, but rather to give a global view and, from this, try to abstract some of the more significant features of the Spiritual Fatherhood.

I do not expect the reader to be immediately thrilled by the concepts which engendered this institution, for they are undeniably contrary to many of the notions and life-patterns of twentieth-century man. I do hope, however to show that these principles are psychologically sound and, if followed, would benefit man even in this action-oriented world.

Our method of investigation is quite basic. Original texts by the Latin and Greek monastic Fathers were examined to abstract key-concepts relating to this Spiritual Father—son relationship. These concepts were, in turn, further examined to determine their psychological validity. Having done this, we conclude with some remarks relating this concept to the modern situation and showing its relevance and, indeed, necessity for modern man.

CHAPTER I

FATHERHOOD

THEOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW

The word "father" has intrigued mankind for many centuries. For our purpose let us look at the early usage of it. Looking back we find that the Aramaic text takes two forms: first with the pronominal suffix of the first person singular 'my father' (Dan. 5:13) and the second with that of the first person plural 'our father.' The word can also be used as a title and a proper name. For instance, some scholars would say that Abba is a contraction of Abraham; since the Rabbis did not use Abraham's or Moses' name out of reverence.[1]

The Aramaic form אַבָּא was almost never used in relationship to God in the Old Testament. However, in the New, we find Jesus using this form in reference to God. Jesus probably used this form in all cases and also in reference to

[1] Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (1964), 1, 5.

God where the New Testament authors have him saying: "Yes, Father, for such was your good pleasure." (Mt. 11:26), "And he said to them, 'When you pray, say; Father, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come!'" (Lk. 11:2),"and Jesus, raising his eyes, said, 'Father, I give you thanks that you have heard me.'" (Jn. 11:41) In doing this, Jesus used an everyday word that was very common and applied it to God. He was unlike his contemporaries who would not even mention the name of Jehovah; his usage must have sounded disrespectful to them.

By Christ's choice of the term, he added something new tothe Jewish concept of relationship and established a new intimacy between God and his people.[2] Saint Paul also used the same word in his epistles. "Now you have not received a spirit of bondage so as to be again in fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons, by virtue of which we cry, 'Abba! Father!'" (R. 8:15) or again "Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 1:2) By this usage, the new link was strengthened between the relationship of man to God.

Looking at the concept more clearly we soon realize that rather than demeaning God by the use of the term, Jesus raised man and added to this term a new spiritual dimension.

> He is a father-a Mussulman of the eleventh century said: the title of father is with them the greatest honor that we are able to

[2]Theological Dictionary, 1, 6.

> discern in the teaching, in effect the principles of this religion rest on it.[3]

This is indeed the greatest honor that Christians could bestow. Throughout all the ages the title is used, however, familarity deadened the clearness of the title and it soon began to lose its value. It became very common, superficial and was given to anyone.[4]

Today we use the word "father" very frequently and yet do not imply either physical or spiritual fatherhood to the person bearing the title. K. I. Logobetes tells us that this abuse of the title has increased the process of making the word "father" become more external and banal.[5] This title should hold for us much of a mystical reality which can be lost outside of Christianity and within a wrong usage of the word.

But where does this new meaning of the word come from? Did it really start with Christ? R. Reitenstein has his opinion basing it on pagan sources.[6] And Heussi feels it comes from the Acts and teachings of the Apostles.[7] It is probably in between; from the fact that the word as we have seen was used in common parlance and then applied by Christ

[3]Irenee Hausherr, Direction Spirituelle en Orient Autrefois (Rome, 1955), 17.

[4]Ibid,, 19.

[5]K. I. Logobetes, La Philosophie des Peres et du moyan-age (Athens, 1930); cf. Hausherr, op. cit., 18.

[6]Historia Monachorum, 210, note I.,cf. Hausherr, op.cit.

[7]K. Heussi, Der Ursprun des Monchtums,(1963), 166.

to God, it received a new and deeper meaning and this meaning was increased and enriched by yhe Apostles and the early Christians.

However, even in Christ's lifetime a strange phenomenon happened. After taking this word from the common parlance of man, Jesus, said: "And call no one on earth your father, for one is your father, who is in heaven." (Mt. 23:9) Why the change or was there one? We know that the Christians did not stop using the title but that it became more common. Should we imply that these men were not following the command of their Master? On the contrary, for A. Von. der Born[8] tells us that Christ was condemning the spirit of adulation and complacency with which the great Rabbis of his day were addressed as Father. Here again we find man being pulled into the goodness and, in a sense, a participation in the divinity of God in the use of the term: a natural phenomenon becomes the bearer of divine grace. Evagrius of Pontis says "since you are fathers imitate the Father, the Christ."[9]

Kittle finds the word Abbas as an allusion to the term being used liturgically by the early christian communities. However, even he suggests that this new usage of the term adds a new dimension.[10] Although, in apostolic times the

[8]Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Bible (1963), 759.

[9]Evagrius of Pontis, Letter 61.

[10]Le Theologisches Worterbuch, s.v., Abbas.

title ismostly used as regards the unique father; Jesus Christ. For a longer explanation see Direction Spirituelle en Orient Autrefois by Irenee Hausherr, chapter two.

Next we find all of a sudden in the Apophthegmata Patrum the flourishing of this concept of spiritual paternity. Starting at the beginning, let us find how Saint Anthony and the first monks used the term.

> One day the Father Anthony received a letter from the Emperor Constantine, inviting him to come to Constantinople, and he asked himself what he should do? He said to his disciple Paul: 'Should I go?' "If you go, they will call you Anthony, if you don't they will call you Abbe Anthony.'[11]

So we see in these texts that the title abbas is a title of honor given spontaneously to a monk or a man of the church by those who recognize in him the special marks of sanctity.

In the fifth century Pope Gelase used and applied the term Abbas to hermits without any hesitation.[12] However, Saint Jerome does question the practice.[13] Saint Basil says "even as God who is and wished to be called Father of all, demands of his servants a very exact docility, so too among the Spiritual Fathers.[14]

[11]Alph. Antoine, n. 31., cf., ACW no. 10, Life of Anthony.

[12]Gratiani Decret. dist. 15, cap. Sancta Romana Ecc.

[13]In Epist. ad Galatas 2, PL 26, 374 B.

[14]Constitutiones Monasticae XIX, PG 31, 1388 B.

Through the centuries we find the new meaning that this word inspired in those early times. For example, in the tenth century the mother of Arsene presented herself to see him at the Monastery of Saint Mammas. Here was the answer she received from her son:

> I am now dead to the world-how could I go back -How could I see again the one who gave me birth. I have a father according the spirit, I receive from him every day the milk of divine grace. I want to call him my father in God. He is also my mother, as he has engendered me in the spirit and held me as a new-born baby.[15]

Thus for Arsene the word "father" held much more than a mere title of honor.

[15] Vie de Symeon le Nouveau Theologien, OC 12, (Roma, 1928), 61.

PSYCHOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

Although most psychologists and those in the mental health professions attest to the importance of the father, there is very little that is written in essay concerning this formation aspect of the personality, notwithstanding the research papers presented in this field: (Koch, 1956; Becker, Peterson, Hellmer, Shoemaker, Quay, 1959; Lynn and Sawrey, 1959; Stolz, 1954).[16] One must search diligently throughout many of the authors and usually find some references to the father when they treat of the Oedipus complex.

Today it would seem that there is more importance attached not to the over-dominating mother as to the absent father figure in the development of the children, especially boys.[17] In a sense what is needed is a complimentary process of development; and the identification which the boy should make with the father needs time and consistency to develop.

Let us observe some of the ideas of psychology concerning the parents and their place in the development of the children.

[16]Most of these studies show the importance of the father, Koch showed that time was not the essential condition and Becker showed in maladujusted children, the role of the father was more important than the mother; Stolz studied the difficulties with the children of fathers involved in war-situations.

[17]Irwin G. Sarason, Personality: An Objective Approach (New York, 1966). 406.

> The danger greatest in the case of strong willed assertive and energetic parents may easily cripple all initiative. In parents who themselves are weak and there is naturally less likelihood of this occuring.[18]

However, it would seem that this is not the complete truth, since ambivalence in the parent-situation would seem to be worse and cause more damage. We should also be aware that the parents must be able to make a corresponding readjustment to their own emotions and tendencies when they begin to release their children. Although the formation of the individual in his early periods of development are very important, also the releasing and allowing them to find their own way in the world in a mature and independent fashion is an area of great anxiety and pressure for both the children and the parents. Tremendous emotional difficulties in latter life are concerned with this very problem of dependency; in which area the Spiritual Father will have to be extremely cautious as we shall see in the future. For as Flugel tells us:

> All that we have said with regard to the weaning of the child from the love relationship that binds him to the family applies with but little alteration to the dependence relationships. During his earliest years the child is necessarily dependent on his parents both for his actual means of his subsistence and for guidance and protection. As he grows up, however, the dependence on his family, should gradually diminish, so that at maturity he should be able to and in most

[18]J. C. Flugel, The Psycho-analytic Study of the Family (London, 1921), 233.

> respects face the world as an independent individual.[19]

It is precisely this independent activity which is necessary for the individual if he is to mature as a person. One must remember that we all tend to slip back into dependent relationships and should try to be aware of this. As someone defined Americans, differentiating them from other peoples: "Americans want to return to the womb, however, with a picture window."

Anna Freud tells us:

> Infants, at the beginning of life, choose their objects on the basis of function, not of sex. The mother is catherted with libido because she is the caretaking, need, fulfilling provider, the father as a symbol of power, protectiveness, ownership of the mother, etc. A 'mother relationship' is often made to the male parent in cases where he takes over the need-fulfilling role or a 'father relationship' to the female parent in cases where she is the dominant power in the family. In this manner, the normal infant, whether male or female figures, has attachments to both, male and female. Although in the strict sense of the term the infant is neither heterosexual nor homosexual, he can also be described as being, both.[20]

She goes on to tell us that this concept of the functions influencing a person is carried out in analytic treatment, where the sex of the therapist is often no barrier to the mother or father relationships which are often transfered

[19] Ibid., 230.

[20] Anna Freud, Normality and Pathology in Childhood (New York), 186.

to the therapist.

This is not to deny that individuals, at a young age, have sexual feelings towards their parents. These feelings, however, do not dominate the whole developmental process.

Who of us has not seen where the mother plays the father role and vice versa in a family relationship. Perhaps from the sense of function the danger is not too great to the individual, human development is never that simple; there is an admixture of many forces and these may tend to become distorted in a situation in the father plays only the mothers role and not his own. Without a doubt, there are situations where both roles have been performed by one parent due to the death of one partner or the other.

The necessity for consistency in the relationship with the children on the part of the parents cannot be overstressed. However, even more important, is the lack of ambivalence in the attitudes, emotions and activities toward the child by the parents. Non-ambivalence meaning that one doesn't love the child one day and hate him the next for the same reason. Such action confuses the child and can give him the impression that he is not loved for himself but rather for what he does or accomplishes. The result of such experience could be a rather insecure, suspicious, mistrusting individual who would not function well and effectively in the adult world. Anna Freud's book, Normality and Pathology in Childhood, is a help for a clearer understanding of the world and development of a child.

What then can be some practical conclusions about the part the father plays in the development of the child, and, in particular,the boy?

One of the chief causes of psychological disturbances in people is the lack of security in the individual, the lack of being a whole, a functioning person, an identity. This can be traced back to the first years of childhood during which time,for what ever reason,the child never felt secure. The father is the one to give the sense of security to the family, consciously and unconsciously. His very presence within the home and his lack of absence for long periods of time convey an impression of strenght. It comes not only directly through himself but also indirectly through the other members of the family; the wife and other children. I don't mean to imply that identity is based primarily on security, for we understand that it is a complex process.

From the crib the child jumps with his identity to the process of identification. Here is where the father plays a more active, direct role. The little boy needs his father and whatever that image contains, in order to set his own pattern and system of acting. The great danger in many families is that the father leaves all the training of the children to the wife because he is the one who brings home the paycheck. However such a father forgets that part of the paycheck in a family with children is a vital interest and concern with their lives in all areas of growth. However, far worse is the father(and mother) who is ambivalent.

Now, we must spring from the material father to the Spiritual Father and presume that within his domain are many of the duties previously held by the material father. For in a sense, the material father has given the boy physical life and the spiritual father will give the life of the spirit; this takes a real father in both realms.

CHAPTER II

SPIRITUALITY

EARLY APPRECIATION

Certainly the concept of the spiritual-pneumatikos-has a varied history, but we are most interested in the application which results in the Spiritual Father. Let us look at (Mt. 10:20) "It is not you who speaks, but the spirit of your father who speaks in you." This is the continual knowledge or background against which the disciple asks the father: "Tell me a word for my salvation" or again "What must I do to be saved?" Also included in this expectation is the advice of Christ "Who is listening to you is listening to me!" (Luc 10:16) But we must remember that the apostles were concerned chiefly about the salvation and holiness of the community as a whole. All the letters were usually addressed to the community as a whole; Romans, Ephesus, Ephesians.

Irenias defines man as: "animae et carnis adunatio assumens Spiritum Dei, spiritualem hominem perficit."[21]

[21] Adv. Haer. V,8.2, PG 7.1142; cf. ANF, I, 315.

It would seem that the Saint further clarifies his notion of man as regarding the influence of spiritual things:

> Praecipuum dilectionis munus, quod est pretiosius quam agnitio, gloriosius autem quam prophetia, omnibus autem reliquis charismatibus supereminens.[22]

Of course, we come to the concept of martyrdom being the summit of charity. Thus certainly the first step to spirituality is charity which is and joins one to God.

CHARISM

There are also the charism of which St. Paul speaks:

> Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit, and there are varieties of ministries, but the same Lord. And there are varieties of working, but the same God, who works all things in all. Now the manifestation of the Spirit is given to everyone for profit. To one through the spirit is given the utterance of wisdom, . . . But all these things are the work of one and the same spirit, who allots to everyone according as he wills.[23]

Thus the charisms were for Paul a living reality of the work of the Spirit among the people of God. Rahner tells us concerning their meaning and use in the time of Paul:

> From the Gr. χάρισμα, gratuitous gift; in the NT it has the meaning of unmerited salvation in general. In the plural in the NT and in modern theological usage it refers to those operations of the Spirit of God upon the individual believers which can never be wrung from God by man, nor foreseen by the official organs of the church, nor effected by the sacraments, and yet are always and everywhere to be expected,

[22] Ibid., IV, 53,2.

[23] Corinthians, 12: 4-11.

> because like office and the sacraments, they belong to the nature of the church. . . . The forms taken by charismata . . . cannot be foreseen, precisely because they belong by their nature to the saving history of the Church; and therefore they must be constantly rediscovered and accepted.[24]

As we will see, the spiritual father was one like Anthony of the Desert, a man who had learned the secrets of being close to God and, through this experience and his own charismatic gifts, was able to detect and dispel the illusions and false ideas which would trouble a young man entering the monastic life. And it was only after the strict direction of the Spiritual Father, that a man could attain the full maturity and perfection which is in the monastic life. The charismatic person was the father of the monk and "the spiritual father exercised a genuine "paternity" in the name of God engendering the life of the spirit in the disciple."[25]

Thus we see that the charismatic gifts which surely distinguished the spiritual father are found in the early and first centuries of Christinity. We see that the church is not only hierarchical, but it is also charismatic and, in a sense, Pentecostal. The Holy Spirit is not limited to only certain of God's people. There is a special ordained ministry of bishops, priests, and deacons; yet, at the same time, all of the people of God are prophets and priests. As

[24] Karl Rahner, Theological Dictionary (New York, 1965), 72; cf. idem, The Dynamic Element in the Church.

[25] Louis Merton, "The spiritual Father in the Desert Tradition," Monastic Studies, V (Easter, 1968), 89.

we all know in the apostolic church there were other charisms besides the institutional ministry conferred by the laying on of hands. However, in the church of later days, these charismatic ministries have been less in evidence but never wholly extinguished. In fact this very paper is concerned with one of the vehichles which has transported and kept alive the charismatic aspects of the church: the spiritual father.

It is Smirnoff who shows how these charismatic revelations are repeated among ancient monasticism and that the elders carried this charism; namely the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that these charisms are given directly from God to the elder to use at his own discretion.[26] Timothy Ware, commenting on this, says:

> This 'spiritual', non-institutional aspect of the church's life has been particularly emphasized by certain recent theologians in the Russian emigration; but it is also stressed by Byzantine writers, most notably Simeon the New Theologian. More than once in Orthodox history, the 'charismatics' have come into conflict with the hierarchy, but in the end there is no contradiction between the two elements in the Church's life; it is the same Spirit who is active in both.[27]

or again:

> The elder is a monk of spiritual discernment and wisdom, who others--either monks or people in the world--adopt as

[26] Smirnoff, "Ispovist i pokania v drevi monastrirax Bostoka," Boh, Vesti, april, 755-763.

[27] Timothy Ware, The Orthodox Church (Baltimore-Maryland, 1963), 253.

> their guide and spiritual director. He is sometimes a priest, but often a lay-monk; he receives no special ordination or appointment to the work of eldership, but is guided to it by the direct inspiration of the Spirit. The elder sees in a concrete and practical way what the will of God is in relation to each person who come to consult him: this is the elder's special gift or charism. The earliest and most celebrated of the monastic startsi was Saint Anthony himself. The first part of his life, from eighteen to fifty-five, he spent in withdrawal and solitude; then though still living in the desert, he abandoned this life of strict enclosure, and began to receive visitors. A group of disciples gathered round him, and besides these disciples there was a far circle of people who came, often from a long distance, to ask his advice; so great was the steam of visitors that, as Anthony's biographer Athanasius put it, he became a physician to all Egypt. Anthony has had many successors, and in most of them the same outward pattern of events is found, a withdrawal in order to return. A monk must first withdraw, and in silence must learn the truth about himself and God. Then, after this long and rigorous preparation in solitude, having gained the gifts of discernment which are required of an elder, he can open the door of his cell and admit the world from which formerly he fled.[28]

Perhaps a few distinctions are needed at this point. Paul tells us: "If I should speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have charity, I have become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal." (1Cor. 13:1) And it would seem that when we look at all the works of the fathers much fuss is made of the accidental matters. But Reitzenstein tells us that the "the psychic is man, nor more, the pneumatique

[28]Ibid., 47, The Orthodox Church.

is no longer man."[29] Psychic is understood as a man who abandoned things to human reason and did not recognize the influence of the spirit. I would understand by this that the man who is operating only on the psychic level is not a whole man. Since, in my understanding of man, the spiritual is indeed essential, and without it one is operating poorly. That is, he is without the spirit. As the Abbe Longin says; "Give your blood and receive the spirit."[30] And again as Evagre of Pontis says:

> The faith, children is solid by the fear of God, that one through continence, that one is given unshakable, by hope and support and from these comes the . . . charity is the door of the physical grace and from there, theology and supreme beatitude.[31]

Let us look into our own times and hear what the Staretz Makar has to say to a disciple.

> You are asking your mother to furnish everything for you in the simplest way possible. But according to the Holy Fathers we ought not to kill our bodies but our passions, I warn you again of this danger: do not take it into your head to become holy all of a sudden. Be careful. You have asked questions about prayer. When we pray we ought to have great humility, and this serves to break down our willfulness and the exaggerated opinion we have of ourselves. Take care not to wish to pray only in spirit, you are not yet capable of this. You will fall at once, into illusion. Pray simply. He who bestows the gift of prayer in the spirit, but only if you become truly humble and consider your

[29]R. Reitzenstein, Die Hell. Mysterien-Religionem, 3ed. 1927), 341.

[30]Apophthegmata, PG, Longin, n. 5.

[31]Evagre, Lettre a Anatolios, PG 40, 1221 b.c.

sin.[32]

Then again Paissy Velichkovsky describes a staretz:

> Teach them the way of salvation by giving them-with God's help-an example of good works, by the careful observation of the commandments of the Gospel, by love for God and your neighbor, by kindness and humility, by the deep peace of Christ expressed in your dealings with others, by a truly maternal pity, by patience and long-suffering, by prayers accompaned by tears, consoling them and encouraging them to do better. Support all their burdens and frailities with God's love, be on fire with God's love for them, teach them diligently to obey God in all things, to restrain or rather mortify their own will. As for yourself, you ought always in the secrecy of your heart and soul regard yourself as dust before God, as the greatest sinner among men.[33]

Thus we can see that the concept of the spiritual (pneumatikos) becomes incarnate, so to speak, in a man; he is filled and led by the Spirit, and through this dynamism he is able to lead other men to the same spirit which is God. This pneumatic-man is guided by the Holy Spirit, he has totally surrendered himself to God and is guided by love and not merely by external or logical norms. Merton tells what the pneumatic-man is not:

> psychikos . . . is the well-meaning but literal-minded monk who seeks to gain

[32]Makar, Twenty-three letters from Staretz Makar of Optino to MMe. S.I.N. (Moscow:1908), cf. Arseniev, Russian Piety (London:1964) 123.

[33]Unpublished letters of Paissy Velichkovsky by Archpr Chetverikov in Paissy Velichkovsky, (Reval:1938) 49-50.

> much merit by his good works, and estimates everything by the yardstick of human respect . . . He is unable to give genuine spiritual guidance, for all he knows about are the externals of asceticism and cult, which are good in themselves, but which he does not know how to relate to their true end . . . He cannot liberate minds and hearts, he cannot open them to the secret action of the Spirit. He trust entirely in an external and legalistic knowledge of mere rudiments and does not "give life" or open the way to genuine development.[34]

[34]Merton, op.cit., 109.

CHAPTER III

SPIRITUAL FATHER

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

If one is now able to put both of these concepts, father and spirituality, together into one person, we come to the institution commonly called the Spiritual Father, Gerontes, or Staretz. This word has been used by many persons from the authors of ancient manuscripts to the famous Dostoevsky and his Father Zossima of Brothers Karamazov. However, it is difficult to find a clear, concise and chronological history of the institution, despite the fact that it is a jewel of the Eastern Churches and in particular of the monastic tradition.

To be sure, it began with Christ himself who was the first Spiritual Father to all of us. He constantly taught us by word and example how we should live, and gave us the beatitudes and teachings to lead us in our lives. However, as we all know, Christ would leave his flock to be cared for by the Apostles and their successors. This spiritual patrimony thus was passed down through them. So, in a general sense, all the successors to the Apostles have the vocation

to be Spiritual Fathers by Christ's command: "Feed my sheep." (Mt. 21:17)

In time there developed among the early Christians the desire to live more in consonancewith the teachings of Christ. They fled from the crowded cities into the solitude of the desert and became the first monks. In a sense, this phenomenon occured simultaneously with the progress of Christianity, rather than as some people believe that monasticism began after the persecutions ended. However, this seems to be a point of controversy among many of the writers on the origins of monasticism.[35] Much of the essence of the Monastic life was being lived among the earliest Christian communities.[36]

One of the more interesting points connected to this is whether the monk is different than the ordinary Christian. Somehow through the ages this has become the impression; inchecking the scholars we find that it is probably not so.[37] We find in both Paul and the Gospels something to say on this topic: "Pray without ceasing."(I Thess. 5:17) and "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole soul and with your whole strength, and with your whole mind; and your neighbor as yourself." (Luc. 10:27) Or again what would be the meaning of the Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas? "Blessed are the μοναχοί and the elect, for you

[35]A. J. Philippou, The Orthodox Faith(Oxford, 1964),249.

[36]Ernst Benz, The Eastern Orthodox Church(Chicago,63),85ff.

[37]Irenee Hausherr, "Spiritualite monachale et unite Chretienne," OCA, 153, cf. 15-32.

are born of it and you will again return to it."(log.49) "There are many who stand near the door, but it is the μονοχοί who will enter the wedding chamber." (log. 75)[38] Saint Gregory of Nyssa tells us that "de perfectione et qualem oportet esse Christianum."[39] It is not manastic profession as such; it is Christianity itself which imposes the tendency to perfection, the ascetics-who are called monks among others are simple Christians who have seen their vocation and take all the means necessary to find it. Then we have the words of Irenee Hausherr:

> The monks wish to be simply perfect Christians, it is in virtue of their baptism that they feel called to perfection.[40]

Among the early writings of Origin and Clement of Alexandria we find many of the beginnings of a theology of asceticism which would later be a basis for the formation of the monastic life. Clement tells us concerning virginity:

> One is not really shown to be a man in the choice of single life, but he surpasses them, who disciplined by marriage, procreation of children, and care for the house has been inseparable from God's love and withstood all temptation arising from children and wife and domestics and possessions. But he that has no family is in a great degree free of temptations.[41]

[38]Bertil Gartner, The Theology of the Gospel according to Thomas (New York, 1961), cf. log. 49.

[39]Gregory of Nyssa, PG 46, 251.

[40]Hausherr, "Spiritualite Monacale," p. 27.

[41]Stromata, 12,(ANF, II;543).

> We praise virginity and those to whom God has given this.[42]

Others may argue that Origin encouraged the notion that monastic life is the replacement for the old martyrdom; he believed that during the time of peace, Satan is happy since the church is robbed of her martyrs.[43]

However, we would prefer to say that monasticism is a charismatic ministry of the eschaton[44] and that the monk's vocation does not isolate him from the world of other Christians. In a sense, when a monk leaves the world, it is not to curse it but to bless it from afar by his life of prayer and penance. The life of Anthony of the Desert is a constant example of the notion of 'a withdrawal in order to return." In a sense, the life of the monk is a hidden one in which the interior life has excellence. To study this is impossible since it is like looking into a mirror and to remain incapable of an interior communion with their experiences. Father Tcheoklitos puts this into better sense:

> Monasticism is revealed as the most authentic form of the spirit of the church. It fulfills the most profound desires of the Christian soul; from penitence to love, from domination of the passions to life

[42] Stromata, (ANF, II:550).

[43] Andre Louf, The Message of Monastic Spirituality (New York, 1964), 14.

[44] Ibid., 15.

> in Christ, from the healing of the wounded soul to the illumination of the Holy Spirit, from purification to perfection, from nostalgia to departing from the celestial world to mystical union with Christ.[45]

These men, some of the first Christians, were the first Spiritual Fathers in the monastic tradition, first of all to themselves because of necessity and then later to the people who followed them as disciples. One of the earliest accounts that we have is Athanasius' Life of Saint Anthony of the Desert. It seems that by the author's time, monasticism was quite common. Anthony was a monk, at least one of the first of whom we hear about in the monastic tradition and indeed some of his ideas would seem to be the basis for the Spiritual Father. One day he addressed the monks:

> The scriptures are really sufficient for our instruction. Yet it is well for us to encourage each other in the faith and to employ words to stimulate ourselves. Be you, therefore, children, and bring to your father what you know and tell it while, I being your senior share with you my knowledge and my experience.[46]

Here was the first outline for the Spiritual Father, he was to encourage them in the faith and they were to bring to him what they knew and felt in their lives. Thus in embryo form we see the concept of the Spiritual Father being

[45]Theoklitos of Dionysiou, "Monastic life and Spirituality," Gregorios ho Palamas, XLIII (Salonika, 1960), 19-30.

[46]Athanasius, Life of Saint Anthony, ACW, n. 10 , trans. Robert Mayer, (Westminster, 1950).

a man who knew something about the holy scripture and who needed experience to help those who were younger than he. It seems therefore that the head of the monastery was responsible for the Spiritual guidance of the members.

Before we can talk about the Spiritual Father any further let us look at the concept and meaning of the word "monk." In the Syrian term for monk-yehidim- we find that the word can have two meanings: men who were solitaries and abandoned, or simple men with unified hearts. The first could contain the notion of the anawim, the remnant of Israel who were praised in the Beatitudes; and the second, a unity which we find in Psuedo-Dionysius'words: "the term monk comes from their lives undivided and one, which unified them in a re-collection excluding any multiplicity, in order to lead them to the deiform monad and the perfection of divine love."[46]

Others would translate the Syrian word as"the only-begotten son."[47] The understanding of the word as simply a hermit or solitary does not seem to be the meaning of the word monachos in Greek.[48] This word can also mean one who has reduced his life to a unity; or from another root this could signify uncommon or little, reminding us that the life

[46]Psuedo-Dionysius, cf. Louf, op. cit., 41.

[47]Benz, op. cit., 86. "The Syrian word lifewise means 'the only-begotten. The Messianic title of Christ as the only begotten Son,(J.1:14) was thus carried over to the perfect Christians, the monk. He was the image of Jesus Christ and, being so, was exalted to the rank of an only-begotten son of God."

[48]Cf. Ibid., 86; Louf, op. cit., 42.

of the monk is also one which includes much childlikeness. Finally, looking at the word from the Slavonic root,[49] we find the concept of the monk being "another;" that is, his life ought to differ from that of other men.

Trying to understand the reality, it would seem that the monk is a combination of all the definitions just stated. The monk is, in a sense, a monad; a unity unto himself, who whether living alone or in a community can be self-sufficient and lead a life which would exemplify the eschaton which we all await. The monk is a man who has ordered his life into a unity which can be visibly seen by those around him and through which he can go to God and bring back to other men the grace of his own experiences.

Now let us look at the definition of the Spiritual Father found in the Russian Fontes.

> Startsy(staritsy) sunt monachi(moniales) invita spirituali progressi, cersate in Sacra Scriptura, in operibus et regulis SS. Patrum, apti ad directionem in vita spirituali suscipiendam quibus committitur aedificationem monachorum.[50]

Here is echoed Anthony's discourse: the sacred scripture, faith and experience.

Thus, the first Spiritual Fathers were monks who by long experience in the desert and much solitude learned the secrets of the life and spirit of men. A great part of the

[49]Slavonic root is ИНОЙ-ИНОК which means other, another.

[50]Textus Selecti Iuris Ecclesiastici Russorum, Fonti Serie II, Fascicolo VII. (Roma:1943), 149.

Spiritual Father was the charismatic gifts as we have already seen.

Slowly this concept of the Spiritual Father spread throughout the East and wherever the Eastern Churches flourished.[52] However, there seem to be some discrepencies about the area of Russia.[53] Konshevich tells us that:

> At the christianization of Russia, the clergy coming there from Greece and Bulgaria carried with them a prepared discipline of penance and the institutions of the spiritual life which they had received from their own countries from the times leading back to the ecumenical councils.[54]

however:

> This discipline (spiritual fatherhood) remained almost untouched up until the 18th Century with the exception of Nil Sorsky.[55]

It is then under the imfluence of Paissy Velichkovsky[56] that a breath of new spirit was felt in Russian monasticism and the spiritual arrival of the Staretz and the understanding of it in the Nilus tradition.[57]

[52] cf., op. cit., OCA, 153.

[53] R. P. Casey, "Early Russian Monasticism," OCP, XIX (Roma, 1953), 372-423.

[54] I. M. Konshevich, Stazania Ducha Svataho (Paris, 1952), 39.

[55] Ibid., 39.

[56] Cf. Kologrivof, Op. cit., 378; I Razac, De Monachisme (Roma, 1952), 25; Konshevichm op. cit., 39.

[57] Ibid., 39.

> Le starchestbo en tant que fait spirituel existant dans les monasteres russes bein avant le XIXeme siecle, comme l'one prouve saint serge, saint cyrille, le grand staretz nil sorskij, saint tikhon de zadonsk et d'autres. Comme ecole reposane sure le fondement solide de l'enseigement patristique et ascetique de l'antiquite, ayant ses reglements, ses methodes et ses traditions, le startchestvo russe doit son origine au staretz Paissij Velitchovski (1722-1794). C'est lui le primier qui, apres des siecles, a l'exemple de saint nil, a rappele aux moines le but de leur view spirituelle.[58]

The most famous of the monasteries of Russia was that of Optima and it was there that the doctrine flourished and spread throughout the rest of the country. In general I have tried to give a brief history of the Spiritual Father and its spread throughout the world.

[58]Kologrivof, op. cit., 380.

CHAPTER IV

NEW LIFE

SILENCE AND SOLITUDE

> The sayings of these fathers show us in simple and often naive terms, the archetypal life-giving charismata of these quiet and humble, often very humorous, always human figures. To such experience and spiritually gifted elders even though they might not be priests, the young would spontaneously direct themselves with their questions, asking for those words of salvation, that would awaken new life and growth in their hearts.[59]

They would present themselves to the Spiritual Fathers in the sense of the new baptism which they had just received in the tonsure from the superior. They were indeed born again and now they needed a new father to lead them along the spiritual path. "Reverend Father, give me a word for my salvation." In a sense the monk is asking for direction in order to find his salvation, his place in the economy of grace in this world. Wasn't this the answer which Pachomius received when he asked the question? "It is the will of God that you serve the human race, in order to reconcile it with him."[60] Thus Pachomius' with-

[59]Merton, op. cit., 89.

[60]L. T. Lefort, Les Vies Coptes de St Pachome (Louvain, 1943), 60-61.

drawal was necessary in order to return and help the human race.

As we know one of the objectives which the monk seeks is quies: that quietude of soul and the feeling of peace with God and man. Thus in order to achieve this, whether for the hermit or the cenobite, retirement into solitude is of no use if they maintain and occupy themselves with aggressive and hostile fantasies. Perhaps this is the reason why Abba Bessarion gave this advice to a novice: "Keep silence and consider thyself to be nothing."[61] or again: "Cut off from hee contention concerning every matter whatsoever, and weep and mourn, for the time has come."[62] It sounds like good advice. Certainly before one finds this quies there is much internal tension which goes on. "A certain brother went to Abba Moses in Scete and received this answer: "Go to your cell, and sit in it and your cell shall teach you all things."[63] Thus it is no use to go running around from one person to another without first being prepared to "face his own solitude in all its maked reality."[64] This maked reality is not to be understood in a completed or perfected form which one just has to discover but

[61]E. A. Wallis Budge, Paradise of the Holy Fathers (London, 1907), v. II, 13.

[62]Ibid., 32.

[63]Ibid., 16.

[64]Merton, op. cit., 100.

rather an embryo of the not-yet-person of which Christ spoke so often and the reality which directed all his activity to men.

Thomas Merton, a modern spiritual father, tells us:

> Though we cannot go into all the depth of this idea at present, let us at least say this much: it is solitude that the monk most completely comes to discover the true inner dimension of his own being at once, "real" and "unreal". The conviction of one's self as a static, absolute and invariable reality undergoes a profound transformation and dissolves in the burning light of an altogether new and unexpected awareness. In this awareness we see that our "reality" is not firmly established ego-self already attained that merely had to be perfected but rather that we are a nothing, a possibility in which the gift of creative freedom can realize itself by its response to the free gift of love and grace. This response means accepting our loneliness and our "potentiality" as a gift and a commission, as a trust to be used, as a "talent" of, in the language of the parables. Our existence is then at once terrible and precious because radically it belong not to us but to God. Yet it will not be fully "his" unless we freely make it "ours" and then offer it to him in praise. This is what christian tradition means by obedience to the word of God. The monk must learn this for himself."[65]

Or with the help of a Spiritual Father? Of course this does not mean that the cell is useless with a Spiritual Father. For we are told of an old monastic saying: that if one does not live worthily in your cell, the cell of its own will vomit you out. Would we be unfair to translate the word

[65]Merton, op. cit., 100.

cell by self or person. If one is not true to one's self and reality, often-times the very self will become the most destructive monster we will face. We will begin to die inside-out and once the inside is gone, it doesn't take much time for the outside to go.

Thus we find that the young monk must go to find some one who can help him remain in himself and direct him to spiritual sonship.[66] "Become not a lawgiver to yourself," said one of the elders, "Those who are not under the law of governors shall fall like leaves."[67] Therefore this seems to be a solid principle-that one should not guide himself. Even though the young man needs the help of another, a Spiritual Father, just as in therapy, he must be determined to help himself. He must be willing to prepare the groundwork of his living and achieving the life of the spirit. He must use the solitude of his cell in order to learn how to face illusion and deception and defenses which abound in all but especially in the unprepared and young.

> One might say that all other advice assumes that one is ready and willing to sustain the purifying silence and loneliness of the cell in which one is stripped of his illusory image of himself and forced to come to terms with the nothingness, the limitations, the infidelity, the defectibility or as we might say today the "void" of his own life.[68]

Thus, it should be evident that by now, the work of

[67]Paradise, op. cit., II, 136.

[68]Merton, op. cit., lol.

the cell and the spiritual father is not simply the performing of bodily and external observances. It rather concerns the struggle of thoughts and fantasies. Therefore it is important for the novice to make known all that is going on within himself to the Spiritual Father. In a sense it is necessary to tune in the Spiritual Father to the tension and nervous and anxiety frequency within the individual. Fedotov in his Treasury of Russian Spirituality introduces the Western world to the thoughts of a modern Spiritual Father, Alexander Yelchaninov, whose thoughts on this very subject seem useful.

Just as a sidenote, Fedotov's description of Yelchaninov as "not a struggler or a mystic but a serene and kind counselor, meek but interiorly austere, a stranger to any kind of opportunism"[69] would and should describe persons working in any of the psychological disciplines.

> Nervousness is in a certain sense the psycho-physical condition of holiness; a refined body-transformed by tears, fasting, sickness, work-becomes more susceptible to the influence of beneficient forces. But at the same time grows morbidly sensitive to the world of gross material objects and its reaction towards this world is nervousness[70]

or

> It is not the definition of sin that is

[69]G. P. Fedotov, Treasury of Russian Spirituality (New York, 1948), 419.

[70]Ibid., 435. This is a translation of sections of A. Yelchaninov, The Teacher of Self-Examination (Paris, 1935) (in Russian.)

> important, nor its precise psychological description, nor even correct arguments concerning the sources and consequences of sin, but the sense of the very stuff that sin is made of, of the nature of sin-the pain and sorrow caused by it, the thirst for liberation from it-that is important.[71]

But what is the nature of this sin and what part does it play in the acquiring of freedom necessary for a person to go to God? What would be some of the tell-tale signs? He tells us that "there is in them a certain resistence of which they are hardly conscious, a resistence to any sort of action, whether agreeable or disagreeable or indifferent." "Here we have a certain, elementary type of sin, to pure sin, disinterested, and without any object."[72] He, in a sense, likens sin to resistence on the part of the individual to anything, whether this be human or divine. This is what sin does; it breaks our relationship with both God and Man. It can also be implied that the person himself is the one who suffers the most, because of "a certain resistence of which they are hardly conscious." Resistence, isn't this the crystallization of most of man's problems, whether in psycho therapy or spiritual direction?

But don't most of the Spiritual Fathers' sayings seem to imply that one should give into the resistence? For when Abba Anthony says: "As a fish when it is lifted out of water dies, even so does the monk who goes outside of his cell."[73]

[71]Yelchaninov, Ibid., 460.
[72]Yelchaninov, op. cit., 476.
[73]Paradise, op. cit. II, 20.

or Abba Theodore saying: "Be a free man, so that you may not be crafty in your words."[74] Are not words and going out of ones cell to be taken for the overcoming of resistence? Would these directives imply that one is building up and encouraging resistence? What is to happen in that cell, in that silence, that quiet and solitude? That womb-like-place!

[74]Paradise, op. cit., II, 88.

REBIRTH

In a sense one gets the feeling that the novice is going through some sort of remaking or being born-over-again. It could be just the discovery of the person who really never did appear in consciousnesss of the individual.

> The idea of rebirth. . . is fundamental to christian theology and practice-it is after all the whole meaning of baptism. All the more so is this idea central to that pecular refinement of the theology of baptism which is the monastic conversatio; the vocation to a life especially dedicated to self-renewal, liberation from all sin, and the transformation of ones entire emnatality "in Christ."[73]

or again:

> the notion of rebirth is not pecular to Christianity. In Sufism, Zen Buddism, and in many other religions or spiritual traditions emphasis is placed on the call to fulfill certain obscure yet urgent potentialities in the ground of ones being, to become someone, that one already (potentially) is, the person one is truly meant to be. Zen calls this awakening a recognition of "your original face before you were born."[74]

It would seem,therefore, that there is in man this striving to return to the womb and bring about some sort of rebirth. Flugel would speak about it this way:

> If the idea of life within the mother's womb is in this way closely associated with the desire for cessation of toil and striving, it is not surprising that we

[73]Louis Merton, "Final Integration toward a Monastic Thearapy," Monastic Studies, VI (November, 1968), 88.

[74]Ibid., 89.

> frequently find it brought into connection with the most striking example of such cessation with which we are acquainted, i.e., the complete stoppage of all vital activities at death. As a matter of fact, the unconscious identification of the state after death with the state before birth would seem to be one of frequent and widespread occurrence of the idea of the mysterious into-uterine life before birth furnishing, through this indentification, one of the causes of belief in a continuance of life after death, life of a kind, however, in which as in the life before birth, all our desires and needs are fulfilled without the necessity for toilsome and unpleasant effort.[75]

or again:

> The idea of rebirth would in a sense have the desire to attain to individual independence and freedom. It is in a sense a repetition of the process whereby we first acquire the status of an independent organism distinct from that of the mother who bore us. Thus this symbolism can be of a remote kind, the idea symbolized being that of moral or spiritual regeneration. Baptism consists in a symbolic representation of the act of birth.[76]

In a sense the novice who wants to achieve complete freedom and independence must return to the darkness and depths of his being, with the aid of a spiritual father , and through this process bring to birth the fulness of his personality.

[75]Flugel, op. cit., 69.

[76]Flugel, op. cit., 73.

We all have experienced the necessity of the aloneness or isolation of an individual in order to find himself. Fromm tells us:

> The other aspect of the process of individuation is growing aloneness. The primary ties offer security and basic unity with the world outside of oneself-to the extent to which the child emerges from that world it becomes aware of being alone, of being an entity separate from all others. This separation is... strong.[77]

In a sense maturity and independence and perhaps humanity itself are not found very easily in ones own person. It takes a going out of oneself into darkness, void, and nothingness in order to find the some-thing-ness of ourselves. We, in a sense, must die in order to live and Christ said unless we lose our life we will not gain it. The play Fantasticks puts it this way:

> There is a curious paradox that no one can explain-who understands the secret of the reaping of the grain, who understands why spring is born out of winter's laboring pain, or why we must all die abit before we live again? I don't know the answer, I merely know it's true; I hurt them and myself a little bit too.[78]

This is the reason for the novice to cling to his cell and follow not a path of his own but with a Spiritual Father so that the solitude and loneliness does not completely destroy him. We must remember that it is paradox.

77 Erich Fromn, Escape from Freedom (New York, 1941) 44.

78 Fantasticks, an off-broadway play by Tom Jones, 1959.

MAN'S OPENNESS TO NEW LIFE

The Spiritual Father would certainly come into conflict with the notion that the essence of man is one and therefore, in a sense, man is nothing more than a recepticle which is to be filled in a rather passive manner. This passive picture of man is rather prevalent among many in the field of psychology who limit man to the result of his mechanistic activities. What is at least certain to some extent is that many men donot seem to fulfill very much in their lives and, even in the most productive, there seems to remain a void, a feeling of uncompleteness with their lives. Perhaps borrowing from Frankl and his Logotherapy we can find an idea of how a Spiritual Father should approach a man.

> To put it figuratively, the role played by the logotherapist(spiritual father) is rather that of an eye specialist than that of a painter. A painter tries to convey to us a picture of the world as he sees it; an opthalmologist tries to enable us to see the world as it really is.[79]

Thus the Spiritual Father will try to broaden the whole spectrum of meaning for the novice and also help show him the potential meaning in his life. The problem goes into the meaning of grace and just what kind of change it brings about in man.[80]

I consider it a dangerous misconception to

[79] Victor E. Frankl, Man's Search for Meaning (New York, 1963), 174.

[80] Cf. Thomas Acquinas, Summa Theologica; Scotus, Opera Omnia, their understanding of grace.

> mental hygiene to assume that what man needs in the first place is equilibrium or as it is called in biology, "homeo stasis," i.e., a tensionless state.[81]

One must be very careful in the understanding of what a man is and must not be tempted to define him simple as a psyche. However, Frankl tells us:

> How can you dare to predict the behaviour of man! You may predict the movements of a machine, of an automaton; more than this, you may even try to predict the mechanisms or "dynamisms" of the human psyche as well, but man is more than psyche.[82]

To divide man into so many components would also seem to do him much injustice. Oftentimes religion has been interpreted as a product of psycho-dynamics in the sense that it is the result of unconscious motivating forces.

> Through such a misconception, the psychology of religion becomes psychology as religion, in that psychology is sometimes worshipped and made an explanation for everything.[83]

In a sense all this is saying is that psychology sometimes forgets about a reality called grace and therefore can at times become too mechanistic in its approach. Perhaps Frankl would not use the word grace; but the reality would seem to be very close.

[81]Frankl, Man's Search, 166.

[82]Ibid., 298.

[83]Ibid., 210.

Isidor Chein also feels that this dynamic element must be present in the image of man.

> It concerns the nature of psychology itself, and at the heart of the issue, I find the issue of the image of man. Specifically, I suggest, we must choose between two images. The first, is that of a man as an active, responsible agent, not simply a helpless, powerless reagent.[84]

Chein would admit that man does respond to his environment; but not in the sense that response is at all times and at every moment an automatic consequence of the interaction of body and environment. He would see it rather as an active dialoque than an automatic consequence.

I believe these men have given us an inkling of the nature of man, of a man who would present himself to a Spiritual Father in order to attain a certain maturity and facility within the domains of spirituality, A man who, in the tradition of the Testaments, has an openness to the influences around him and not in a passive way but actively and dynamically. If this were not the case, God could not reach or make contact with the greatest of his creatures—man.

Let us just for a moment listen to what others have to say concerning this same area, at least implicitly:

> man no longer condemns the Jews nor the Greeks, nor sinners . . . the interior man looks at all men with a pure eye, and he rejoices then on

[84]Isidor Chein, "Image of Man," The Journal of Social Issues, 18:4 (1962), pp.1-35.

> account of the entire universe he desires with his whole heart only to love and venerate each and everyone.[85]

Paul Evdokimov commenting on this says:

> Having arrived at the height of the greatest freedom the hermit can find the world again since for him it is not any longer bewitched. He can find men and their city again since he has attained to the charity that urges him to leave his solitude.[86]

This is, in a sense, what happens after one has successfully completed psycho-therapy. The person is then able to accept people for whom they are and not use them or have them simply satisfy his needs. Their's is a great soul-searching which compares to that of the monk and what goes on during the time in the desert; really or figuratively. "The ascesis of the desert is a vast psycho-analysis followed by a psycho-synthesis of the universal human soul."[87]

> Depth psychology very frequently comes to give scientific substance to ascetic art and to aid man to understand himself. It analyses the dynamism of the affectivity, the obscure zome of the unconscious, the irrational root of the soul where the instinct of 'the will to life' is active. Jarred by the reality of social censure, this

[85]Paul Evdokimov, The Struggle with God (New York, 1966) Homelies.

[86]Ibid., 109.

[87]Ibid., 103.

> interior world is remodeled; a part of its vitality is repressed; reflexes of inhibition and compensation are eleborated. A mysterious and hidden life flows on beneath the threshold of consciousness, ceaselessly exercising its pressure. The person's health depends on the balance between the conscious and the subconscious, on the minds capacity to project its light there, on integration with its shadow.[88]

This is more easily accomplished through the help of a Spiritual Father. Certainly everyone has heard of the many outrageous stories of the fathers of old, and often dismisses them as neurotic old men set on keeping younger persons in the name of God under that terrible institution called "blind obedience." I would prefer to call it with Merton an uncritical or unquestioning obedience.[89] It is not blind or unreasoning and passive obedience to one who obeys merely in order to let himself be broken and crushed. It is blind only in putting aside or holding in abeyance one's limited and biased judgment. Not that one doesn't know anything but that one is still a child in the matters of the spirit and therefore the Father must lead the way for the child to be able to stand on his own two feet and breathe in the Spirit without choking on it.

[88] Ibid., p.162.

[89] Merton, op. cit., p.107.

A good example of this taken from modern literature, Narcissus and Goldmund, shows some of this in practice.

> No Goldmund, I am not like you in the way, you think, although I, too, am keeping an unspoken vow--in that respect you are right--but I am in no way like you. Some day you will think of what I am going to say to you now: our friendship has no other purpose, no other reason, than to show you how utterly unlike me you are.[90]

Or again:

> Narcissus looked at him gravely: "I take you seriously when you are Goldmund. But your're not always Goldmund. I wish nothing more than to see you become Goldmund through and through. You are not a scholar, you are not a monk--scholars and monks can have a coarser grain. You think your're not learned or logical or pious enough to be me. On the contrary, you are not enough yourself." . . . "Look, he said," I am superior to you only in one point: I'm awake, whereas you are only half awake, or completely asleep sometimes. I call a man awake who knows in his conscious reason his innermost unreasonable force, and weaknesses and knows how to deal with them. For you to learn that about yourself is the potential reason for your having met me. In your case, mind and nature, consciousness and dream world lie very far apart. You have forgotten your childhood; it cries for you from the depths of your soul. It will make you suffer until you heed it.[91]

Nor must the Spiritual Father be of the same temperament as the novice who wishes help in discovering his real self.

[90] Hermann Hesse, Narcissus and Goldmund (New York, 1968), 33.

[91] Ibid., p. 44.

At one point in the Novel Brother Narcissus tries to show this to the boy Goldmund:

> Natures of your kind, with strong, delicate senses, the soul-oriented, the dreamers, poets, lovers are almost always superior to us creatures of the mind. You take your being from your mothers. You live fully, you were endowed with the strength of love, the ability to feel. Whereas we creatures of reason, we don't life fully, we live in an arid land, even though we often seem to guide and rule you. Yours is the plenitude of life, the sap of the fruit, the garden of passion, the beautiful landscape of art. Your home is the earth, ours the world of ideas. You are in danger of drowning in the world of the senses; ours is the danger of suffocating in an airless void. You are an artist, I am a thinker. You sleep at the mother's breast; I wake in the desert. For me the sun shines; for you the moon and the stars.[92]

This was a slight excursion into the world of a novel to find expressed and, in rather lucid terms, some of the preceding ideas concerning the Spiritual Father. The main point which I wished to show by these excerpts is the overall notion of the possibility of the person to develop and that unless he does much suffering will remain. These words are based upon the assumption that the persons is open and can receive actively and dynamically. Staretz Silouan tells us this:

> No reader of the Gospel can fail to notice the apparent lack of logical sequence in Christ's conversation. Consider, for example, the exchanges with Nicodemus, with the woman of

[92]Ibid., p. 45.

> Samaria, with the disciples at the Last Supper. Christ's interest is directed not so much to what a man says as to what there is in his heart of hearts, and to what he is capable of receiving from God.[93]

Would this be in contradiction to the exhortation of the experts that one has to listen to what the person is saying? Not so! For indeed the staretz is telling us to really listen to what a person is saying and not merely listen to the words alone. What do the words mean in relation to the persons themselves, the one to whom they are talking and finally to the relationship going on between the Spiritual Father and the novice?

[93]Sofrony, Arch., The Undistorted Image (London, 1958), 103.

CHAPTER V

PRACTICAL ASPECTS

TECHNIQUES

As in any way of life and existence there develop very soon on the human level various repetitive ways of acting: certain outlooks on life itself, various customs as regards almost anything and, for lack of a better word: techniques. So too with the Spiritual Father. He soon began to see certain similarities within the persons that were under his care and could come to valid conclusions as to what his manner of acting should be toward them—if you wish, a *modus agendi* which was based on their knowledge of human nature.

But where would one find these techniques? Certainly the Fathers did not sit down and pen out a book on the techniques of the Spiritual Father. One must search their own writings and what was written about them, sifting through the fiction and literary style to find the meaning and thoughts which the Fathers tried to convey. The task is a giant one and here we mean to give only a cursory glance.

Thus from our view of the early fathers, cenobites or hermits, we can get a good idea of the techniques used by them. The form and technique was that of a master-disciple, paternal-filial relationship. The primary guidance technique in these relationships was based on love and followed the natural pattern of the parternal-filial relationship. Thus the love a father has for his son and that of a son for his father enter into this technique. We can also imagine that the admiration a son has for his father and his ideals and the son's desire and ambition to imitate and be like his father, the fear the son has to displease his father whom he loves and admires, the power of correction and discipline that is a father's right in order to guide his son to spiritual perfection. enter into it.

The basic element in the relationship of this type of spiritual direction is the love of God and the love of neighbor. A means to this relationship during the time of Saint Basil was the manifestation of conscience. In this process the new person entering the monastery would tell the Spiritual Father all he could remember concerning his past. Once this was accomplished, he would then be concerned with his present life, his thoughts, desires, actions tensions and conflicts. The purpose of the manifestation of conscience was to expose the weakness of one's personality with all the faults contained therein and thereby be able to free oneself from them and begin to become completely alive as Brother Narcissus said.

The Spiritual Father would then try to lead the individual toward a better insight into his fundamental tendencies, defenses, and conflicts, of which he is not always aware, so that he could understand himself. This understanding would help to resolve some of his tensions and thereby relax the person. His energies also would be directed along their proper course and he would be better able to handle the problems and difficulties that would arise. Indeed the spiritual Father had his work cut out for him: the rehabilitation, re-orientation, and the integration of the individual into a complete person.

Carl Rogers goes over some of the areas in his book Counseling and Psychotherapy[94] concerning techniques which he feels can pose problems in the direction by a Spiritual Father. The ordering and forbidding technique which is one of the oldest has or he feels should be discarded because it usually deals only with externals and can be very superficial and have only temporary effects. However this procedure would seem to have grown out of the historical context of the early monks. For with the development of stable communities of monks grouped together, the formulation of rules began, such as that of Saint Basil's Long Rules. The leadership of the primitive communities was usually centered in one man, spiritually and materially, since they were very small and simple. But as the monastic life began

[94]Carl Rogers, Counseling and Psychotherapy (Boston,1942) 20-35.

to become more widespread, its whole structure had to be regulated and made more orderly. The administration of the community and its temporal affairs began to take more and more time of the Superior, who was also the Spiritual Father. Eventually this development and evolution so burdened the heads of the communities that they had less time for the work of Spiritual Direction. Certain people today would call this one of the early bad developements in the monastic way of life and perhaps that is why today the big cry is for small communities with a father and not an administrator as the superior.

These changes in the status of the Spiritual Father (superior) led to the delegation of the concerns of the spiritual life of his community to others whom he, as the superior, appointed as Spiritual Fathers, Some feel that this is a corruption since a Spiritual Father receives his calling from God in view of the remarks which we have already stated concerning the charismas and characteristics to be found in a Spiritual Father.

The Spiritual Father would usually exhort the novice to do certain things but this could have the bad effect of arousing the individual to a high and artificial emotional pitch to such an extent that he will promise anything for anyone. Perhaps its real danger is it's temporary effects and the avoidance of the source of the lack of initiative on the part of the individual which may be deep-rooted, although encouragement helps in whatever way of life one is.

Two other dangers which a Spiritual Father could easily fall into would be suggestion which would give the individual the notion that he is really improving when he is not, and by this, would be denying the feelings which the person would have. In a sense the Spiritual Father would be distorting reality, which can never help anyone. Often too many would be tempted to give concrete advice and persuasion for a particular problem; a difficulty being that the goal of the solution is often the Spiritual Father's and not the directed one's.

We had previously spoken about the manifestation of conscience and Rogers compares this to the psychotherapy approach called catharsis.[95] It allows the individual to discuss his problems thoroughly; in a sense, to talk them out, with another individual who provides a certain type of acceptance. This process frees the individual from those conscious fears and guilt feelings of which he is aware, and can build up a relationship of trust and confidence. Indeed perhaps the early fathers and ascetics found the key to all their direction in this 'opening of ones soul' or manifestation of conscience. This indeed is the essential tool at their disposal and indeed has been justified by psychology from then on. It was by means of this tool that they became more passive in their overt direction and more active in their listening to the clues for the understanding of the individual entrusted to their care.

[95] Ibid., p. 21-22.

OBLIGATIONS

Very shortly the Spiritual Father knew that his aim was the greater independence and integration of the individual, and in a sense innately knew that the focus was on the novice and not his problem. He did not set out to solve their individual problems but to assist the novice to grow and to develop so that he could not only solve the present problem but also all future ones which were surely to come along.

Let us look now at just what are considered to be the tasks or obligations of the Spiritual Father. It would seem that the first obligation of his, after being considered to possess the qualities necessary, is to accept the office.

> The first manifestation of the charity of the Spiritual Father is not to refuse to accept this function.[96]

This must be a real acceptance on the part of the Spiritual Father since with it goes many responsibilites. His "yes" must be clear and precise. In a sense this sounds very much like the psychotherapist who must first agree to work with the client before the process can begin. However, his motives for refusing might be more easily comeby than the Spiritual Fathers The following is an excerpt from the life of Sisoes:

> Humility was to be considered a part of their past and present state. How does the practice of asceticism prepare one for the direction of his neighbor? The

[96]Hausherr, op. cit., 175.

> brothers went to consult the Abbot Sisoes and he didn't say a word to them. He always answered "Pardon-me." Nevertheless they noticed the baskets that he had made and they asked his disciple Abraham, "what are you doing with those baskets?" He answered: "We sell them here and there." The Master then said: "Sisoes also has to eat from time to time." The brothers were helped greatly and went away from him with joy and were edified by his humility. "Pardon-me" said the same Sisoes, "I am a man without learning. I prefer to receive instruction than to give it. The beginning of salvation, that is to reprove oneself."[97]

or Macaire the Egyptian:

> As for me, I am still not a monk, but I have seen some monks. . . . If a brother came to me timidly in the manner of a holy and venerable old man, I would not speak to him. But if someone would speak to me as in reproach, for example if they said Abbot, is it true that when you were a camel driver, you stole salt-peter and received a thrashing, if someone spoke to me like that then I would answer every one of his questions with joy.[98]

Thus, even the Ancients made some distinctions in the matter of becoming Spiritual Fathers.

The next task of the Spiritual Father is to pray for his spiritual son.[99] This is the first task after accepting the function of being the director. All the saints written about in the <u>Apophthegmata Patrum</u> give and show the necessity of this. In fact most of the conversations of

[97]Alph. Sisoes, n. 16, Vitae Patrum, V, 15n, 46.
[98]Alph. Macaire, 2 PG 65. 260-261.
[99]Hausherr, op. cit., 130.

the novice to his Spiritual Father usually begain with: "Father, pray for me." One of the first prayers recorded is that of Saint Pachomius:

> Lord God, you have commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Since then, you know the secrets of my heart, I beg you, do not scorn me when I cry to you for their safety; but out of pity for them, give them our fear, so that recognizing your divine power, they may serve you in truth, strong in all things, out of hope in your holy promises. For my soul is overly afflicted because of them, and all my senses are troubled from top to bottom.[100]

For if prayer is the existential point when and where a man is able to reach and touch God then it would follow that at such a moment he would pull along with him so to speak; anyone for whom he has great responsibility. Although most psychotherapists,I am sure, don't pray for their clients maybe the Spiritual Father has one on them.

If one is concerned for an individual to the extent that one is willing to take on his spiritual direction, it goes without saying that the Spiritual Father is in a sense helping him carry his burdens. Thus the Spiritual Father shares with any helping person in our human condition. The deeper the involvement and the subject matter the deeper will be the carrying of the burden. The listener just by his silence will make the burden lighter to the one who is speaking. So too with the Spiritual Father, perhaps even

[100]Vita S. Pachomii Abbatis Tabernensis, XXXII, PL 73, 252.

more so. Gregory the Theologion, tells us that "the norm of all spiritual direction is to always neglect one's own proper interest for the help of others."[101] And in a sense this is what the spiritual Father does, he takes upon himself the welfare and salvation of the young man entrusted to him and in a sense subordinates his own desires and interests. Of course this is only possible because of the fact that love has to be the binding force between these two persons. And it must come first from the Father so that by his example the son will learn to appreciate this emotion.

I don't think that enough can be said concerning this aspect of the relationship for without it the relationship will cease to exist and function. Is it not, after all, love that will make up for the defects in the young man and help him come to the realization of his full potentials?

It goes without saying that for the Spiritual Father to have the above qualities and abilities, he must himself be a integral human being. He needs the maturity of freedom and without it he would only be imposing his own immaturities on those who are still young and susceptible. Therefore it is presumed that the Spiritual Father must also have had his own Spiritual Father and therefore learned many of the techniques by experience. This is similar to the rule that one must have undergone psycho-therapy before one

[101] Gregory Naz. Oratione, II, PG 35, 464.

begins to practice it. So too, with the director. He should have had a Spiritual Father who then will tell or direct him when he is ready to become a Spiritual Father.

CHAPTER VI

CONSCIOUS-UNCONSCIOUS

OPENING OF THE SOUL

There is much written on this topic and all the works are agreed upon the necessity of this practice. It is not only the opening of the conscience, but also the unconscious. This practice is not concerned with sins but rather with the thoughts which accompany the sins. In fact the reason for a rather detailed account of the person's life before he entered the monastery is not to help the person achieve compunction for his sins but rather to give the Spiritual father more knowledge of just how the person functions. There is interest in the actual inclinations of the individual and all his 'movement of the spirits' which have existed in his own microcosm, although one must be careful that in the too detailed remembrance of past activities and emotions a person can receive more harm than good. Mark the Hermit tells us:

> Detailed remembrance is a nuisance to hope, it is accompanied by sadness,

> it is possible to renew oneself without sadness, it brings back past-better-forgotten things.[102]

We must remember that Mark is not concerned with the sacrament of penance but with the psychology of the individual. In order to learn more about him and his abilities and energies so that they can be directed to the goal of the individual—perfect union with God. Mark was not concerned with what the novice was or had been but with what he had the desire to become, again an implicit understanding of the 'becoming' in man.

Thus it is important to know the "movement of the spirit', the suggestions, and most of all the internal impulses. Mark the Hermit would say that the first movement of the individual to something which seems not to conform or gives him anxiety, prosbole,[103] should be reported to the Spiritual Father. And it is precisely this recourse which will help the person to understand the nature of the problem. An anonomous Spiritual Father was to have said:

> If bad thoughts are bothering you, do not hide them, but immediately tell them to the Father, the more one hides his thoughts, the more they multiply and take strength. As a serpent, out of his nest flees right away, so the troublesome thoughts manifested are easily dissipated. And as a worm in the wood, does it damage, so these thoughts which are not revealed, demolish the heart. He who tells his thoughts is soon cured, he who hides them, makes himself sick with

[102]Mark the Hermit, n. 139, PG 65, 952 B.

[103]premiere suggestion de mauvaise oensee, avant l' internvetion de la volonte libre; Hausherr, OCA, 144, Glossary.

pride.[104]

Thus the Fathers understood that one must keep all one's desires and thoughts to oneself but it is only in the revelation of them to another and the light of his experience that they can be put to useful work.

It has been presumed that the Spiritual Father psssesses what is called Diacrisis—the discernment of good and of bad, of divine and diabolic, the knowledge of what to do and consequently, discretion. For without this, all the manifestation of thoughts will be to no avail.

Besides the psychological value for the 'opening of one's soul' Saint Anthony gives us other reasons:

> I have seen some monks who have broken their bodies in asceticism, and who not having had diacrisis, have come far from God . . . I saw monks who after much labor have fallen and gone to folly, to have counted on their own work and refuse the command of God: Ask your Father and he will inform you . . . If it is possible, it is necessary that the monk has confidence in the Old One in all the steps that he takes, of each drop of water he drinks in his cell, to know that he doesn't commit a mistake.[105]

Thus the insistence is that one should not trust one's own direction completely. It is necessary to confide in others. And one only has to look into the Lausiac History and see the many stories told concerning the monks who tried to guide themselves. Some of them are often very funny but underneath the humor is the truth of the axiom: "No one can

[104]Paul Evergetinos, Synagoge I cap. 20, 62 co. 1.

[105]Alph. Anthony 8, PG 65, 77B, 37, 88; 38, 88; 7, 77.

be his own guide."

Cassien gives us an interesting point of thought when he says that: "it is a universal sign and evidence, that a thought is from the devil when we blush to tell it to the Elder."[106] Indeed it need not be from the devil but it does show that there is some difficulty in our feelings concerning the value of the thought. Who has not blushed when he realizes that he has thoughts and desires which seem most inappropriate?

But the blushing would soon be removed by the understanding and love manifested by the Spiritual Father. Saint Barsanuphe define this feeling:

> Brothers there is a difference between the love of the father for his son and the love of Brothers for Brothers. The perfection of the Charity of the Spiritual Father toward their children is of such a nature that it contains nothing of danger, spiritual or physical, the fathers have the guarantee of a spiritual soul. What ever they say or they do they are concerned with the well being of the young. Animated by this charity, they do not concentrate on the faults. For Saint Paul tells us, to Correct, Blame and Exhort. (2tim.4;2) That is what your Father will do.. . . The fact is that by charity he does not let your mistake pass, . . . each one must love his neighbor according to his own measure of perfection.[107]

But this charity and love can be obtained only if one has experienced both sides of the coin so to speak. All of the

[106]Cassien, <u>De Coenobiorum institutis</u> 4, 9, PL 49, 161-162

[107]Barsanuphe et Jean, edition Nicodeme L'Hagiorite, (Venice; 1816), letter 239, 174.

great Spiritual Fathers began as being perfect spiritual sons: Saint Pachomius to Saint Palemon; Saint Theodore to Saint Pachomius; Saint Dorothia to Saint Barsanuphe; Saint Theodore Studite to Saint Platon. And the list continues throughout the centuries.

Saint Basil says on the Subject:

> Each subordinate, if he realizes the progress which is worthwhile and the desire to live according to the command of Jesus, our Savior, must avoid to keep hidden in himself any movement of his soul; and not to say any word without control and disclose the secret of the hearts to his brothers who have received the mission.[108]

[108]Saint Basil, Long Rules, 26, PG31, 985.

MANIFESTATION OF THOUGHTS

Let us look at this practice from the aspect of the manifestation of thoughts. Nothing is clearer than this duty on the part of the novice. This was usually done aloud before the Spiritual Father, on a daily basis. But before the novice can relate his imagination, feelings, and desires to the Spiritual Father, he must first understand them himself. In other words, he must be aware of these actions within himself. The novice's first rule is "Know yourself." The usual method was the daily examine of conscience. By this means, the novice will be able to know in what conditions he is and also to what all his desires and feelings are directed. It was the custom of the early Fathers to make lists of various vices and virtues in order to help the novice assess his position, such as Origen and Evagrius of Pontis.

The word used for this vigilance and sobriety in Byzantine literature is nepsis.[109] It was by means of this practice that the novice was able to distinguish the wolf from the sheep, the devil from the angel of light. However, the novice should not trust his own judgements at least in the beginning of his training, but submit them to the Spiritual Father. John Climacus tells us about a certain monastery:

> The refectorian had a habit that intrigued me very much, he carried on his belt a tablet and I learned that he was writing the thoughts that came to him every day in order to tell them to the Spiritual Father. He was

[109] signifies to be sober, vigilant, and attentive. This term plays a great role in oriental spirituality.

> not the only one to do it. I observed the same thing with most of the others. It was, they tell me the directive of their great master.[110]

The point of John telling his story doesn't seem to be to recommend the practice to everyone but rather to show the necessity of vigilance and care in knowing the nature of one's thoughts.

The question must arise at this time to the reader as to just how did the Spiritual Fathers have the time to listen to all the thoughts of their spiritual sons, primarily, in the early times, when they were also the superiors of the monastery also? It seems that just as today we have appointments, the early Spiritual Fathers also had set times during which they would consult with their charges. As they became more acquainted, and the personality of the novice became more real to the Spiritual Father, he was certainly able to dispose of these thoughts in a shorter time. The setting of time could also be a good means of discipline for the young religious. Hausherr relates the story of the Spiritual Father Barsanuphe and his spiritual son Andre, which is too long torelate here. The novice is continually sick with one malady or another and relates them to his Abbe in great detail over and over again, but the Abbe always listens with patience and finally helps him to see that many of the complaints were psycho-somatic.[111]

[110]Climacus, op. cit., Step 4, PG 88, 701 D.

[111]Hausherr, op. cit., 215.

Let us listen to the advice this great Spiritual Father gives to a novice who likes to exaggerate:

> Brother it is not necessary to ask on all thoughts that are germinating in your spirit. They are fugitives. But on the subject of those that persist and fight man, they are different. As a man who insulted by a crowd of people, scorns his injuriers and makes himself absolutely indifferent; but if one person attacks him, and wants to hurt him, then he can complain against him to the magistrate.[112]

Thus for Barsanuphe the only way to overcome disturbing thoughts besides revealing them to the Spiritual Father was to concentrate on one at a time; and those which persisted more than those of a more fleeting nature. The novice is being implicitly asked to make use of his own good sense. Good sense would certainly be the mark of much potential in the individual.

It is also good to remember that the monastic silence and the other ascetical discipline of the monastery would have a good effect upon the novice. It would help him discover, as we have already seen, his real nature and character. In such a milieu he would be able to work out many of his thoughts without the immediate consultation of the Spiritual Father.

At this point we should remark that there were Spiritual Fathers who taught that it was alright for a person to direct himself in the desert. However, one questions as to who would determine which one could go into the desert and

[112]Barsanuphe, Letter 89.

direct himself and who could not. Certainly the multitude of authors would not favor this, among whom the Greatest, Basil the Great, feels that the community life is most essential for one to advance in the Spiritual Life. However there areaways exceptions.

However in the cenobitic monasteries there were rules for the practice of exagoreusis.[113] The Studite Constitutions tell us that the superior should come out of the choir during Orthos, at the beginning of the fourth Ode. He sits for the confession and receives the brothers who come to find him and gives to each the useful spiritual care. From other sources we find that there was also the custom of telling one's faults in the evening after Complines. This would seem to be an opportunity for those who go out of the monastery to serve and work and don't come back until later in the evening. There is not a question that in some of the monasteries this practice became a fetish and often led to scrupulosity. However, the principle behind it certainly would seem to be valid, even though there are abuses.

[113]the manifestation of ones thoughts to a Spiritual Father; this later was called sacramental confession although there are differences.

CHAPTER VII

COMPLEXITIES OF RELATIONSHIP

DISTORTIONS

As in any relationship, one has to be careful of the distortions which can arise and which can be detrimental to the relationship. Since, as we have seen the Spiritual Father has some basis in the physical fatherhood, one of the usual difficulties which can arise is that of dependency, that is, the father can make the son so very incapable of doing anything or making any decisions, that he would virtually be a prisoner of the Spiritual Father.

Another area which I would like to examine more closely is that of transference and counter-transference which goes on within such a relationship. Menninger defines transference as "the unrealistic roles or identities unconsciously ascribed to a therapist by a patient in the regression of the psychoanalytic treatment and the patients reactions to this representation derived from earlier experience."[114] And to

[114]Karl Menninger, Theory of Psychoanalytic Technique (New York, 1958), 81.

be sure this goes on during the encounters of the novice with the Spiritual Father. But since this paper is primarily concerned with the Director, let us look more closely at the phenomena of counter-transference. It is very important for the Spiritual Father to be aware of all his own hang-ups and difficulties and to be able to distinguish them from those of the novice.

It is during the regression stage of psychoanalysis that many of the difficult areas of treatment will develop or at least come to the forefront. In a sense, the work and progress of the Spiritual Father seems to be identical in that there also seems to be a deliberate allowing of regression in the indivdual. All the overtones of the various profession ceremonies deal with baptism, new life and thus attribute to increasing the regression. In speaking of regression, Menninger says:

> He will become a child again, and be reborn, so to speak. Then he will grow up again, grow up better than he did before, guided by his now more mature intelligence and warnings and lessons of his unhappy experiences now better understood. , , , Psychoanalysis is not alone in making use of regression in order to favor a new development. It was recommended by Jesus to Nicodemus, who was astounded by the recommendation that he be born again and really grow up.[115]

The Spiritual Father also encourages regression although he doesn't call it that. But it would seem that the same prin-

[115] Ibid., 49.

ciples are at work. The question may be the competency with which they are used. No one would deny this. However, in reading the works of the Fathers it is evident that they would come to the same conlusions and techniques which are used today in a more sophisticated manner. However, both the Father and the Psychotherapist must be prepared for what happens when regression is encouraged in a person. They must be prepared for the honesty and frank discussion of thoughts and feelings. This is precisely where lies the danger of counter-transference.

Of course it is evident that the trained therapist is better equipped to handle such situations, primarily because he should be in control of his own difficulties which might be sparked by the matter of the encounter. He always has a supervisor to whom he can go if any over-powering difficulties present themselves, whereas the early Spiritual Fathers were oftentimes sent far from their own Spiritual Fathers and were very much more on their own.

However, in reading the works of the fathers it does seem that they had an innate sense into the proper manner of handling rather explosive situations with great tact and simplicity. I am sure that this was due to their own sense of integrity and also the understanding of many problems from their own personal experience. Most immaturities of life are found in most men, the difference being the ability to understand them and cope with them and thereby bring them to maturity.

> We must remember that it is precisely this more honest, even if more disturbing , behavior that the therapist must learn about in order to offer help. He has invited the patient to let himself go, to let himself be as childish as he wishes, to say whatever comes to his mind regardless of the consequences that would ensue were this not a special situation. Thus, the patient is not only permitted but encouraged to abandon those very devices which he has spent a lifetime acquiring with respect to what he might say to and about another human being. In this situation there is not a need to be polite, no need to be considerate, no need to be fair, no need to be practical, no need to be realistic. It is only necessary to follow the original instruction: "Try only to be honest. Think whatever you wish and say whatever you think. It may be only tentative. At any rate I promise there will be no retaliation no passing of judgment, not even a definite conclusion." [116]

This, in a sense, is the climate in which the Spiritual Father will try to bring to fruition the authentic person who oftentimes resides deep within the recesses of the novice. A word should be said concerning the asceticism in which the Spiritual Father encourages the Novice, the long hours of prayer and, most of all, the even longer hours of silence. Is it possible to compare this to Freud's words: "analytic treatment should be carried through, as far as is possible, under privation-in a state of abstinence."[117] Menninger commenting on this state of abstinence says:

[116] Ibid., p. 52.

[117] Sigmund Freud, "Turnings in the Ways of Psychoanalytic Therapy," Collected Papers, Vol II, (1924), p. 394.

> The state of abstinence, then, refers to the activity of both the patient and analyst: the analyst must abstain from responding to the patients pleas, charges, maneuvers, requests, and demands in the way he would ordinarily respond were this a social relationship, and the patient must experience the denied satisfaction. For so far we have come upon no better method for allowing the patient to discover his style of, and his conditons for, loving and hating. It is this controlled frustration in anaylsis that highlights the patients typical methods of relating himself to the significant people in his life. This self-discovery is crucial for the process of recovery.[118]

Could not this state of abstinence compare with the 'sense of nerviousness' which Father Yelchaninov felt was necessary for any progress in the spiritual life? I think we recognize the fact that not all tension is necessarily bad but that often it has a positive value in the human maturational process. We repeat his words again:

> It is not the definition of sin that is important, nor its precise psychological description, nor even correct arguments concerning the sources and consequences of sin; but the sense of the very stuff that sin is made of, of the nature of sin, the pain and sorrow caused by it, the thirst for liberation from it, that is important.[119]

or again:

> We must not put our vices to sleep, we must uproot them. Here lies the advantage of life in the world: through conflict with people and circumstances offering temptation, it discovers our own heart to us.[119]

[118] Ibid., p. 57.

[119] Yelchaninov, op. cit., p. 230.

If we can look at the relationship between the Spiritual Father and the novice in terms of psychotherapy we could say that there is a great amount of dependency which developes at the beginning of the encounter through the notion of re-birth. The contract is set up at the clothing and profession ceremnony in which the novice freely chooses the the Spiritual Father and the Fatherin turn accepts the responsibility. To be sure, transference and counter-transference will develop throughout the encounter, especially in the middle section or period of time. This, however, is not to be considered negative if it is understood and kept aware of. Anne Reich tells us:

> Counter-transference is(not only an inevitable feature but also) a necessary prerequisite of analysis. If it does not exist, the necessary talent and interest is lacking. But it has to remain shadowy and in the background.[120]

During the progress of the encounter between the Spiritual Father and the novice regression will begin and, at times, be consciously encouraged. In fact the regression would be intensified by the symbollism of the notions of re-baptism, rebirth and the profession ceremony. Throughout this relationship a strong bond will be building between the two persons and thereby enable the novice to gain much from the Spiritual Father. Evident throughout this entire process

[120]Anne Reich, "On Countertransference," International Jounral of Psychoanalysis, XXXII (1951), p. 26.

will be the personality of the Spiritual Father, a person who in turn has had a Spiritual Father and thereby has come to a clearer understanding of his own personality and being, and therefore will have a better grasp of the counter-transference activity. But first and foremost that he be a person, integral as possible is necessary and helpful. For just as humility and modesty are important pre-requisites for a monk, Menninger sees their value for the psycho-analist.

> Humility, modesty, and all those qualities opposite to arrogance are not only becoming in an analyst-they are more than necessary as a part of his therapeutic equipment. This is not to say that patients cannot be benefitted, sometimes, by even the most ill-mannered assertions or the most condescending explanations. But the very spirit of psychoanalytic science is to help an afflicted ego to realize its own potentialities, to let a patient discover what he can really do-not because he is commanded to, not because it is diagrammed for him, but because he is acquiring a new view of himself.[121]

Merton comes to the same conclusions when speaking about the qualities of the Spiritual Father:

> we see that the master must be extraordinarily humble, discerning, kind and in no sense a despotic character. The 'hard saying' which he administers must spring from genuine kindness and concern for the inerests of the disciples and not from a secret desire to dominate and exploit them for his own egotistic ends. The master, must in other words be himself one who is no longer in the least attracted by 'superiorship' or by the desire to rule and teach others. In fact,

[121] Op. Cit., p. 93.

> we find many of the spothegms devoted to stories of monks who refused to take on the role of Abba, or who fled from those who attempted to gather around them as disciples. . . . One remarkable characteristic of the desert hermits as reflected in the 'sayings' is their great respect for the variety of personal vocations and 'ways! They did not impose hard and fast rules, reducing all to an arbitrary uniformity. Far from seeking security in a kind of servile conformism, they were able to appreciate the diversity of gifts which manifested the one Spirit dwelling in them all.[122]

The fact that the Spiritual Father was no longer the Superior of the Monastery was perhaps not simply the result of history. The Spiritual Fathers must have very soon come to the conclusion that both could not be fulfilled, and when they can, it takes a very exceptional man to do so.

John the Solitary, which we might call one of the Psychological textbooks of the Fathers, describes the Spiritual Father from his point of view: a person much more open than the psychikos. For him the psychikos has indeed overcome his grosser passions and lives a life of virtue, however he really doesn't love God or men. He is caught in an inbetween state, loving those who live according to his own interests and not yet free enough spiritually to love all men. By loving is implied the willingness and not the completed fact. "The love of God is not acquired by bodily asceticism but by insights into the mysteries; and

[122]Meron, op. cit., 108.

since he (psychikos) has not attained to this he fails to love all men."[123] There comes a time when logic and intellectual argumentation must cease if one is to learn the meaning of the 'Spirit.' Here could also be recalled Narcissus' advice to Goldmund; "we creatures of reason, we don't live fully, we live in an arid land, even though we often seem to guide and rule you."[124]

On the contrary, Merton tells us:

> a truly spiritual father is sought out not only by beginners but by those who are themselves advanced, because he has the 'words of life,' and loves men as God does. They see that he loves not a doctrine, not a method, but men. Since he loves not his ideal but them. . . .[125]

[123]Dialogue sur l'Ame, op. cit., 43.

[124]See note 92.

[125]Merton, op. cit., 110.

CONCLUSIONS

"Withdrawal in order to return:" these words have echoed continually throughout this paper. The words of the Fathers and even moreso their spirit seem to be imbued with this whole concept. They did, in fact, flee to the deserts and secluded places, but this flight was not an end in itself, but rather provided a means of achieving the quietude which is necessary for the fining of oneself. Too often the impression has been that the monks were bitter old men who hated and despised the world. Rather, as we have seen, they blessed it from afar, and indeed returned to it--but only when they were ready.

I have tried to show some of the important doctrines and ideas connected with this institution. After looking back over them I can certainly see how many of them have evolved into modern psychological theory. Oftentimes the words of the Fathers were crude and their ideas not too refined, but, underneath, the reality of situation sparkled and led them along the right path.

There is no doubt that each of the chapters in this paper could have been a thesis in itself. The subject is indeed vast and entails tremendous reading, often in foreign languages. If anything, this present paper is simply an insight into the wealth of knowledge and experience which can be found in the traditions of the monks of the East.

I have tried to show that, germinally at least, their doctrines are in accord with the psychological teachings of our day. These doctrines certainly had their shortcomings , but they had the advantage of being based upon the experiences of the Spiritual Fathers actually directing their spiritual sons.

Although the early Fathers certainly did not use Freudian terminology, their basic doctrine could be called Freudian: the necessity for understanding the ego to develop effectively the personality. They understood the necessity of understanding the feelings and desires even though at times they seemed to discourage them.

Their asceticism was geared not to deaded the emotional and affectional life of their subjects but rather to spark and crystallize its meaning to the person. They held man in the greatest dignity because they saw in him the image of God, an image which was not static but ever-changing and dynamic under the influence of the Spirit. If one could distinguish one underlying principle of this whole institution, even monasticism itself, it would be this: the realization of the dignity of man and his unseen potentials both for good and evil. They understood that the only binding force which could move a man in a real meaningful relationship must be love—love of God and our fellow men, not a love that stifles and makes another totally dependent in the fashion of a slave, but a love that allows

another to open up his arms and heart and receive the world. "Withdrawal in order to return."

Today, when the pace of life is faster and one can get caught in the furor of the crowd so easily, when crisis seems to mount upon crisis, the salvation of many a troubled soul would be a Spiritual Father of the same fiber of the early monastic fathers. He would provide a counterbalance to those who would chide us to get where the action is, to where the movement of the human race seemingly is carried on.

This quest for activity which is the cry of today carries with it the very real danger of becoming so immersed in movement that one fails to move oneself. In the midst of this turmoil it is essential to stand still in quiet and solitude, at least in the beginning of ones life. This provides the opportunity to enter into the activity and dynamism of the microcosm which we call ourselves. It moves faster than any crowd and its intensity can become stronger than the fiercest riot. It is only by stepping back from the crowd and entering into a monadic existence that one can reappear to the human race and share with it his humanity.

The retreat into solitude, however, is beneficial only as a means for advancement, and must not be considered as an end in itself. Once this retreat has been made, moreover, it is essential to advance slowly and in a very clearly defined direction. Herein lies the very real and often fatal danger.

For the inexperienced soul of today, just as for the monastic novice of old, the barriers and detours along the

road of advancement are many, the need for a Spiritual Father, a man well-tempered in the spiritual life, is great. It is only through this expert guidance and paternal love and concern that the neophyte can have any real expectation of advancing in knowledge of himself and of the Spirit.

As distasteful as this idea may seem to modern man, action-minded and independent as he is, it is nevertheless essential. The contemporary cry for reality has deadened the life of the Spirit and also smothered the concept of mystery. The need for integrity and the call of so many for its realization may be preparing them for a great surprise once they have indeed realized it. For as John the Solitary in his Dialogue on the Soul tells us ever so quietly: "Beyond integrity is mystery which cannot be defined."[126]

[126]Dialogue sur l'Ame, 46.

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