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Edited by  
ELIZABETH A. LIVINGSTONE

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## THE SPIRITUAL FATHER IN ST. JOHN CLIMACUS AND ST. SYMEON THE NEW THEOLOGIAN

Kallistos T. Ware

'What is more to be desired', asks St. Theodore the Studite (759-826), 'than a true father—a father-in-God?'<sup>1</sup> This personal relationship between the spiritual father or elder—*geron* in Greek, *starets* in Slavonic—and his child in God is of crucial importance for any understanding of the Christian East. There are in a sense two forms of apostolic succession within the life of the Church. First there is the visible succession of the hierarchy, the unbroken series of bishops in different cities, to which St. Irenaeus appealed at the end of the second century. Alongside this, largely hidden, existing on a 'charismatic' rather than an official level, there is secondly the apostolic succession of the spiritual fathers and mothers in each generation of the Church—the succession of the saints, stretching from the apostolic age to our own day, which St. Symeon the New Theologian termed the 'golden chain'.<sup>2</sup> The two types of succession overlap, for a bishop may also be a spiritual father and a saint. The first type has as its chief centres the great primatial and metropolitan sees such as Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Moscow, or Canterbury. The chief centres of the second vary from one generation to another, and are usually certain remote hermitages in the desert or the forest: Nitria and Scetis in the late fourth century, Gaza in the early sixth, Sarov, Optino and Spruce Island, Alaska, in the nineteenth. Both types of succession are essential for the true functioning of the Body of Christ, and it is through their interaction that the life of the Church on earth is accomplished.

The ministry of the spiritual father is already foreshadowed in the New Testament: 'Though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the Gospel' (1 Cor 4:15).<sup>3</sup> Here St. Paul makes an emphatic distinction between the 'guide' or 'pedagogue' (*παιδαγωγός*), in a broader sense, and the 'father': the Corinthians have many 'pedagogues' but only a single father, only one who has 'regenerated' them into the new life in Christ Jesus, and who is thus uniquely entitled to say, 'I have begotten you' (*ἐγὼ ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα*). Obviously Paul's ministry is not identical with that of the elder in later Eastern spirituality: Paul was a preacher of the word, an itinerant missionary, and not a director of souls working in a monastic *milieu*. But at the same time there are striking parallels between Paul and the monastic elder. Paul feels a continuing responsibility for those whom he has 'begotten' or 'initiated' into the

Christian life, a direct involvement in their subsequent struggles. Shifting from a paternal to a maternal image, he writes to the Galatians: 'My little children, with whom I am in travail until Christ be formed in you!' (Gal 4:19). As this text makes clear, his commission does not come to an end with their initial conversion, but he goes on caring and suffering for them as a parent throughout the long process of development during which Christ is being 'formed' within them. He does not simply preach the word to them, but he bears their burdens, making their joys and sorrows his own: 'If anyone is weak, do I not share his weakness? If anyone is made to stumble, does not my heart blaze with indignation?' (2 Cor 11:29). He helps his children in Christ precisely because he is willing to share himself with them, identifying his own life with theirs. All this is true also of the spiritual father at a later date. Dostoevsky's description of the *starets* may be applied exactly to the ministry of St. Paul: like the elder, the apostle is one who 'takes your soul and your will into his soul and will'.<sup>4</sup>

The ministry of the elder to his spiritual children is foreshadowed also in Alexandria during the second and third centuries. The teacher's role, as understood by St. Pantaenus, St. Clement and Origen, was by no means limited to instruction in the narrow academic sense, to the bare transmission of facts. The teacher was also a spiritual guide to his pupils, a living model and exemplar, providing them not only with information but with an all-embracing personal relationship. Origen's life of asceticism and prayer formed an integral part of his vocation as teacher.<sup>5</sup> Significantly Clement begins the *Stromateis* by likening the master-disciple relationship to that between parent and child, and he mentions that catechists in Alexandria were called 'father'.<sup>6</sup> There are important parallels here in classical philosophy<sup>7</sup> and Rabbinic Judaism.<sup>8</sup>

The figure of the elder or spiritual father, of which Paul and Origen serve in some measure as precursors, occupies a decisive place in Eastern monastic life from the fourth century onwards. The 'founder' of Egyptian monasticism, St. Antony (c. 251-356), provides in his own person a standard and norm for later generations. To appreciate how a true *geron* lives and acts, we need look no further than St. Athanasius' biography<sup>9</sup> or the stories told by Palladius about the old man's dealings with Eulogius and Paul the Simple.<sup>10</sup> The centrality of spiritual fatherhood is likewise underlined in the sayings attributed to Antony at the start of the *Apophthegmata*:

I know of monks who fell after much toil and lapsed into madness, because they trusted in their own work and neglected the commandment that says: 'Ask your father, and he will tell you' (Deut 32:7).

... So far as possible, the monk should in full trust ask the elders how many steps to take and how many drops of water to drink in his cell, in case he is making some mistake in these matters.<sup>11</sup>

Although they offer no abstract definition of what the *geron* is, the *Apophthegmata*

remain up to the present the most important single source for the practice of spiritual direction in the Christian East. The impression that they give is confirmed, in a yet more vivid and first-hand manner, by the correspondence of two sixth-century spiritual fathers in Southern Palestine, Barsanuphius and John of Gaza: the questions put to them and their answers survive in a remarkably detailed form.<sup>12</sup>

The tradition of spiritual fatherhood or motherhood—for this is a ministry also exercised by women<sup>13</sup>—retained its full significance throughout the Byzantine era, while from Byzantium it spread to the Slav Orthodox world. To take but one example out of many, the following advice is given in a text from Kievan Russia, the *Admonition of the Father to his Son* (?eleventh century):

I show you, my son, true refuges—monasteries, the houses of the saints: have recourse to them and they will comfort you; shed your sorrows before them and you will be gladdened: for they are sons of sorrowlessness and know how to comfort you, sorrowing one. . . . In the city where you are living or in other neighbouring towns seek a God-fearing man—and serve him with all your strength. Having found such a man, you need grieve no more; you have found the key to the Kingdom of Heaven; adhere to him with soul and body; observe his life, his walking, sitting, looking, eating, and examine all his habits; first of all, my son, keep his words, do not let one of them fall to the ground; they are more precious than pearls—the words of the saints.<sup>14</sup>

It is noteworthy in this passage that the *staretz* assists his disciple not by words of counsel alone but by the pattern of his entire life: ' . . . observe his life, his walking, sitting, looking, eating . . . '. As in the case of Origen at Alexandria, what he offers is not so much instruction as a personal relationship.

The relationship remains as significant in modern Orthodoxy as ever it was in the past. Spiritual fatherhood—as exemplified, for instance, by St. Seraphim of Sarov or the elders of Optino<sup>15</sup>—provides the true key to nineteenth-century Russian church life; and the chief reason for the unexpected revival of Greek monasticism on Mount Athos in the last fifteen years lies precisely in the presence there of elders able to supply the kind of charismatic guidance that St. Antony provided in fourth-century Egypt. The Athonite houses which today attract novices are those with an abbot or other monk able to act as a true father in the Spirit.<sup>16</sup>

The *Apophthegmata* and numerous other texts, especially lives of the saints, indicate with many details *how* in practice the spiritual father fulfills his task. But it is less easy to find in Patristic sources an analysis of *what* in principle constitutes the essence of spiritual fatherhood. The matter is, however, discussed notably in two texts: the letter of St. John Climacus (?579-?649), abbot of Sinai, entitled *To the Shepherd (Ad Pastorem)*,<sup>17</sup> sometimes treated as the thirty-first step in the *Ladder of Divine Ascent*; and the first letter of St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022), abbot of St. Mamas in Constantinople, entitled *On Confession*.<sup>18</sup> Both authors also make many references to spiritual fatherhood elsewhere in their writings, confirming what is said in these two letters. The points of similarity between the two texts are so striking as to exclude mere coincidence. Although Symeon, following his

usual practice, does not quote any earlier Fathers in his letter *On Confession*, there can be little doubt that he is drawing directly upon Climacus, whose *Ladder* was certainly known to him.<sup>19</sup> I am encouraged to examine with some care the parallels between Climacus' letter *To the Shepherd* and Symeon's *On Confession* because, to the best of my knowledge, no one has so far attempted to do this in a systematic fashion. Somewhat surprisingly Dr. V. Ch. Christophoridis, in his valuable monograph specially devoted to Symeon's teaching on spiritual fatherhood, fails to note the close dependence.<sup>20</sup>

Although neither Climacus nor Symeon provides a systematic list of characteristics, the spiritual father is in fact described by both authors chiefly in five ways. He is seen as doctor, counsellor, intercessor, mediator and sponsor.

1. *Doctor* (ιατρός). This is the dominant 'model' for the spiritual father in Climacus and Symeon, and indeed in Eastern Christian literature generally from the fourth century onwards. Athanasius describes Antony as 'a doctor given by God to Egypt';<sup>21</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>22</sup> and John Chrysostom<sup>23</sup> use similar language about the pastoral work of the priest or bishop. The Council in Trullo (AD 692) refers to the sinner as a 'sick man'; sinfulness is a 'disease', while the confessor is the one who applies 'healing' for the 'illness'.<sup>24</sup>

Such exactly is the approach also of Climacus and of Symeon. In his treatise *To the Shepherd* Climacus develops the medical analogy at length. The spiritual father is a 'doctor', who cares for the 'sick man', using 'plasters, razors, eye-salves, potions, sponges, remedies against nausea, instruments for blood-letting and cauterization, ointments, sleeping draughts, the knife, bandages'. The 'penance' (ἐπιτίμιον) that he imposes is not a punishment but a healing remedy, a 'cauterization' that he administers 'in a compassionate way as an aid to repentance'.<sup>25</sup> The spiritual doctor can only help if the patient is completely honest, 'baring his wound with entire trust'.<sup>26</sup> Symeon uses the same medical language. 'Seek out a compassionate and merciful doctor', he enjoins in the letter *On Confession*;<sup>27</sup> 'let us run at once to the spiritual doctor'.<sup>28</sup> To confess our sins is to spit out the poison within us; and the penances (ἐπιτίμια) that the confessor prescribes are, as in Climacus, not a punishment but a remedy or antidote (ἀντιφάρμακον) against the poison.<sup>29</sup>

It is to be noted that neither Climacus nor Symeon—nor, indeed, the Eastern Christian tradition in general—envisages the confessor or spiritual father primarily as a judge, passing sentence and imposing penalties. He is on the contrary what in medieval England would have been styled a 'ghostly leech', a spiritual healer or physician. It is true that Symeon refers to the spiritual father's power to bind and loose, which may be taken to imply a measure of juridical authority;<sup>30</sup> but in Climacus this aspect is less evident, while even in Symeon it is not in any way the dominant 'model'. In both of them the main images are not legalistic but therapeutic:<sup>31</sup> confession is like going to a hospital rather than a court of law; the penance is not so much a punishment as a tonic to assist the patient in his recovery. Moreover, what the spiritual child reveals to his father are not only his sins but more generally his 'thoughts' (λογισμοί), long before they have led to outward acts—even those

thoughts that are seemingly harmless and innocent.<sup>32</sup> The medical care of the elder embraces not just the transgressions but the entire inner life of the patient; the treatment is prophylactic rather than retrospective.

2. *Counsellor* (σύμβουλος). Most obviously, although not exclusively, the spiritual father heals by his *words*, by his advice or counsel. In the *Apophthegmata* what the disciple or visitor says to the *abba* is commonly, 'Speak a word to me' (ἐλπé μοι ρημα),<sup>33</sup> or else, more specifically, 'Speak a word to us, how can we be saved?'<sup>34</sup> The word of the spiritual father is a word of power, saving and regenerating. Accordingly Climacus in the letter *To the Shepherd* describes the spiritual father as a 'teacher' (διδάσκαλος) who heals through his *logos*.<sup>35</sup> He recognizes, however, that the elder may perhaps suffer from diffidence and find himself unable, face to face, to put his advice in words; in that case, says Climacus, let him write it down.<sup>36</sup> Symeon likewise speaks of the confessor as a 'teacher'<sup>37</sup> and a 'good counsellor who by his shrewd advice suggests in an appropriate manner ways of repentance'.<sup>38</sup> While healing by his speech, the spiritual father may also heal by his silence, that is, simply by virtue of his presence. When St. Antony of Egypt asked a monk who came to see him regularly why he never put any questions to him, the other replied, 'It is enough for me just to look at you, father.'<sup>39</sup> St. Symeon the New Theologian recounts of his own spiritual father St. Symeon the Studite or 'the Pious' (ὁ Εὐλαβής) (917-986/7), that he used to spend the whole day in the company of his disciples, 'and he helped many of them simply by his appearance'.<sup>40</sup> But Climacus warns the elder against the danger of keeping silent too much: it is his duty also to speak.<sup>41</sup>

3. *Intercessor* (πρεσβευτής). The spiritual father heals, not by his words of counsel only, but also and more fundamentally by his prayers. In the *Apophthegmata* the visitor says to the holy man, not merely 'Speak a word to me', but 'Pray for me'.<sup>42</sup> I recall a visit made by a friend of mine, an American, to a contemporary elder on Mount Athos. At the end of the conversation my friend said to him, 'May I write to you sometimes to ask for advice?' 'No,' the monk replied, 'don't write; but I will pray for you.' The American felt this as a rejection and went away saddened. But another monk, who had overheard the conversation, said to him later: 'You ought to be very happy that the *geronta* promised to pray for you; he doesn't say that to everyone. His advice is good, but his prayers are far, far better.' The intercessory prayer of the spiritual father for his children is a master-theme constantly recurring in the answers of Barsanuphius and John: 'Night and day I am praying for you unceasingly to God.'<sup>43</sup>

Faithful to the Gaza tradition, Climacus states in the first definition that he gives of the 'shepherd':

A shepherd is pre-eminently one who has the power to seek out the lost spiritual sheep and to set them on the right path, by means of his guilelessness, his zeal and his prayer.<sup>44</sup>

The monk, says Climacus elsewhere, has, as a 'helmet of salvation', the 'protection given by his superior through prayer'.<sup>45</sup> The obedient monk, even if he raises the

dead, will think that it is the intercession of his spiritual father which has enabled him to do this.<sup>46</sup>

As before, Symeon agrees closely with Climacus. The function of the spiritual father, he says, is to win God's favour for his children 'through his prayer and intercession';<sup>47</sup> he is an 'intercessor'.<sup>48</sup> Visiting his own elder, Symeon the Studite, the New Theologian greets him with the words: 'Pray for me . . . that through you I may find mercy.'<sup>49</sup> In the account that the younger Symeon gives of his first vision of the divine light, he records that he saw, standing close to the uncreated radiance, the figure of his spiritual father; and this made him realize 'how greatly the intercession of that holy man had assisted him'.<sup>50</sup> The spiritual father's intercession continues even after his death.<sup>51</sup> But the relationship is reciprocal, for the spiritual father in his turn needs the prayers of his children.<sup>52</sup>

4. *Mediator* (μεσότης). Pursuing further this conception of the intercessory function of the spiritual father, both Climacus and Symeon describe him as an 'intermediary' or 'mediator': he does not simply pray for his children, but through his intercession he *reconciles* them to God. So Climacus, at the very start of the *Ladder*, likens the spiritual father to a new Moses, mediating with God on our behalf against the invisible Amalek (cf. Exod 17:11-13):

All of us who wish to depart from Egypt and to escape Pharaoh certainly need some Moses, as a mediator with God, yet below God, who will stand on our behalf between action and contemplation and lift up his hands to God, so that those under his guidance may cross the sea of sins and overthrow the Amalek of the passions.<sup>53</sup>

Climacus is careful to say 'a mediator with God, yet *below God*' or '*after God*' (μετὰ Θεόν). He does not lose sight of the fact that, in the full and strict sense, there is only one mediator between God and man — Jesus Christ the *Theanthropos* (cf. 1 Tim 2:5); the mediation of the spiritual father is secondary to that of Christ and dependent upon it.<sup>54</sup>

*To the Shepherd* develops this idea of mediation. The 'superior' or spiritual father is the friend of the king; because he has free access to the royal presence, he can plead with boldness on behalf of others:

Just as those who behold the king's face and have made him their friend can if they wish reconcile any of the king's servants - and also strangers and even his enemies - and enable them to enjoy his glory, so it is also with the saints.<sup>55</sup>

From this Climacus draws the startling conclusion that a sin against one's spiritual father is graver than a sin against God:

Do not be shocked by what I am going to say. . . . It is better to sin against God rather than against our father. For if God is angry with us, our guide can reconcile him to us; but if our guide is roused against us, we have no one to make propitiation on our behalf.<sup>56</sup>

The spiritual father's mediation works in both directions: in the Godward direction, through his intercession he represents his children before the throne of heaven; in the manward direction he represents God to his children, so that his instructions have the value of the word of God. As an Alexandrian monk said to Climacus during the latter's visit to Egypt: 'I thought of the shepherd as the image of Christ. I thought of the command [that he gave me] as coming not from him but from God.'<sup>57</sup>

Since the spiritual father is the intermediary who has free access to the royal presence and so is able to introduce others to the Great King, it follows that no one should dare to assume the ministry of eldership unless he possesses personal experience of God. This is the basic and essential qualification of the spiritual father: direct inspiration by the Holy Spirit. 'Believe me, my child Zacharias,' says Abba Moses in the *Apophthegmata*, 'I saw the Holy Spirit descending upon you, and that is why I am compelled to question you.'<sup>58</sup> St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) insists in similar terms upon the need for the *starets* to possess direct experience of the Spirit—for him to be, as it were, *transparent*: 'I give only what God tells me to give. I believe the first word that comes to me to be inspired by the Holy Spirit . . . God directs my words.' And he adds: 'Were I to give an answer out of my own judgement—and, we may add, *a fortiori* an abstract answer copied from books—'. . . then I would make a mistake.'<sup>59</sup> Such also is the standpoint of Barsanuphius: when called upon to give guidance, the spiritual father prays inwardly, 'Lord, whatever you wish for the salvation of this person's soul, entrust it to me so that I may speak it to him; then I shall speak your word and not my own.'<sup>60</sup>

The cardinal importance of direct, personal experience is precisely what Climacus underlines at the outset of his letter *To the Shepherd*:

A genuine teacher is one who has received directly from God himself the tablet of spiritual knowledge inscribed by his divine finger, that is, by the active working of illumination, and who has no need of any other books. It is as unseemly for a teacher to copy out other people's writings, as it is for a painter to reproduce the work of someone else.<sup>61</sup>

No one can be a true elder at second hand; he needs to speak of what he has seen and felt for himself. If he is to be an instrument of reconciliation on behalf of others, he must first have 'reconciled God to himself'.<sup>62</sup>

In all this Symeon follows Climacus exactly. Quoting Hebrews 5:1-3,<sup>63</sup> he applies the title *mesites* to the spiritual father, whom he sees as an intermediary introducing the sinner into God's presence:

In his desire to be forgiven his debts, a man seeks for a mediator and helper to this end; for, weighed down as he is by many degrading sins, he cannot shamelessly approach alone.<sup>64</sup>

He will certainly seek out a mediator and friend of God, who is capable of restoring

him as he was before, and of reconciling him with God the Father. . . . There is no other way of being reconciled to God, except through the mediation of a holy man who is a friend and servant of Christ, and through fleeing from evil.<sup>65</sup>

As mediator, standing in God's presence face to face, through his prayer and intercession before God he wins on your behalf the gracious favour of the Deity.<sup>66</sup>

Here, as in Climacus, the spiritual father is the king's friend, who can therefore gain the royal favour on behalf of others. Such a man, adds Symeon, is not easily found.<sup>67</sup> Just as Climacus insists that the spiritual father is a mediator only in a secondary sense, 'after God', so Symeon likewise teaches that Christ is 'the first mediator and sponsor (μεσίτης καὶ ἐγγυητής) of our nature, offering it to his own God and Father'; our Lord then entrusted the task of 'mediation and sponsorship' to the apostles, and they in turn conferred it upon others, but it is Christ who remains the unique source.<sup>68</sup>

Once more as in Climacus, the mediation works in both directions: the spiritual father not only represents us to God but equally represents God to us. He is a living ikon of Christ, and we are to accept his counsel as coming directly from the Lord:

Looking at him and speaking to him as if he were Christ in person, you should honour him and learn from him what is to your profit.<sup>69</sup>

He who has acquired explicit faith in his father according to God, when looking at him thinks that he is looking at Christ; when in his presence or following him, he firmly believes that he is in Christ's presence or following Christ.<sup>70</sup>

The corollary to this notion of mediation, for Symeon as for Climacus, is that none can act as intermediary unless he is himself a friend of the king; none can be a true spiritual father unless he has acquired, in a direct and conscious manner, personal experience of the Holy Spirit. The need for palpable, experiential awareness of the indwelling Paraclete is a dominant theme in all Symeon's writings:

Do not say, It is impossible to receive the divine Spirit.  
 Do not say, It is possible to be saved without him.  
 Do not say, One can participate in him without knowing it (ἀγνώστως).  
 Do not say, God does not appear to men.  
 Do not say, Men do not see the divine light,  
 Or else, This is impossible in the present time.  
 It is never impossible, my friends;  
 It is certainly possible for anyone who wishes.<sup>71</sup>

Symeon composed a special treatise, attacking 'those who think that they have the Holy Spirit within themselves in an unconscious manner, but who do not feel his energy at all'.<sup>72</sup> It is not enough, Symeon maintains, to claim, 'I have received Christ and the Spirit in baptism', but each of us must become *consciously aware* of the baptismal grace already present and at work in his or her heart:

If those who 'are baptized into Christ put on Christ as a garment' (Gal 3:27), what is this garment that they 'put on'? God. Then should not he who has put on God as a garment be aware spiritually and see what he has put on? One whose body is naked feels when he puts on clothes and sees what his robe is like; and should not he whose soul is naked feel God's presence when he has put on God?<sup>73</sup>

Applying this general teaching about personal experience to the specific situation of the spiritual father, Symeon insists that nobody should presume to embark upon such a ministry unless he has 'received the grace of the Spirit consciously and knowingly, becoming thereby taught by God'.<sup>74</sup> Direct experience of the Spirit is the one indispensable qualification for the spiritual father's ministry:

Do not seek to be mediators on behalf of others until you have yourselves been filled with the Holy Spirit, and until you have come to know the King of all through the conscious experience of your soul.<sup>75</sup>

Lacking this personal experience, we cannot act as mediators on behalf of others, since we ourselves require someone else to mediate on our own behalf.<sup>76</sup>

While stressing in this way the need for personal experience, never for one moment does Symeon isolate the attainment of such experience from the practice of the Christian life as a whole, according to the pattern of Holy Scripture. He would surely have found astonishing the theory advanced by Aldous Huxley that the direct awareness of transcendent reality can be achieved simply through the use of drugs.<sup>77</sup> On the contrary, there is in his view only one way to acquire conscious experience of the Spirit, and that is to practise the virtues, to overcome the passions, and so to gain *apatheia*, 'passionlessness' or 'dispassion'.<sup>78</sup> Of course Symeon regards experience of the Spirit, and the vision of divine light, as a free and unmerited gift of God, not to be earned by human effort, and he never ceases to reflect on his own unworthiness to receive any such gift. But at the same time there is for him no mysticism without asceticism, no *theoria* without *praxis*. Claims to 'experience', if divorced from the profession of the true faith and the pursuit of the 'active life', would have appeared in his eyes nothing but a diabolic delusion.

Symeon then proceeds to draw out the full implications of this insistence upon personal experience. Priests, and even bishops and patriarchs, who lack such experience of the Spirit have no right to act as spiritual fathers, and no power to pronounce absolution and to bind and loose; on the other hand, lay monks, not in priestly orders, provided that they possess this conscious experience, are fully entitled to hear confessions and to exercise the ministry of binding and loosing.<sup>79</sup> He appeals to the example of his own elder, Symeon the Studite, who was not ordained.<sup>80</sup> While this is not a question that John Climacus discusses explicitly, in fact he nowhere specifies or implies that the spiritual father must be a priest. There is, moreover, no evidence that he was himself ordained, and yet he certainly exercised the ministry of fatherhood and direction.

Here Symeon's letter *On Confession* raises, in a particular form, an issue that re-

curs constantly in religious history: the relationship between priest and prophet, between the hierarchy and the holy man, between the Church as 'institution' and the Church as 'charismatic event'. The right of lay persons to bind and loose had been a matter for dispute in the Church long before this, in Africa during 251-2, when the confessors in the recent persecution claimed the authority to reconcile the *lapsi*, while St. Cyprian maintained that this could be done only by the hierarchy.

Symeon does not in fact allude to this precedent. He is making two connected assertions, the first positive and the second negative:

(1) Persons not in priestly orders—or at any rate monks who are not ordained—have the right to bind and loose, provided that they possess conscious experience of the Spirit.

(2) Ordained persons who lack this experience have no right to bind and loose.

For the first or positive contention, it is in fact possible to cite much supporting evidence in the history of Eastern Christian monasticism, from the fourth century up to the present day. Many of the leading elders in the Egyptian desert, including Antony himself, were never ordained; Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, so far as is known, were not priests. One of the best known *startsi* in the recent history of Athos, Fr. Silvan (1866-1938) of the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon, was a lay monk;<sup>81</sup> so also is the Greek Fr. Paisios (living formerly near Stavronikita, and now close to Karyes), respected as a *geronta* throughout the Holy Mountain today. To explain this practice of lay confession, modern writers, both Orthodox and non-Orthodox, sometimes make a distinction between spiritual counselling in the broader sense—the disclosure of 'thoughts'—where the minister may be a lay monk, and in women's communities a nun, and the sacrament of penance strictly understood—the absolution of sins—which can be ministered only by priests.<sup>82</sup> But Symeon himself does not employ such a distinction: 'Pour lui la confession constituait un tout indivisible, un acte charismatique.'<sup>83</sup>

What is, however, more controversial is Symeon's second or negative thesis. Pressed to its logical conclusions, his argument appears to make the validity of the sacraments dependent on the sanctity of the minister, and thus comes perilously close to Donatism. In defence of Symeon it may be said that, in the letter *On Confession* and elsewhere, he is speaking pastorally rather than juridically, in moral rather than dogmatic terms. He is making, not primarily an abstract statement about sacramental validity, but a personal appeal to the priests and bishops in the Church of his own time. Do not be too quick, he is saying to them, to assume the ministry of spiritual fatherhood; perhaps God has not called you to it. Although Symeon actually says, 'You *cannot* bind or loose', surely his true meaning is, 'You *should* not take upon yourselves this task unless called to it directly by the Spirit.' His letter is to be understood, not as a systematic discussion of doctrine, but as a prophetic warning.

It is significant that Symeon was never censured or condemned for the opinions expressed in his text *On Confession*. When he was found guilty and sentenced to exile by the Holy Synod at Constantinople in 1009, the charge against him was the liturgical *cultus* that he was rendering, without ecclesiastical sanction, to his spiritual

father, now dead, St. Symeon the Studite. In any case, the Synod's sentence was revoked soon afterwards, and Symeon was declared innocent. It is true that, implicit in the conflict between him and Stephen the Syncellus, there was undoubtedly the question of confession to lay monks: Stephen considered that Symeon was dangerously undermining the prerogatives of the priesthood. But in his case against the New Theologian he preferred not to press that particular charge, presumably considering that a condemnation could more easily be secured over the question of the liturgical *cultus*; and so the issue of lay confession was not brought clearly into the open. Symeon's standpoint in the letter *On Confession*, even though many Orthodox disagree with it, remains nevertheless a tenable view for an Orthodox to uphold.<sup>84</sup>

Setting aside this controverted topic, let us recall the basic point about spiritual paternity that Symeon is here concerned to make: the father in Christ is a mediator, reconciling his children to God.

5. *Sponsor* (ἀνάδοχος). Healer, teacher, man of prayer, mediator—the spiritual father is all these things, and yet he is also something more. Fifthly and finally, for both Climacus and Symeon he is an *anadochos*. Linked with ἀναδέχεσθαι, to take upon oneself, to undertake, ἀνάδοχος denotes somebody who assumes responsibility or provides security for another, standing surety for his obligations. The term is applied to Christ as the redeemer of our souls,<sup>85</sup> to the godparent at a baptism,<sup>86</sup> or to the sponsor at a monastic profession.<sup>87</sup> In this way it is also used to indicate the spiritual father. As mediator after the likeness of Christ, he does not merely pray for his children, but takes on his shoulders the weight of their temptations and guilt.<sup>88</sup> He is, in the Pauline phraseology, a burden-bearer: 'Bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ' (Gal 6:2). This idea of burden-bearing is to be found in the *Apophthegmata*: 'Confess your sin to me and I will carry it', says Abba Lot to a brother who cannot find peace in his conscience.<sup>89</sup> It is particularly emphasized by the sixth-century Gaza school; thus Barsanuphius writes to one of his spiritual children:

After Jesus Christ, I have spread out my wings over you until this day, and I am bearing your burdens and offences. . . . I have seen and covered everything, just as God sees and covers our sins. . . . See, I give you a commandment for your salvation; and, if you keep it, I will take upon myself the sentence of condemnation that is against you, and by the grace of Christ I will not abandon you either in this age or in the age to come. . . . I have taken from you the weight and burden and debt; and see, you have become a new man, free from guilt and pure.<sup>90</sup>

In this as in other ways the abbot of Sinai shows himself a faithful adherent to the Gaza tradition.

More than once in his text *To the Shepherd* Climacus applies the term *anadochos* to the spiritual father.<sup>91</sup> It is the elder's vocation, he says, 'to take upon himself (ἀναδέξασθαι) the burden of the one under obedience to him'.<sup>92</sup> 'Let your father', he writes elsewhere, 'be the one who is able and willing to labour with you in bearing the burden of your sins.'<sup>93</sup> The influence of Galatians 6:2 is manifest. Like Bar-

sanuphius, Climacus believes that this burden-bearing extends beyond the present life into the age to come. At the Last Judgement the elder will answer for his disciple's sins, and so the disciple can face death free from anxiety, 'knowing with certainty that, when it is time to go, not he but his spiritual director will be called to render an account'.<sup>94</sup> The evident corollary to all this, even though Climacus does not explicitly spell it out, is that each of us should be extremely careful before assuming the ministry of spiritual fatherhood: we may be taking upon ourselves far more than we realize!

Thus, as a mediator representing Christ to us, the spiritual father is more particularly an image or ikon of Christ the Good Shepherd, who carried the lost sheep on his shoulders and laid down his life for the flock. As a 'true shepherd' after the likeness of the 'Great Shepherd', the elder expresses above all the quality of sacrificial love:

It is love that shows who is the true shepherd; for by reason of love the Great Shepherd was crucified.<sup>95</sup>

Sponsorship (ἀναδοχή) in the proper sense is a laying-down of one's own soul on behalf of the soul of one's neighbour in all matters.<sup>96</sup>

Without this burden-bearing and self-sacrifice, no one can be an *anadochos* or spiritual father.

Climacus provides an illustration of such sponsorship in action. For twenty years a monk had been troubled by unspeakable and blasphemous thoughts, and despite all his efforts in fasting and keeping vigil he could obtain no relief. Eventually he wrote the passion down on a piece of paper and gave it to a 'holy man', prostrating himself before him on the ground and not daring to look up. After reading what was on the piece of paper, the old man smiled, made the monk stand up, and said to him: 'Child, put your hand on my neck . . . Let this sin be on my neck. . . . From now on, ignore it.' At once the brother was set free from the thoughts of blasphemy.<sup>97</sup> There is a close parallel to this in the *Life* of St. Ioannikios the Great (c.754-c.846). The saint told a young nun, troubled by impure desires, to lay her hand on his neck: 'Place your hand on my neck, child. . . . By the power of Christ, my daughter, let the warfare of the temptation that has afflicted you until now pass over to me.' At once she was freed from the temptation. But in this instance it is emphasized that Ioannikios was immediately attacked, 'as with fiery arrows', by the passions that had been assailing her.<sup>98</sup> Once more the moral is clear: the 'way of exchange' or of 'substituted love', to use the phrase of Charles Williams, is a serious matter, and none should embark on such a path who is not prepared to lay down his own life for the sake of others. The gesture occurring in both these stories, whereby the penitent places his or her hand upon the neck of the spiritual father, is found in ancient rituals for confession.<sup>99</sup>

Here, as elsewhere, Symeon's letter *On Confession* contains the same terminology and ideas as are found in Climacus. According to the *New Theologian*, the spiritual

father is 'a man of God who becomes sponsor (*ἀνάδοχος*) for the debt of others'; he 'assumes responsibility (*ἀναδέχεται*) for the sins of the other and answers on his behalf', although it is presumed that the person himself will be genuinely repentant.<sup>100</sup> Along with *apatheia*, 'dispassion', an essential characteristic of the spiritual father is *sympatheia*, 'compassion', in the full sense of suffering with and for others. This quality is prominent in Symeon's portrait of his own elder, Symeon the Studite: 'There were no limits to his compassion.'<sup>101</sup> Through *sympatheia* the spiritual father can 'make his own' the joys and sufferings of others (*ἰδιοποιεῖσθαι . . . τὰ ἀλλότρια*).<sup>102</sup>

Thus for Symeon, as for Climacus, compassionate and sacrificial love is an essential characteristic of the true elder. Symeon himself felt so closely bound to his spiritual children that he regarded his own salvation as inseparable from theirs. 'I saw a man', he writes, alluding to himself in the third person (cf. 2 Cor 12:2),

... who longed so intensely for the salvation of his brethren, that he often prayed to God the lover of humankind with scalding tears and all his soul, that either they might be saved or else he might be condemned with them. Modelling his attitude on God and also on Moses (cf. Exod 32:32), he absolutely refused to be saved alone. Spiritually bound to them by a holy love in the Holy Spirit, he did not want to enter the kingdom of heaven itself if that meant he would be separated from them.<sup>103</sup>

Barsanuphius offered the same prayer:

O Master, either bring my children with me into your kingdom, or else wipe me also out of your book.<sup>104</sup>

If such are the qualities required of the spiritual father in his fivefold role as doctor, counsellor, intercessor, mediator and sponsor, we may well be tempted to ask with St. Paul, 'Who is sufficient for these things?' (2 Cor 2:16). The Patristic sources agree with us in this. Nothing, says St. Gregory of Nazianzus, is so difficult as to direct others: it is 'the art of arts and science of sciences'.<sup>105</sup> The answer must be that no one would dare to assume such a ministry, did he not feel compelled to it by love for others. Even so, it should not be he that takes the first step, but he awaits a specific call from God. This comes in various ways. Sometimes, as with the *startsi* of Optino, an elder before his death chooses one of his spiritual children to take his place. On other occasions the initiative comes from the disciples: in search of guidance, people approach a recluse or hermit; at first he gives them no answer, telling them to go to others for counsel;<sup>106</sup> but eventually the moment arrives when he accepts their requests for help as an indication of the divine will and stops sending them away. In this fashion it is the spiritual children who disclose the elder's vocation to himself. That is what happened, for example, to St. Antony of Egypt and St. Seraphim of Sarov.

Enough has been said to indicate the striking parallels between Climacus and Symeon in their characterization of the spiritual father. There are also differences of emphasis: Climacus uses in particular the image of the shepherd and the sheep, as

the title of his treatise indicates; the idea is present in Symeon,<sup>107</sup> but is much less accentuated. Climacus also speaks of the elder as 'guide' (ὁδηγός), 'director' (κυβερνητής) and 'superior' (προεστώς), terms which are not prominent in Symeon's treatment. The New Theologian makes more use of the image of the father begetting children,<sup>108</sup> or even of the mother conceiving and bearing them.<sup>109</sup> He also thinks of the spiritual father as an apostle,<sup>110</sup> an idea not found in Climacus. In general, however, there is a remarkably close correspondence between the two authors, alike in vocabulary and thought; and this is particularly evident in the use by both of them of the categories 'doctor', 'mediator' and 'sponsor'. The freshness and vivacity with which Symeon writes should not blind us to the truth that, in his letter *On Confession* as elsewhere, he bears witness not only to his personal experience but equally to the long tradition of which he is the heir.

OXFORD

### Notes

1. *Ep. i. 2* (PG 99: 909B). The basic study on spiritual fatherhood is still I. Hausherr, S.J., *Direction spirituelle en orient autrefois, Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 144 (Rome, 1955). Cf. H. Dörries, 'The Place of Confession in Ancient Monasticism', *Studia Patristica* v, *Texte und Untersuchungen* 80 (Berlin, 1962) pp. 284-311; K. Ware, 'The Spiritual Father in Orthodox Christianity', in K.G. Culligan, O.C.D. (ed.), *Spiritual Direction: Contemporary Readings* (Locust Valley, 1983) pp. 20-40.

2. *Cap.* [*Theological, Gnostic and Practical Chapters*] iii. 4. References to Symeon are made, wherever possible (i.e., except in the case of the *Letters*), to the SC [*Sources Chrétiennes*] edition; in the case of works other than *Cap.*, the line of the SC text is given.

3. On this text see P. Gutierrez, *La paternité spirituelle selon Saint Paul* (Paris, 1968); M. Saillard, 'C'est moi qui, par l'Évangile, vous ai enfantés dans le Christ Jésus (1 Co 4,15)', *Recherches de science religieuse* 56' (1968) pp. 5-41. Both authors are at pains to argue that Paul's words should not be discounted as mere metaphor: he is describing a 'réalité ontologique' (Gutierrez, p. 172); 'la paternité spirituelle de Paul est bien plus qu'une image émouvante' (Saillard, p. 5).

4. *The Brothers Karamazov*, i. 5; Eng. trans. by D. Magarshack, (Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1958), vol. i, p. 28.

5. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* VI. iii. 8-12.

6. *Strom.* 1.1.2 (GCS, p. 3, line 15).

7. For example, Iamblichus, *De vit. Pyth.* 31. 198 (the father-child relationship among the Pythagoreans); *ibid.*, 35. 250 (Epaminondas calls his teacher Lysis 'father').

8. Cf. Babylonian Talmud, *Sanhedrin* 19b: 'When a man teaches the son of another the Torah, Scripture treats him as if he had begotten him.'

9. Note especially *Vit. Ant.* 81 (PG 26:957A): 'He was beloved by all, and all desired to have him as their father.' The title 'father' was applied equally to Pachomius: cf. L.Th. Lefort, *Les vies coptes de saint Pachôme* (Louvain, 1943) pp. 3, 55, 211; P. Deseille, *L'esprit du monachisme pachômien* (Bellefontaine, 1973) pp. vii-xix.

10. *Hist. Laus.* 21 and 22 (Butler, pp. 65, 19-68, 12; 70, 7-74, 20).

11. Alphabetical collection, Antony 37 and 38 (PG 65: 88B).
12. *Erotapokriseis*: Greek text, ed. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain (reissued S. Schoinas, Volos, 1960); critical ed. and Eng. trans. of Letters 1-124 by D.J. Chitty, *Patrologia Orientalis* 31, 3 (Paris, 1966); French trans. of the whole collection by L. Regnault and P. Lemaire, *Barsanuphe et Jean de Gaza, Correspondance* (Solismes, 1972).
13. In the alphabetical collection of the *Apophthegmata* (PG 65), in addition to 127 'abbas' there are also three 'ammas' or spiritual mothers, Theodora, Sarah, and Syncletica. For the title 'amma', cf. Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 34 and 59 (Butler, pp. 99, 18; 153, 8; see app. crit. and p. 180); *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Sarapion 1 (PG 65: 416B). Around the year 1200 the monk Isaias even composed a complete *Meterikon* or 'Sayings of the Mothers', parallel to the *Paterikon* or 'Sayings of the Fathers': cf. Hausherr, *Direction spirituelle*, pp. 266-7.
14. Cited in G.P. Fedotov, *The Russian Religious Mind*, vol. i, *Kievan Christianity, the Tenth to the Thirteenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 1966) p. 215.
15. Cf. I. Gorainoff, *Seraphim de Sarov* (Bellefontaine, 1973); V. Zander, *St Seraphim of Sarov* (London, 1975); Macarius of Optino, *Russian Letters of Direction 1834-1860*, ed. I. de Beausobre (London, 1944); J.B. Dunlop, *Staretz Amvrosy, Model for Dostoevsky's Staretz Zossima* (Belmont, Mass., 1972).
16. Cf. K. Ware, 'Wolves and Monks: Life on the Holy Mountain Today', *Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review* v, 2 (1983) pp. 56-68.
17. PG 88: 1165-1208; Eng. trans. by Archimandrite Lazarus (Moore), *The Ladder of Divine Ascent* (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, Mass., 1978) pp. 231-50.
18. Critical text in K. Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum. Eine Studie zu Symeon dem neuen Theologen* (Leipzig, 1898) pp. 110-27. A revised critical edition is to appear, with Symeon's other letters, in SC. Doubts have sometimes been expressed about the authorship of the letter *On Confession*: cf. B. Englezakis, 'A Note on Tradition and Personal Experience in Symeon the New Theologian', *Eastern Churches Review* vi (1974) pp. 88-89. Englezakis refers to J. Gouillard, 'Constantin Chrysomallos sous le masque de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien', *Travaux et Mémoires* 5 (1973) pp. 313-27; but Gouillard is concerned here with the *Discourses* attributed to Symeon (which have long been regarded as suspect), and not with the letter *On Confession* [Ep. i]. On Symeon and Chrysomallos, see also J. Gouillard, 'Quatre procès de mystiques à Byzance (vers 960-1143). Inspiration et autorité', *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 36 (1978) pp. 5-81, especially pp. 24-39; on p. 35, n. 45, Ep. i is treated by Gouillard as an authentic work of Symeon.
- Ep. i appears occasionally in the manuscript tradition as a work of St. John of Damascus. When included among Symeon's writings, it often occupies in the manuscripts a place somewhat apart from his other works. But this in itself is not a sufficient reason to question its authenticity. The opinions expressed in it can in fact be paralleled from Symeon's other works.
19. See Nicetas Stethatos, *Vita Sym. Jun.* 6 (ed. I. Hausherr, *Orientalia Christiana* xii, no. 45 [Rome, 1928] p. 12). The *Ladder* (but not *To the Shepherd*) is twice cited explicitly in Symeon's *Catecheses*: cf. *Cat.* iv. 540; xxx. 141. But, although Symeon was widely read in earlier Patristic works, only very occasionally does he cite his authorities by name. In the letter *On Confession*, he appeals to Scripture (Ep. i. 2; p. 110, 15) and in general terms to the 'inspired Fathers' (Ep. i. 11; p. 120, 1), but without mentioning any specific Father.
20. In 'Η πνευματική πατρότης κατὰ Συμεῶν τὸν Νέον Θεολόγον (Thessaloniki, 1977) [henceforward cited as 'Christophoridis'], a few similarities with Climacus are noted in passing, but only on peripheral matters. There is no reference to the parallels in B. Krivochéine, *Dans la lumière du Christ: Saint Syméon le Nouveau théologien 949-1022, Vie - Spiritualité - Doctrine* (Chevetogne, 1980) [henceforward 'Krivochéine']: spiritual fatherhood is discussed on pp. 94-106, 131-47. Both authors quote freely from the letter *On Confession*, treating it as a genuine work of Symeon. Likewise nothing is said about the parallels in Holl, *Enthusiasmus* . . . , or in H.Graef, 'The Spiritual Director in the Thought of Symeon the New Theologian', in P. Granfield and J.A. Jungmann (edd.), *Kyriakon. Festschrift Johannes Quasten*, vol. ii (Münster Westf., 1970) pp. 608-14. W. Völker gives more attention to Symeon's use of Climacus: see *Scala Paradisi: Eine Studie zu Johannes Climacus und zugleich eine Vorstudie zu Symeon dem Neuen Theologen* (Wiesbaden, 1968) pp. 27-51, and *Praxis und Theoria bei Symeon dem Neuen Theologen: Ein Beitrag zur Byzantinischen Mystik* (Wiesbaden, 1974) pp. 111-29, especially p. 119, n. 1, and p. 125, n. 1; but even so he notes only a few points of similarity, and

does not make a specific comparison between Climacus' *Ad Past.* and Symeon's *Ep.* i.

21. *Vit. Ant.* 87 (PG 26: 965A). For similar imagery in Pachomian sources, see the Greek *Vita Prima* 132 (Halkin, p. 83, 23).

22. *Or.* ii, 16 and 28 (PG 35: 425A, 437A).

23. *De sac.* i, 9 (PG 48: 630); cf. *Vita Phocae* 1 (PG 50:699).

24. Canon 102: G.A. Rallis and M. Potlis, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων*, vol. ii (Athens, 1852) p. 549. Compare the exhortation to the penitent in the Russian rite of confession: 'Take care, then, lest having come to the doctor's you depart unhealed': cf. *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Apostolic (Greco-Russian) Church*, ed. I.F. Hapgood (Boston/New York, 1906) p. 289.

25. *Ad Past.* 2 (1168D-1169C).

26. *Ad Past.* 7 (1184AB). For further uses of medical language, see *Ad Past.* 1 (1165B); 5 (1177A); 7 (1181C); 13 (1196C); *Scala* 4 (PG 88: 697A, 716A); 5 (776C), etc.

27. *Ep.* i. 5 (p. 114, 21-22).

28. *Ep.* i. 6 (p. 115, 26).

29. *Ep.* i. 6 (p. 116, 2). Further instances of medical imagery: *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 9-14); *Cat.* xviii, 469-70; xx, 198; and above all *Ethical Treatise [Eth.]* vi, 269-328.

30. *Ep.* i. 1 (p. 110, 4-5), etc. Sin is a debt for which payment will be demanded: *Ep.* i. 3 (p. 111, 12-21); i. 5 (p. 114, 17-20). For the spiritual father as judge, see *Eth.* vi. 427.

31. Cf. K. Ware, 'The Orthodox Experience of Repentance', *Sobornost incorporating Eastern Churches Review* ii, 1 (1980) pp. 22-26.

32. On the receiving of *logismoi* by the spiritual father, see Climacus, *Scala* 4 (701CD); Symeon, *Ep.* i. 9 (p. 118, 24); i. 17 (p. 127, 13-14); *Eth.* v. 524; vi. 75-76; *Hymn* iv. 27-28.

33. Alphabetical collection, Ammonas I; Poemen 69, 111; Sisoës 45 (PG 65: 120A, 337C, 349C, 405B), *et passim*.

34. Antony 19 (PG 65: 81B).

35. *Ad Past.* 1 (1165B); 2 (1169AB); cf. *Scala* 4 (704D). See A. Louf, 'La parole au-delà de la Liturgie', *Collectanea Cisterciensia* 31 (1969) pp. 165-94, esp. pp. 188-9.

36. *Ad Past.* 6 (1180A).

37. *Cap.* i. 55 and 59; *Cat.* vii, 8; *Ep.* iii. 647-8, in Christophoridis, p. 29; *Ep.* iv. 212-14, in Christophoridis, p. 25.

38. *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 1-2).

39. *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Antony 27 (PG 65: 84D); cf. Poemen 173 (364BC).

40. *Cat.* xvi. 34.

41. *Ad Past.* 6 (1177C).

42. *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Antony 16; Macarius of Egypt 33; Felix 1 (PG 65: 79C, 277C, 433D), etc.

43. *Erotap.* 17; cf. 27, 144 (Regnault, 217), 208 (Regnault, 113), 507.

44. *Ad Past.* 1 (1165B).

45. *Scala* 4 (677D); cf. 15 (893B).

46. *Scala* 4 (705D-708A).

47. *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 3-5).

48. *Cat.* xxxv (*Euch.* i), 74-75; cf. *Cap.* i, 84.

49. *Cat.* xvi. 62-63.

50. *Cat.* xxii, 105-6 (Symeon is speaking of himself in the third person). Cf. *Cat.* xxviii. 276-8; xxxii. 89; *Cap.* i. 84; *Hymn* xviii, 176, 207; xxxii. 4; lv. 82.

51. *Cat.* xx. 155-7. Cf. the words of St. Seraphim of Sarov to the nuns in his charge at Diveyevo, shortly before his death: Gorainoff, op. cit. (note 15), pp. 133-4; Zander, op. cit., p. 112.

52. *Cat.* xii. 22.

53. *Scala* 1 (633D-636A). For the spiritual father as a new Moses, cf. Symeon, *Hymn* xviii. 124-221.

54. For the phrase μετὰ Θεόν, cf. Lefort, (note 9), pp. 55, 211; Pachomius is 'father after God' to his monks; ps.-Basil, *Const. asc.* 20 (PG 31: 1389D); the true father is God; after God, the abbot is father.

55. *Ad Past.* 3 (1172D).
56. *Scala* 4 (725D-728A).
57. *Scala* 4 (692B).
58. Alphabetical collection, Zacharias 3 (PG 65: 180B).
59. Zander, (note 15), pp. 32-33.
60. *Erotap.* 577.
61. *Ad Past.* 1 (1165B). On the need for direct experience, cf. *Scala* 25 (988AB); 28 (1140C).
62. *Ad Past.* 11 (1188B).
63. *Ep.* i. 11 (p. 120, 12-15): not an exact quotation from Hebrews, for the word *μεσότης* has in fact been added.
64. *Cat.* xxxv (*Euch.* 1), 251-5.
65. *Ep.* i. 5 (p. 115, 9-11 and 19-21).
66. *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 3-5). For further uses of the term *μεσότης* see *Cat.* xxxv (*Euch.* i), 74; *Ep.* iii. 554-6, in Christophoridis, p. 29.
67. *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 14-15).
68. *Ep.* iii. 550-64, in Christophoridis, p. 116.
69. *Cat.* xx. 60-62.
70. *Cap.* i. 28. Cf. *Cat.* iii. 216; v. 882-3; xx. 60-186; *Eth.* vii. 435-45; *Ep.* iii, *passim*.
71. *Hymn* xxvii. 125-32.
72. *Eth.* v, title.
73. *Eth.* v. 60-65. Cf. B. Krivochéine, in *SC* 96 (Paris, 1963) pp. 151-4. Symeon does not, however, altogether identify the *reality* of grace with the *conscious experience* of grace, but sometimes allows for the possibility that divine grace may be at work inside our heart without our conscious knowledge (see *Cap.* iii. 76-77). In this way he avoids what Hausherr regards as the 'fundamental error' of Messalianism: 'L'erreur fondamentale et la logique du Messalianisme', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* i (1935) pp. 336-8; reprinted in *Études de spiritualité orientale, Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 183 (Rome, 1969) pp. 72-74.
74. *Eth.* i. 12, 469-70.
75. *Ep.* i. 10 (p. 119, 4-7). Cf. *Cat.* xxviii. 344-53; *Eth.* vi. 413-28.
76. *Ep.* i. 10 (p. 119, 11-12).
77. Cf. *The Doors of Perception* (London, 1954); shrewdly criticized by R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* (Oxford, 1957) pp. 1-29.
78. On the need for *apatheia* in the spiritual father, see Climacus, *Ad Past.* 11 (1185D); Symeon, *Ep.* i. 1 (p. 110, 11); *Eth.* xi. 703-25.
79. *Ep.* i. 11 (pp. 119, 24 - 120, 12); i. 13-14 (pp. 122, 9 - 124, 21). Cf. *Cat.* xxxiii. 37-41; *Eth.* iii. 590-99.
80. *Ep.* i. 16 (p. 127, 6-7).
81. For his life and writings, see Archimandrite Sophrony, *The Undistorted Image* (London, 1958); revised ed. in 2 vol., *The Monk of Mount Athos* (London, 1973); *Wisdom from Mount Athos* (London, 1974).
82. See Christophoridis, pp. 56-57, 123.
83. Krivochéine, p. 147.
84. For a typical statement, denying to lay monks the right to bind and loose, see Theodore Balsamon (c. 1140-after 1195), *Answer 21 to Mark of Alexandria* (Rallis and Potlis, vol. iv, pp. 464-5). For further discussion, see Holl, *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt*, esp. pp. 225-331; Krivochéine, pp. 131-47; Christophoridis, pp. 49-58; J. van Rossum, 'Priesthood and Confession in St. Symeon the New Theologian', *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 20 (1976) pp. 220-28; J. Hörmann, *Untersuchungen zur griechischen Laienbeicht. Ein Beitrag zur allgemeinen Bussgeschichte* (Donauwörth, 1913); A. Teetaert, *La confession aux laïques dans l'Église latine depuis le VIIIe jusqu'au XIVe siècle* (Wetteren, 1926).
85. Mark the Monk (Marcus Eremita), *Disp. cum caus.* 15 (PG 65: 1093A).
86. Dionysius Areopagita, *De eccl. hier.* II. ii. 5 and 7 (PG 3: 396A, 396C).
87. Cf. P. de Meester, *De monachico statu iuxta disciplinam byzantinam* (Sacra Congregazione per la Chiesa Orientale, Codificazione Canonica Orientale, Fonti Serie II - Fascicolo X: Rome, 1942) pp. 363-4, 385; P.I.

Panagiotakos, Σύστημα τοῦ Ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ Δικαίου κατὰ τὴν ἐν Ἑλλάδι ἰσχὺν αὐτοῦ. Vol. iv. Τὸ Δίκαιον τῶν Μοναχῶν (Athens, 1957) pp. 84-85.

88. Cf. J. Gouillard, 'Christianisme byzantin et slave', *Ecole pratique des hautes études. Ve section. Sciences religieuses. Annuaire* 82 (Paris, 1974) pp. 215-17.

89. Alphabetical collection, Lot 2 (*PG* 65: 256B). Cf. the anonymous supplement, §§179, 180, 346, 354, 389: ed. F. Nau, *Revue de l'Orient chrétien* xiii (1908) p. 270; xvii (1912) pp. 298, 300; xviii (1913) p. 143. The spiritual bearing of others' burdens is a favourite theme in eighteenth-century Jewish Hasidism: see M. Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim. The Early Masters* (4th ed., New York, 1968) pp. 164, 237, 242, 294, etc.

90. *Erotap.* 239. Cf. 168-9 (Regnault, 72-73), 189 (94), 191 (96), 199 (104), 203 (108), 206 (111), 483; Dorotheus, *Doct.* 4 (ed. Regnault, *SC* 92, §§56-57); 7 (§79).

91. *Ad Past.* 10 (1185B); 12 (1189A).

92. *Ad Past.* 2 (1169B).

93. *Scala* 3 (665D). For the same idea, cf. *Scala* 24 (984C); *Ad Past.* 12 (1189C).

94. *Scala* 4 (705B). Cf. *Ad Past.* 1 (1168A); 10 (1185B).

95. *Ad Past.* 5 (1177B).

96. *Ad Past.* 12 (1189B).

97. *Scala* 23 (980AB).

98. Sabas, *Vita Ioannici* 12 (Halkin, *Bibliotheca Hagiographica Graeca*, §935: *Acta Sanctorum*, November, vol. ii, 1, p. 343). For a closely parallel incident involving the same gesture, see Leontius, *Vita Stephani Sabaitae* 124 (*B.H.G.*, §1670: *Acta Sanctorum*, July, vol. iii, p. 582): Stephen died c. 794.

99. See, for example, the service for the ritual of confession attributed to St. John the Faster (d. 595), but certainly of later date (probably not before 9th-10th century), in *PG* 88: 1893A; on the dating, cf. E. Herman, 'Il più antico penitenziale greco', *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* xix (1953) pp. 71-127.

100. *Ep.* i. 6 (p. 116, 9 and 13-14). Cf. *Cap.* iii. 46: 'our father and *anadochos*'; *Ep.* iii. 554-6, in Christophoridis, p. 29, where the term ἑγγυητής is applied to the spiritual father. For the verb ἀναδέχεσθαι, see for example *Eth.* vi. 418.

101. *Cat.* xvi. 21-22; the noun (or equivalent verb) recurs in lines 48 and 65. Cf. *Ep.* i. 5 (p. 114, 21): 'a compassionate (συμπάθη) and merciful doctor'. But the *sympathia* must not be excessive: *Ep.* i. 7 (p. 117, 11-12).

102. *Cat.* iii. 33-34.

103. *Cat.* viii. 57-64. Cf. *Cat.* xix. 94-97; *Hymn* xiv. 109-12.

104. *Erotap.* 110 (Regnault, 187).

105. *Or.* ii, 16 (*PG* 35: 425A).

106. For the reluctance of the spiritual father to give advice, see for example *Apophthegmata*, alphabetical collection, Sisoës 16 (*PG* 65: 397AB). But Symeon, by contrast, felt *compelled* by the Holy Spirit to take the initiative in speaking out to others: *Cat.* xxxiv. 275-304.

107. For example, *Cat.* xviii. 470; xx. 198; xxxv (*Euch.* i). 256; *Cap.* i. 56.

108. *Ep.* iv. 121-6, in Krivochéine, p. 102.

109. *Ep.* iii. 1-3, in Christophoridis, p. 26; also Krivochéine, p. 99. Arsenius, Symeon's disciple, speaks of him as both father and mother: Nicetas Stethatos, *Vita Sym. Jun.* 46 (Hausherr, p. 60).

110. *Cat.* xxxvi (*Euch.* ii), 129, 161.