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CHAPTER I

by Franz Spitta

APYPHASIS OR APOPHASIS

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LEGENDS AND FRESCOES
OF
MOUNT ATHOS

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MYSTICISM ON ATHOS

Mysticism and Theology of the Eastern church differ from the West by a substantial point, namely as regards the "God-recognition". In technical language *(Eastern)* it is called apophatic whereas the other *(Western)* is known as kataphatic. Apophasis means denial. It is denied that man, a created being, is able to recognize features of the Creator. The only thing one can declare about God is His unexplorability. To add attributes to Him, attributes which have escaped the world of the created, is considered as an unapproachable effort. Whereas the kata-

phatic theology claims - kataphasis means affirmation:-
 True, the Creator-god is unexplorable, and every declaration about Him would be mistaken, if Christ's incarnation and through Him the revelation had not been allotted to us, out of which conclusions about the essence of God are ~~possible~~ granted possible.

between these two theological interpretations there exists no more dispute, one considers them just as different modes of the interpretation, which get on together in brotherly love, but which have taken different roads since their arisings in mysticism, liturgies and church-history.

The superworldly themes such as incarnation, transfiguration and the resurrection of Jesus, and

the mystery of the Holy Trinity suit the superworld-ly character of the apophatic theology, whereas the kataphatic theology of the West especially loves to be occupied with all that are humanly conceivable themes, it lay stress on the ethic value of the Bible and prefers every thing out of which God's attributes are opened up.

In the West, mysticism and theology are two related yet different paths of religious recognition, of which the latter's preeminence is admitted. In the East, on the contrary, both are one. Thanks to a personal experience mysticism is gained and verified theology, not a dithyrambic extacy which flares

up, but a calm inner blessing, a lasting state.

Another difference exists in the fact that the saints of the Western church stand so often in the constant battle ~~with~~ against the demon, from which the saints of the Byzantine culture-world have been spared and can therefore offer themselves to spiritual development less disturbed. What they report about their mystic experiences is expressed shortly and in the character of mark-sayings; the hymnlike rhetoric of extatic Spain ~~or~~ and Italy is completely missing. They stick to the apophatic rules of the Bishop Ignatius - first century: "Better silent and to be than talk without being" and "Whoever really has Christ's word, is able even to hear his silence".

Before the mystic of the East ventures to rise up to the higher spheres of consciousness, he feels obliged to understand clearly to his body and his surroundings. He disapproves of that pagan or manichean dualism, according to which body and spirit stand opposite each other as enemies. For the true Christian the material world is no work of a bad demon, but it also is a creation of God, on which though a darkness has fallen, ^{like on all creation} through Adam's sin, that has darkened also humanity. But now Christ, the second Adam, overcome the darkness through His light, the soul has through the christening reattained her ~~God-fit~~ God-filiation, and thereby the strength, to become again as pure as Adam before his fall. The renunci-

ation of the world equals a return of the soul to
 itself. Thus says Isaak the Syrian: "The soul in
 itself is passionless. Only when it surrenders to
 the outer world does it succumb to the passions."
 So as to keep it pure, constant watchfulness is needed.
 The spirit should watch over the heart; the heart
 should glow, but the spirit must remain cool.

When this condition is fulfilled, there is given
 the possibility of a genuine mystical experience.
 According to the early christian anthropology the heart
 is the place and source of all soul- and metaphysical
 stirrings. Thus says Macarios the Egyptian: "The spi-
 rit and all thoughts of the soul are to be found in the
 heart." Therefore both must stand in harmonic relation,

thus, that the heart thankfully accepts its being
 watched over by the spirit. When it has got used to
 that it will gradually become able to watch over itself.
 The spirit as the place of the human person will then
 be given back its task, to guide God's grace into the
 heart. This is the personal participation with

With that the state of passionlessness is reached
 which is not "dull"slacking along", but it is through-
 out an active behavior, a constant practice of watchful-
 ness. This wone (overcome) the first step into the
 lightrealm of mysticism is done. The second lies in
 awakening metania. The word really means to think
 in a new way, but soon took on the meaning of repentance
 To experience that is an act of grace. Whoever has

recognised that the light is only possible through
 an estrangement from darkness, it will become his lot.
 Thus says Isaak the Syrian: "Remorse is the soul's
 shiver before the gates of paradise" and he continues
 by explaining: "Remorse is the presupposition for the
 right prayer. This is the personal communication with
 God. Prayer is the stand before the face of God."

Thus it is understandable that a quite dominant
 importance is given to prayer on Athos. A prayer
 of special requests of personal needs is not the right
 prayer, on it hang too many earthly things, which is
 humanly understandable, but - from the apophatic
 point of view - pollutes the higher purpose. (?)
 Only the pure prayer / *prosefchi kathara*, which only

asks for spiritual values, is worthy to reach up to God. The soul must pray beyond prayer. The complete prayer is a spiritual (or mental in both German and Greek) **prosefchi pnevmatiki** and only this is meant when one talks about prayer on Athos. There it has become the central conception of mysticism and piusness.

~~It's secret~~ In mental prayer the soul leaves the realm of the created, the becoming and the decaying, and rises into the world of eternal being. Then is reached the state of completed rest of the soul and balance, the **hesichia**, the realm of splendour and joy in the silence of the spirit. This mystic state of god-"soaked" relaxedness deprives itself

of any psychological description, for in this state

the soul has grown out of itself. He who has not

realised this is endangered into considering the Cris-

tian **hesichia** = equal to the fakeerlike wiped out con-

sciousness. Yet this case is the opposite: conscious-

ness has become overalert, so much so, that our worldly

understanding cannot grasp it. Consciousness is still

there but in a higher sphere.

The orthodox **hesichia** must not be equalised to

the ecstasy of the western saints. The latter is a

sudden intoxicant state, in which the body sinks,

senceless and kataleptically. In the **hesichia** the

feeling of the body is still preserved but is submitted

under the soul's experience. **Hesichia** stretches into

hours and does not end in exhaustion but with a newly gained feeling of strength.

Hesichia is the state of the coming age (aeon), in which the soul has a part of the divine energies which surround it. Were a pagan expression allowed one could call this state apollonic.

In the program of the monk's life the evening is the best time to practise **hesichia**, the hours from ^{2-3 hours long} the vespers until sun-down. The monks go into the garden, in the kiosk (gazebo?), or to the cemetery to submit themselves to the pious quiet. They sit there quietly, and do nothing else than be silent.

That is the creative quiet which was called by the

Romans otium. The Northerner must first learn what **hesichia** is: a happy bond with God, a prayer without words. When one asks a monk about **hesichia** the answer one gets is merely an embarrassed smile. How could one grasp what is beyond all words? On the other hand one is more inclined to bring the meaning of mental prayer closer to the stranger, that which is a fruit of **hesichia**. It must be everlasting, like breath and heartbeat, according to the words of the Bible: "Pray uninterruptedly!", calls for a special practice. In him the latent **hesichia** becomes active. This is to do nothing else than meet with the continuous down-pouring Grace, by human cooperation-**energia**, but it has nothing to do with the Asiatic prayer-mechanism.

So it is not suitable to talk of a Christian Yoga.

The mental prayer., the prayer of the heart, goes back to ancient-christian tradition and at an early time it was put into wordings fit to be taught. Thus says Neilos the Sinaite on the subject: "If you want to see the countenance of the heavenly Father, then do not strive to see any picture ore form during prayer."

Diadochus of Photike: "The prayer of the heart enables us to love God completely. The love is a godly energy which enflames the ^(of) soul and binds it with God."

Basil the Great: "The good prayer is that in which the soul formulates the continuously operating God-thought."

This formulation must happen consciously, because ~~the~~ the **Eastern ORTHODOX** ~~conscience~~ does not know to be subconscious, no slumber of

the soul. If the gospel announces: "God is light", then the formulatoin must also be light. Light is experienced as a real aspect in the knowledge: *en gnosei* of God. Gnosis is on the highest grade of experiencing the uncreated light. "In your light we see the light". (Ps.36,10) Like this also, Symeon the New Theologian: "God is light and they that he makes worthy to see Him see him as light. Who ever has received this light ~~has~~ have received the grace of God."

This divine light is the same as that of the burning bush, that which formed around (?) prophet Elias.

Explanation to P. 13. last line

Because the idea of subconscious does not exist in the Eastern (Orthodox) He means that it must not be an automatic stupefying practice, but an intelligent ^{conscious} ~~one~~

the soul. If the gospel announces: "God is light", then the formulation must also be light. Light is experienced as a real aspect in the knowledge-en gnosei of God. Gnosis is on the highest grade of experiencing the uncreated light. "In your light we see the light".

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This divine light is the same as that of the burning bush, that which formed around (?) prophet Elias, that which threw down Saulus and which glorified (transformed?) the Lord on mount Tabor. According to Dionysius Areopagita it is equal to the divine fire, which descen-

ded on to the disciples as the Holy Ghost at Pentecost,
 and is to be equalised with the divine energies, that
 stream downwards on the people as light of grace, an
 spiritual inner light. This is definitely no contradiction to
 the apophatic point of view. Indeed, according to this
 view the essence-ousia of God is unexplorable for every-
 one, yet in the essence of God lies the possibility to
 operate in the created world. Exactly these operations
 are the energies. ~~As an example~~ The rays of the sun
 can serve as an example, they are not the sun itself
 yet they are experienced by human beings, because there
 exists in the man something which enables him to experien-
 ce the light, his eye. "Were the eye not sun-ly..."
 Yet this example is inaccessible because it sets up

an organic interrelation, which is missing in the religious sphere, for the inpouring of the energies is grace from the Holy Ghost. **Metania**-repentance, and **hesichia** allow \neq man to hope, that God will listen to his prayer's cry, but they cannot force on the grace. The teaching from the in-pouring of the divine energies and the illumination-**ellampsis** belongs neither to the intellect nor to the senses but is the reserved phenomenon of the mystical experience.

This light of illumination is, as Symeon the New Theologian says, a fire, really divine, not created, not material, without a beginning. It was according to the words of Gregorious Palamas in the Old Testament frightening, in the New Testament it is mild. He teaches fur-

ther: "The light of illumination on the mount Tabor was visible for earthly eyes, because the disciples had at an earlier stage been seized by it. Who ^{has a} ever shares in the divine energies ~~is~~ becomes likewise himself light. Those who are pure of heart see God, who lives in them because He is light and because He revealed Himself to those who love Him! This corresponds with the word of Paul: "The body must be spiritualised, must become a spiritual body," for the heart is, as mentioned, the

Tomus Hagioriticus concludes therefrom: "If the body with the soul should have a part in the unimaginable goods of the coming aeon then it must be able to do this here below as far as possible."

Therein lies the key to the understanding of the

Athos- mysticism: the~~x~~ body is no enemy of the soul,
 but it is it's companion, which is likewise to the soul
 called to take part of the enlightenment, at the same ~~tim~~
 time. Christ has ennobled the body by His incarnation,
 and enabled it to take part in everything that comes
 across the soul. Thus is the psycho-physical problem
 solved in the sence of enlightenment-mysticism.

This spirit-bodily union explains the power of
 the heart-prayer, for the heart is, as mentioned, the
 mystic organ which binds the soul and body together.
 Seraphim of Sarow says about that: "God is the fire, that
 warms the hearts and turns them into glowingness. When
 we feel cold in the heart, which comes from the demon, ~~xxx~~
 then we call to the Lord, and He will come and He will

warm our heart through the love to Him and to the neighbour. Infront of the glow of His countenance the cold of the enemy will fade away. The cold and idleness=**akedia** of the heart is a test, which every one must go through, who aspires ^{to} the completion of the soul." Symeon the New Theologian also describes these states: "Often did I see this light, at times it appeared ~~in~~ my innermost, when my soul possessed the peace and the silence, at times it shone only from far away or it hid completely. Then I felt great sorrow, for I feared never to see it again. As soon as I freed myself from everything tough and strove for genuine humility and ~~to~~ to be obedient, the light would shine anew. Thus didst thou disappear and appear

to me day and night, unspeakable, invisible, untouch-
able, thou who at every hour revealest and hides thyself!

All mystic experiences, which that are allotted to man
are only weak forebodings of coming bliss. Isaak the
Syrian says about that: "The realities of the coming aeon
have no actual name. One can receive of them only
a certain simple cognizance, beyond all words, all ele-
ments, all pictures, forms and names. This is an
unknowing which surpasses all knowledge."

Symeon the New Theologian again states about the
coming sight of God: "When we have reached completion,
God appears not in any picture or in any traces but
He lets Himself be seen in His simplicity, which is

arisen by the flameless and ungraspable light. I cannot say any more about it."

So the mystery is hidden in everything which aims at the coming aeon which eill be a life in love and light, a life in the Holy Ghost.

If one wishes to categorize the teaching of the East according to time one finds a threefold partition according to the works (or effects) of the Holy Trinity: The old Testament lives in the faith strength of faith and in directing hope for the (coming of) Son. The new Testament realises through the Son all the hopes and leads the world to the realm of love, to the Holy Ghost. Christ, the second Adam, has given us paradise back, the Holy Ghost fills it with light.

Therewith is introduced the Parusia, the coming back of Christ and the last judgement, which will meet the sinners. Thereof reports Symeon the New Theologian: "Those that have become the children of light and sons of the coming day, the day of the Lord will never come to them, because they have all the time been in God. It will come suddenly though to those who live in the spirit of this world and who cling to the passing goods of it."

The mystery of the divine light is called the mystery of the "eighth day", of eternity.

So we see that in the East dogmatic tradition and mystical experience go hand in hand and complete each other. The mystic Symeon is called the Theologian, because his mystic experiences form the foundation of

Eastern-church-belief holds of belief, which gives a special importance also to the church festivities.

So ~~Whitsun~~ Whitsun like in the West is the feast of descent of the Holy Ghost, yet apart from that it is the feast of the Holy Trinity, for on this day poured the divine energies over the people, by the grace of a third divine person.

The celebration of Easter is the feast of the faith, because the belief in the resurrection of Christ has become the pledge for our own resurrection.

In the outline of the historical development of the two problems, the prayer of the heart and the sight of the Tabor-light, there is the following picture: Owing

to the principle kataphatic frame of mind of the Western-
 church it is understandable that the apophatic theolo-
 gy of the Orient met with her dismissal & considering
 that the worldpolitics of both brother chuches wasgrowing
 more and more apart in the 13th century. Yet the exit
 of an open conflict was purely a theoretical one. The
 Greek monk from Calabria Barlaam represented a quar-
 relsom kataphatism, which enflamed the East to a resis-
 tance. He claimed that God gave us the possibility
 to recognize the supernatural through the incarnation
 of Christ, the same with his revelations. To deny
 that is such an atrocity, that only the demon could have
 whispered it to man. In the same manner Barlaam
 attacked the prayer of the heart, which supposedly

by artificial costriction of the senses (or conscious-
ness) is supposedly against nature. For the same
reason he dismisses the sight of the Tabor-light as a
subjective illusion.

The learned archbishop of Thessalonica Gregorios
Palamas answers him in his 'Triads to the defence of
the holy Hesichasts'. By sharp responses Barlaam
showed himself more and more clearly as a Renaissance-Hum-
anist with a platonic touch, ~~the~~ by which he came into
the ^{field} arena of a masked pagan for the Orient. The fight
surged back and forth for ~~x~~ ten years until in August
1341 a council in the Hagia Sophia at Constantinople
plainly took the side of Gregorios Palamas and discarded
Barlaam's thesis. The latter returned to Italy and in

his old age became the Greek-teacher of the poet Pet-
arca.

Now the victorious thoughts of Apophatism could pre-
vail everywhere in the East without resistance, and
the flourish of Athos-mysticism began. One no longer
shrank from applying the psychotechnical means which
Barlaam scorned, so as to reach union with God, the
way suggested by Symeon the New Theologian: "Sitting in
a quiet cell isolated from try to do what I tell you.
Cut yourself off from the world around you and pull
your spirit from those idle and passing things. Here-
upon fix your chin to your chest and focuse your eyes to
the middle of the tummy with all concentration. on the
level that is to say. Hold your breath so that you do

not breathe after your wish. Look into your innermost
 for the place of the heart, where naturally all powers of
 the soul live. In the beginning you will find unpenetrable
 thick darkness. If you persist though
 and try day and night you will- oh what a wonder!- find
 unending peace. As soon as the spirit tracks down the
 place of the heart, it sees what it earlier never had
 experienced. For it sees through the veil of the heart
 and sees itself in full clarity." To reach this goal
 a lot of endurance is necessary. One is to hold
 in front of one's eyes always the summons: "Pray without
 interruption." (1.Th.5,19) The church-father Chryso-
 stome gives to that the explanation: "Hang onto the name
 of Jesus uninterruptedly, so that your heart absorbs

the Lord and the Lord your heart, so that there become out of two one. This is not the work of a day or two, but of a long time and ~~endurance~~ constancy. Because a lot of fighting and time are needed, so that the enemy is thrown out of your heart and Christ takes it for habituation!

So when the one who practices does not slacken from his eagerness and the grace of God comes towards him the following takes place according to the holy Seraphim of Sarow: "As soon as man sees the inner light inside himself, his understanding (or consciousness) becomes clear and free of all earthly imaginations. Completely sunk into the seeing of uncreated goods he forgets the whole world of the senses, wishes also not

to see himself but to hide deep down in the heart of the earth just so as not to loose the real good, God."

These are all testimonies of mystics of earlier centuries. But are such experiences possible for men also, of our age? People whos senses are overflowed by enflamation since childhood, whos' restlessness has become for them the element of life? How shall he then reach the inner complete quiet?

Yet even today the same mystical experiences count as in the earlier days. A learned man of our days, the athos monk Vassili Krivoschein, expresses himself about that from his own experience: "So as to understand ~~orthodox~~ Orthodox mysticism properly one must keep in mind the central idea, namely the becoming

one with God. This oneness is a grace of God. Man though must also from his part aspire to God and his love for Him must be shown in work as an expression of it. This deepest expression of loving God is the prayer in which the whole human being turns to God and aspires to be one with Him. Since according to parician anthropology the innermost centre of man is the heart, the proper spiritual prayer is accomplished in the heart. All appearances of imagination, all sensual imaginations are considered something uncompleted, even harmful, because they are hindrances against direct union with God. And not only the soul but the whole man, spirit and body unite with God in spiritual prayer. That is the deepest purpose (or meaning) of Hesichasmus.

Although the prayer of the heart, **xi** untill 30 years ago, was as good as unknown in the West, because the athos-books hardly mention it, since a short time it has found a certain spreading here, curiously among the lay, while the Western meditation-forms, like the ones found in *exercitia spiritualia* of Ignatius Loyola and in the scriptures of St. John of the Cross and Theresa of Avila, are mainly practiced in clerical circles. In comparison to the Spanish contemplation-forms the prayer of the heart is of touching simplicity, without learned presuppositions. By what invisible ways it trickled into our midst is unknown.

In the book 'The prayer of the Heart. The Century Of Monks "Kallistus and Ignatius" (Munich 1955) Prof. Gerhard Frei relates , in his epilogue, about the

practice of the prayer of the heart in the present of
 nine cases that he has come across during his 25 year
 activity of looking after souls,. A secretary, a painter,
 painter, a teacher, a book-keeper, a young mother and
 a peasant-woman, have given themselves to the prayer of
 the heart and tell how ~~their~~ their lives have become
 happy by it. An eighty-yearold woman changed it into
 'Lord Jesus I trust in Thee'.

Prof. Frei closes with conclusion that in our midst
 there is a ^{invisible} congregation of devout people who carry the
 monk's cell within them and who constantly inhale the
 prayer of the heart like a breath. He examines also
 the question whether the Jesus-prayer can be put on equal
 basis to the Indian Yoga; as a research r of religion

he arrives at interesting conclusions. According to Him it rests on three secrets, like every mantram, on the name, the heart, and the rythm of breathing.

About the name he says: The dress of the x idea is the word, the soundbody of the idea. Every thing is a cristallised sound-body, is the word become visible. In the name the nemed one is present. Knowledge of the name means power over the named one. That is why the 'great' name, the secret name, is by all peoples only given to the initiated. Likewise also the name of Jesus has its secret power for this name was chosen by God Himself for His incarnated Son. Je-shua means: Jawe freed. That is the name above all names(Ph.2,9). The first Sunday of the year is the celebration of the

name of Jesus. This name protects one from demons, reaches into spheres outside the world, then. "The Heart-prayer circulates like a planet around the sun of Jesus Christ."

Frei says about the secret of the heart: "As man draws the stream of breath from the nose into the breast so must he send thoughts from the brain into the heart. The heart is the center between brain and sexus, therefor also the centre of the inner man. Life must be interwoven with spirit, neither heatedly stirring neither coolly calculating."

This is what he says about the secret of rythm and breath: "Kosmos and history are built according to measure, number and rythm, therefore the heart-prayer

must also have the rythm of heart-beat and breathing. It must ~~hard~~ blend quietly and relaxedly without drill and struggle. That which wishes to reach religious importance must be simple and easy to do again! (Rosenkranz, Litanei.) This is completed in a forward by by some thoughts in a forward of Andre Bloom: "The silence of the soul is the mystery of the coming time." (Vgl.S.8,13.) Prayer is a special gift from God and it cannot be brought to fulfillment by any artificial means neither by cunning or force. In prayer the static of quiet (*hesichia*) and dynamic of life ^(zoe) unite.

Dew to the close connection of Athos and the Russian monasteries it is understandable that the heart-

prayer found great spreading at an early time in Russia. And namely by the book Dobrotoluje, which reached the most far off villages from the hundredthousand exemplars from St. Petersburg. Through the medium of pious old men, the starzes, millions found the happiness of pious construction. (Spiritual rconstruction?) It is a folkloric translation of the Greek Philokalia, an anonimus collection of mystic scriptures, printed for the first time in Venice 1782. A Frensh translation of chosen parts appeared in Paris 1933: J. Guillard, Petite Philocalie. About the influence of Dobrolubje on the Russian piety, another little book reports to us. It is anonimus, Russian, a shaking document of religious innerness. (German translation by Reinhold

von Walter, "Ein Russisches pilgerleben." berlin 1925.)

The Russian Pilgrim is a simple peasant , who has learnt to read and write but dwe to a paralised left arm is unable to do any farming. Providance guides him to pious starez who initiates him into hte ~~PRAYER~~ secret of heart-prayer. Under his directions he first prays threethousand times a day and increases that number to four times as much in a short time. One can doubt if that is possible during the sixteen hours of the waking state, but nowhere in the text is there any sign of exageration. He passes, in continuous prayer, a happy summer in solitude and wonders after wards across Russia and Sibiria untill he desides to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem whereupon he disappears f

for the reader. The Russian life of pilgrimage is
initiates touching simplicity a gripping document of the
purest love for God, which through the teaching of the
devout starez, leads to the highest happiness reachable
for man on earth.

But it also materially brings to the reader some-
thing new,. Thus teaches the starez to the russian
pilgrim and pupil, which according to the Russian vesion
is to be prayed like this:" Imagen your heart exactly,
focuse your eyes there as though you could see it through
your breast, and imagin it as vividly as possible.
Listen if possible attentively how it ~~stirrs~~ stirrs and
beats each time. When you have found your way therein
looking into this , begin at every beat to fit the

prayer words to it. At the first beat say or think to yourself, 'Lord! by the second, 'Jesus,' by the third 'Christ', by the fourth, 'have mercy', by the fifth, 'upon me!' and repeat that as ~~soon~~^{often} as possible. This will seem easy for you for you have already prepared yourself for the prayer of the heart. When you have got used to that though, then begin ~~in~~ the Jesus prayer at the same time as your breathing direct it into the heart and out again, as the Fathers teach it,. That means, you are to say ^{or think} when you inhale: 'Lord Jesus Christ! Then let out: 'Have mercy upon me!' Do this as often as possible , so then you will feel a distant pleasant pain in your heart; as then a warmth will spread therein. Thus you will reach the automatic operation of the

sanctifying inner heart prayer with God's help.

Try also with all your strength to drive back all which your consciousness whispers or which might appear to you . Take up no picture! For the holy Fathers have announced that one is not to see anything during the inner prayer, so as not to fall to temptations."

A few pages further we find the resulting manifestations which develop by exact obedience to the given rules: "After listening to all this attentively he began full of eagerness to ~~begin~~ proceed according to this way. About five days later he became aware of a strong inner warmth and an unspeakably pleasant feeling in the heart. Apart from that also the inclination to repeat the prayer continuously which ~~led~~ ~~to~~ the love of Jesus to him.

At times he saw a light shining although he did not perceive any objects therein. Occasionally it seemed to him, when he went into the depths of his heart, that at the same time the strong flame of a burning candle udescribably blessed, arose in his heart and pressed out from his throat and shone around him. By the light of this flame he could even see things far away." Thus the heart-prayer becomes the exit-point of parapsychological phenomena, to which though the aspirant gives no importance, because they could distract him from the actual purpose of the prayer, the union with God. His soul has already overcome space and time and lives there already in a beyondness, which is nothing but blessing love of God.

That the operations of God-blessed old men, the Stzarzes had an effect in Russian literature is shown in the 'Folk-tales' of Tolstoj also the chapters in Dostojewskij novel 'The Brothers Karamasoff', which are about the blessed works of the saintly Starez Sossima. In the year 1878 Dostojewskij looked for the Starez Amwrosij at the moastery of Optina. Leo Tolstoj had been to Amwrosij three times, during the fourth journey to Optina he died on his way to Starez Joseph in 1910.

In these authors we see the same meekness in behavior as we have got to know them in the Russian legends of Mt. Athos, which are also aimed at the mystic and ethic goal, which binds the other side with this side. And added to them is a touching simplicity which is under-

standable to every one.

Now it would be interesting to know if there is any thing left of the tradition of the Starzes in today's Russia. To our surprise we hear from neutral travelers who can get as far as the villages and small towns that at many places, apart from the officially authorised religion, there exist secret and even tolerated, pious konventikel in which the sovjet people occasionally meet to~~x~~ devotional practises, in private flats, after having completed their state-duties. Among them there are not only old people but also young ones who take part. Has the church returned to the Katakombes then?

Such reports are confirmed by the ^{notice} ~~notse~~ taken which the official newspaper takes when in 1962, Jan-

uary, it complains that still seventy percent of the population (!) are still believers. (This is taken from a Vienna church paper.) How is this to be understood? Surely no other fact than that the pre-sovjet tradition of the Starzes and the Dobrotolubje still live effectively, in secret. And with them the heart-prayer and with it the Athos-mysticism - Like through a miracle it is preserved till today.

So as to return to the subject of the chapter, to the Athos-mysticism still practices in our days, the editor is convinced that a completely exhausting and perfect report on that is only possible to him who for years lives among monks as a monk and who absorbs all the secrets of the holy mountain. Hints towards the actual

spiritual activity of these times of the holy mountain will be given in the following chapters.

That much the author was able to find out that in Athos one is less and less talkative about questions concerning Mystical problems, from year to year. One guards these secrets from foreigners still more. No wonder after the many unfortunate experiences one had to bear dew to ununderstanding ore sensational foreigners.

So it has come to be that Athos took up two aspects, one exoteric meant for foreigners and the other esoteric for pious pilgrims and serious visitors, learned people and theologists from whom one need not fear profanation of the holy. But also to the ones of the

first category if they are earnest and are taken by the aspiration for religious knowledge, one admits to them glimpses into the spiritual Athos-world occasionally. One draws their attention to two easily understood foundational ideas: 1. the goal of Athonite devotion is the union of the soul with God, the ^{union} enosis and 2. this union cannot be forced even through the greatest prayer-"work" , but depends exclusively on the merciful Grace of God according to the ~~epistles~~ Roman epistles 9, 16: "So it lies not in someone's will ~~xx~~ but in God's mercy" ~~There~~ therewith everything is said and the mystery ~~xxde xx~~ brought to awareness.

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