

Forming Young Souls

"Not of this World: The Life and Teaching of Fr. Seraphim Rose" by Monk Damascene Christensen

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No source of instruction can be overlooked in the preparation for the great battle of life, and there is a certain advantage to be derived from the right use of the heathen writers. The illustrious Moses is described as training his intellect in the science of the Egyptians, and so arriving at the contemplation of Him Who is. So in later days Daniel at Babylon was wise in the Chaldean philosophy, and ultimately apprehended the divine instruction.... [But] we must not take everything indiscriminately, but only what is profitable It would be shameful for us in the case of food to reject the injurious, and at the same time, in the case of lessons, to take no account of what keeps the soul alive, but, like mountain streams, to sweep in everything that happens to be in our way.

-St Basil the Great (+379)

When you have children, teach them music; of course, real music and not dances and songs. Music aids the development of the acceptance of spiritual life. The soul becomes more refined. It begins to also understand spiritual music.

-Elder Barsanuphius of Optina (+1913)

Not too many years ago a young monastic aspirant went to Mount Athos. In talking with the venerable abbot of the monastery where he wished to stay, he told him, "Holy Father! My heart burns for the spiritual life, for asceticism, for unceasing communion with God, for obedience to an Elder. Instruct me, please, holy Father, that I may attain to spiritual advancement." Going to the bookshelf, the Abbot pulled down a copy of David Copperfield by Charles Dickens. "Read this, son," he said. "But Father!" objected the disturbed aspirant. "This is heterodox Victorian sentimentality, a product of the Western captivity! This isn't spiritual; it's not even Orthodox! I need writings which will teach me spirituality!" The Abbot smiled, saying, "Unless you first develop normal, human, Christian feelings and learn to view life as little Davey did-with simplicity, kindness, warmth, and forgiveness-then all the Orthodox 'spirituality' and Patristic writings will not only be of no help to you-they will turn you into a 'spiritual' monster and destroy your soul."

Fr. Herman loved to tell this story, based upon a true occurrence, as he sat with his brothers around the refectory table. He himself had had a similar experience when, as a 19-year-old boy, he had been made to read classic Russian novels by Fr. Adrian. While he had longed to discuss "spirituality," Fr. Adrian had instead turned the topic of conversation to some character or idea in the works of Dostoyevsky, Goncharev, etc.

Fr. Seraphim, from his own experience in dealing with young people, saw the wisdom behind the approach of Fr. Adrian and the Athonite elder mentioned above. In an essay entitled "Forming the Soul" he carefully articulated the Orthodox philosophy behind it:

"The education of youth today, especially in America, is notoriously deficient in developing responsiveness to the best expressions of human art, literature, and music. As a result, young people are formed haphazardly under the influence of television, rock music, and other manifestations of today's culture (or rather, anti-culture); and, both as a cause and as a result of this-but most of all because of the absence on the part of the parents and teachers of any conscious idea of what Christian life is and how a young person should be brought up in it-the soul of a person who has survived the years of youth is often an emotional wasteland, and at best reveals deficiencies in the basic attitudes towards life that were once considered normal and indispensable.

"Few are those today who can clearly express their emotions and ideas and face them in a mature way; many do not even know what is going on inside themselves. Life is artificially divided into work (and very few can put the best part of themselves, their heart, into it because it is 'just for money'), play (in which many see the 'real meaning' of their life), religion (usually no more than an hour or two a week), and the like, without an underlying unity that gives meaning to the whole of one's life. Many, finding daily life unsatisfying, try to live in a fantasy world of their own creation (into which they also try to fit religion). And underlying the whole of modern culture is the common denominator of the worship of oneself and one's own comfort, which is deadly to any idea of spiritual life.

"Such is something of the background, the 'cultural baggage,' which a person brings with him today when he becomes Orthodox. Many, of course, survive as Orthodox despite their background; a few come to some spiritual disaster because of it; but a good number remain crippled or at least spiritually underdeveloped because they are simply unprepared for and unaware of the real demands of spiritual life.

"As a beginning to the facing of this question (and hopefully, helping some of those troubled by it), let us look here briefly at the Orthodox teaching on human nature as set forth by a profound Orthodox writer of the 19th century, a true Holy Father of these latter times-Bishop Theophan the Recluse (†1894). In his book *What is Spiritual Life and How to Attune Oneself to It*, he writes:

Human life is complex and many-sided. In it there is a side of the body, another of the soul, and another of the spirit. Each of these has its own faculties and needs, its own methods and their exercise and satisfaction. Only when all our faculties are in movement and all our needs are satisfied does a man live. But when only one little part of our needs is satisfied-such a life is not life A man does not live in a human way unless everything in him is in motion One must live as God created us, and when one does not live thus one can boldly say he is not living at all.

"The distinction made here between 'soul' and 'spirit' does not mean that these are separate entities within human nature; rather, the 'spirit' is the higher part, the 'soul' the lower part, of the single invisible part of man (which as a whole is usually called the 'soul'). To the 'soul' in this sense belongs those ideas and feelings which are not Occupied directly with spiritual life-most of human art, knowledge, and culture; while to the 'spirit' belong man's strivings towards God through prayer, sacred art, and obedience to God's law.

"From these words of Bishop Theophan one can already spot a common fault of today' s seekers after spiritual life: Not all sides of their nature are in movement; they are trying to satisfy religious needs (the needs of the spirit) without having come to terms with some of their other (more specifically, psychological and emotional) needs, or worse: they use religion illegitimately to satisfy these psychological needs. In such people religion is an artificial thing that has not yet touched the deepest part of them, and often some upsetting event in their life, or just the natural attraction of the world, is enough to destroy their plastic universe and turn them away from religion. Sometimes such people, after bitter experience in life, return to religion; but too often they are lost, or at best crippled and unfruitfu1."3

Fr. Seraphim saw this "plastic" approach to religion most graphically when a young pilgrim, having spent time at another monastery in America, came to Platina talking all about elders, hesychasm, Jesus Prayer, true monasticism, and the ascetic wisdom of the Holy Fathers. One day Fr. Seraphim saw him walking around the monastery singing rock songs, snapping his fingers and bouncing with the rhythm. Surprised, Fr. Seraphim asked him if he didn't think this might go against all his interest in spirituality, but the young man just shrugged his shoulders and replied: "No, there's no contradiction. Whenever I want spirituality, I just switch on the Elder"-meaning that he could take out his rock tape and put in a tape of his Elder giving a spiritual discourse.

The fact that this young man could compartmentalize his life like this, Fr. Seraphim understood, showed that something was missing in the basic formation of his soul. To explain what is meant by this formation, he again referred in his article to a passage from St. Theophan the Recluse:

A man has three layers of life: that of spirit, of the soul, and of the body. Each of these has its sum of needs, natural and proper to a man. These needs are not all of equal value, but some are higher and others are lower; and the balanced satisfaction of them gives a man peace. Spiritual needs are the highest of all, and when they are satisfied, then there is peace even if the others are not satisfied; but when spiritual needs are not satisfied, then even if the others are satisfied abundantly, there is no peace. Therefore, the satisfaction of them is called the one thing needful.

When spiritual needs are satisfied, they instruct a man to PUL into harmony with them the satisfaction of one's other needs also, so that neither what satisfies the soul nor what satisfies the body contradicts spiritual life, but helps it; and then there is a full harmony in a man of all the

movements and revelations of his life, a harmony of thoughts, feelings, desires, undertakings, relationships, pleasures. And this is paradise!

"In our own day," Fr. Seraphim pointed out, "the chief ingredient missing from the ideal harmony of human life is something one might call the emotional development of the soul. It is something that is not directly spiritual, but that very often hinders spiritual development. It is the state of someone who, while he may think he thirsts for spiritual struggles and an elevated life of prayer, is poorly able to respond to normal human love and friendship; for If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God Whom he hath not seen? (I John 4:20).

"In a few people this defect exists in an extreme form, but as a teaching it is present to some extent in all of us who have been raised in the emotional and spiritual wasteland of our times.

"This being so, it is often necessary for us to humble our seemingly spiritual impulses and struggles to be tested on our human and emotional readiness for them. Sometimes a spiritual father will deny his child the reading of some spiritual book and give him instead a novel of Dostoyevsky or Dickens, or will encourage him to become familiar with certain kinds of classical music, not with any 'aesthetic' purpose in mind-for one can be an 'expert' in such matters and even be 'emotionally well-developed' without the least interest in spiritual struggle, and that is also an unbalanced state-but solely to refine and form his soul and make it better disposed to understand genuine spiritual texts."⁴

What Fr. Seraphim said here of spiritual fathers is even more true of natural parents, for the "formation of the soul" should begin in early childhood. During a lecture at the 1982 St. Herman Pilgrimage, Fr. Seraphim gave parents some practical advice on how to use whatever is positive in the world for their children's benefit:

"The child who has been exposed from his earliest years to good classical music, and has seen his soul being developed by it, will not be nearly as tempted by the crude rhythm and message of rock and other contemporary forms of pseudo-music as someone who has grown up without a musical education. Such a musical education, as several of the Optina Elders have said, refines the soul and prepares it for the reception of spiritual impressions.

"The child who has been educated in good literature, drama, and poetry and has felt their effect on his soul-that is, has really enjoyed them-will not easily become an addict of the contemporary movies and television programs and cheap novels that devastate the soul and take it away from the Christian path.

"The child who has learned to see beauty in classical painting and sculpture will not easily be drawn into the perversity of contemporary art or be attracted by the garish products of modern advertising and pornography.

"The child who knows something of the history of the world, especially in Christian times, and how other people have lived and thought, what mistakes and pitfalls people have fallen into by departing from God and His commandments, and what glorious and influential lives they have lived when they were faithful to Him-will be discerning about the life and philosophy of our own times and will not be inclined to follow the first new philosophy or way of life he encounters. One of the basic problems facing the education of children today is that in the schools they are no longer given a sense of history. It is a dangerous and fatal thing to deprive a child of a sense of history. It means that he has no ability to take examples from the people who lived in the past. And actually, history constantly repeats itself. Once you see that, it becomes interesting how people have answered problems, how there have been people who have gone against God and what results came from that, and how people changed their lives and became exceptions and gave an example which is lived down to our own times. This sense of history is a very important thing which should be communicated to children.

"In general, the person who is well acquainted with the best products of secular culture-which in the West almost always have definite religious and Christian overtones-has a much better chance of leading a normal, fruitful Orthodox life than someone who knows only the popular culture of today. One who is converted to Orthodoxy straight from 'rock' culture, and in general anyone who thinks he can combine Orthodoxy with that kind of culture-has much suffering to go through and a difficult road in life before he can become a truly serious Orthodox Christian who is capable of handing on his faith to others. Without this suffering, without this awareness, Orthodox parents will raise their children to be devoured by the contemporary world. The world's best culture, properly received, refines and develops the soul; today's popular culture cripples and deforms the soul and hinders it from having a full and normal response to the message of Orthodoxy.

"Therefore, in our battle against the spirit of this world, we can use the best things the world has to offer in order to go beyond them; everything good in the world, if we are only wise enough to see it, points to God, and to Orthodoxy, and we have to make use of it."⁵

Years earlier, when he first gave his "Orthodox Survival Course" in 1975, Fr. Seraphim spoke specifically about how certain types of art can help children to grow up in sexual morality.

"In our present society, boys by the time they are 14 or 15 years old know all about sexual sins, much more than even married people used to know. They know exactly what is going on in the movies, they see it, and the whole atmosphere in which they live is one of indulgence. 'Why fight against this sort of thing?' it is said. 'It's natural.' Obviously, they are being prepared for a life of indulgence in sin.

"Such a boy may be given the standard of truth, which is chastity, virginity; but this is a very high and difficult standard if all he has in his mind is the abstract idea of chastity in order to fight against this all-pervading atmosphere of sensuality which attacks not only the mind but also the

heart-and the body directly. He sees everywhere billboards which lead to temptation, and the magazines which he can now look at are frightful; and all this is much stronger than the single idea of being pure. In fact, everybody will laugh at that idea, and the poor boy will have a very difficult time not just in resisting, but even in seeing that he should resist temptation, because all the evidence is against it except for that one little abstract truth that he should be pure. In this respect he can be helped by literature

"The boy can read something like David Copperfield, which describes a boy growing up: not some kind of monk or ascetic hero, but just an ordinary boy growing up in a different time It's true that this is a worldly book about people living in the world-but that world is quite different. Already you get a different perspective on things: that the world has not always been the way it is now; that the standard which is now in the air is one kind of world and there are other kinds; and that this is a different, normal world in which, although the element of sex is present, it has a definite role. You get strength from seeing what was normal in that time, from the way Dickens describes this young boy growing up and falling in love. He is embarrassed to be around the girl and never thinks about dirty things because nothing like that ever comes up; whereas if you read any contemporary novel that's all you get. This book shows a much higher view of love, which is of course for the sake of marriage, which is for the sake of children. The whole of one's life is bound up with this, and the thought never comes up in this book that one can have some kind of momentary satisfaction and then pass on to the next girl. David Copperfield is full of dreams of this woman, how he is going to live with her and be a big man of the world. It is assumed that he has sexual relations after he is married, but this is involved with what one is going to do with one's whole life.

"Again, this gives strength to a boy who is himself occupied with precisely these temptations. When he asks questions like, 'How do I behave towards a girl?'-an abstract sort of standard doesn't help much. But if he sees how this fictional person, who is very true to life at a different age, was so embarrassed, so concerned, so polite, so idealistic and tender, this inspires him to behave himself more normally, according to past standards. And in such a novel we see how many sides there are to the whole question of love and sex, how complicated it is in our whole human nature. Although no Orthodoxy is preached, the whole atmosphere is filled with at least a large remnant of Christian values, and this gives a definite help to the boy on his own level, not on some spiritual level, but on the level of his leading an everyday life in the world.

"Also, Dickens communicates an extremely warm feeling about life, about human relationships, which is not given in school today. And this very feeling of warmth about human relationships might have more effect on keeping a boy pure than giving him the abstract standard of Orthodoxy

"The warmth of Dickens can help break through one-sided rationalism better than years of arguments, because even if you accept the truth you can still be cold and rationalistic and insensitive. Simply reading Dickens can already produce in one tears of gratitude for having the true religion of love. The earnestness and compassion of Dostoyevsky can help break through

one's self-love and complacency. Even someone like Thomas Mann who doesn't have the qualities of great warmth and compassion can give one a deeper insight into the wrongness of the path of Western life."

In the same lecture Fr. Seraphim recalled an incident from his youth in which his own soul was formed according to a standard of truth:

"In college, before I had much sensitivity about architecture, my German professor gave a talk one day as we were walking between two buildings built about thirty years apart in much the same Spanish stucco style. He asked, 'Can you tell me the difference between those two buildings? Look closely: one has bricks, it has lines; the other is of cement, it's flat, nothing. One is warm, the other cold; one has some kind of human feeling to it, the other has nothing, it's just abstract; one is suitable for a person to live in .. .' This gave me a very deep lesson, that even a small thing like the presence of lines or the small ornaments on Victorian architecture which are in no way utilitarian-all this gives some kind of quality. Today the feeling for anything more than what is absolutely necessary has been lost. This utilitarianism, this practicality, is very deadening. Of course it is cheaper to make things purely utilitarian and therefore all this is logical; still, we have lost a great deal. When parents can at least show a child that 'This building is good; that one IS not, it's rather dead,' such a basic education will help him so that he will not simply think that whatever is modern or most up-to-date is the best. This is not simply a course in art, but a course in life, part of growing up which parents and teachers can give between the lines of a formal education. All this involves a sense of art. By contrast, the contemporary upbringing in schools emphasizes crudity, coldness, and inability to judge what is better and what is worse-total relativity, which only confuses a person and helps fit him into the world of apostasy. There must at least be a minimum of a conscious battle to help raise a child with different influences."

From all that has been said, one can get a sense of the seriousness with which Fr. Seraphim regarded the education of the boys and young men whom God had placed under his charge.

By the school year of 1981-'82, Theophil was in his 'Twelfth-Year Course," in which Fr. Seraphim strove to teach him English grammar, Russian grammar, world literature, music appreciation, history, Church music, and Typicon.

During the same year, Fr. Seraphim taught a course on the "Orthodox World View." An extended version of his "Survival Course" of 1975, it required tests and term papers. His first incentive to teach it had come in August of 1981, when an 18-year-old Jordanville seminarian had visited the monastery with his parents. The parents, who were long-time friends of the Brotherhood, were worried about their son's future. Like so many people his age who had been raised in our modern fragmented society, the seminarian was unable to express or face his emotions and ideas, and was unsure of what was going on inside himself. As Fr. Seraphim noted: "He does not want to do anything else but prepare himself for service in the Church, but he is also very much afraid of the depression which came over him last year in Jordanville (and

lasted for months), based upon idleness, inability to apply what he reads in spiritual books to the reality of his life, etc. He is presently in a 'bored' state, and without close supervision he is afraid (and we agree) that he will lose all interest in serving the Church."

Learning all this from the seminarian and his parents, the fathers came up with an idea: to let him stay at the monastery and do his course work there, under Fr. Seraphim's guidance and instruction. After praying about it and receiving Holy Communion the next day, the young man accepted the proposal. Fr. Seraphim wrote to Bishop Laurus in Jordanville asking if he could still receive his seminary degree under this arrangement. "From what we know of him over the past several years," Fr. Seraphim wrote, "he seems to be a highly gifted and motivated boy who could easily perform the necessary work; and under close supervision we believe his emotional problem (which seems to be bound up with immaturity) can also be handled." After some discussion, the Jordanville faculty accepted Fr. Seraphim's proposal.

Soon another 18-year-old Jordanville seminarian, George, also came to do his course work at Platina. Of Protestant background, George was from Redding and had been baptized by Fr. Seraphim, his family having been introduced to Orthodoxy by the man whom Fr. Herman had met in the Redding bookstore.

During the 1981 Summer Pilgrimage, yet another young man came to stay at the monastery: a college student named Gregory from the Santa Cruz Orthodox fellowship. (It had been at Gregory's apartment that Fr. Seraphim had stayed when he had gone to Santa Cruz back in May.) An earnest young man with shining blue eyes and a wild mop of red hair, Gregory had recently converted to Orthodoxy from Anglicanism and what he now called "charismania." He had always longed for a life of self-sacrifice and closeness to nature, and upon encountering Orthodoxy he had become all inspired with the idea of desert monasticism. He would carry The Northern Thebaid around the college with him like a textbook. When he came to the monastery in August and decided to stay, the fathers noticed that he was always looking after and caring for others, and by this they knew that his desire for a desert podvig was a genuine one, not just an egotistic escape. He also had an incredibly quick mind. Clearly, here was another young soul just begging to be filled, to be given an Orthodox formation. Gregory was clothed as a novice, and began the next school year in Fr. Seraphim's "Orthodox World View" course.

Including both monastery brothers and "lay" students, seven men took part in the full course, with several more young men and women coming up to attend lectures regularly on the weekends. A tremendous amount of material was covered in a nine-month period. Fr. Seraphim devoted much time to dogmatic theology and the history of the Church, acquainting the students with the lives and thought of a great many Holy Fathers. At the same time he taught much of what they would normally learn in universities, again according to a definite way of seeing that made sense of it all. Among the people covered in the course were: the religious teachers Joachim of Fiore, Martin Luther, Adam Weishaupt, and Teilhard de Chardin; the Western philosophers Thomas Aquinas, Kant, Voltaire, Hegel, Marx, Rousseau, and Proudhon; the scientists Copernicus, Kepler, Lamarck, Lyell, Darwin, and Haeckel; the literary figures Homer,

Dante, Milton, Samuel Richardson, Oliver Goldsmith, Henry Fielding, Jonathan Swift, Jane Austen, Diderot, Byron, Pushkin, Leontiev, Tolstoy, Chekhov, Gogol, Dickens, and Wordsworth; and the political figures and thinkers Julian the Apostate, Oliver Cromwell, Boris Gudonov, Peter I, Nicholas I (Fr. Seraphim's favorite Tsar), Bakunin, Fourier, Thomas, Burke, Pobedonostsev, Owen, Napoleon, Hitler, Donoso Cortes, Saint-Simon, Metternich, and de Maistre. Fr. Seraphim discussed the works of scores of painters and sculptors from the ancient to the ultra-modern. He taught about the music of the Renaissance, Baroque, Classical, and Romantic periods, and about the new standards of music which came after these; even the contemporary phenomenon of the "Beatles" was brought out according to the Orthodox world view.

Fr. Seraphim's students did not know then how fortunate they were. This was by far the most in-depth course he had ever taught, and he would not live to give another one. As he himself well knew, such a broad education in world knowledge and experience based on Orthodox principles is virtually - extinct in our times.

In addition to the Orthodox World View course, Fr. Seraphim taught a course in English grammar-poetry-composition, and Fr. Herman taught one in Church history and literature. The students spent about twelve hours per week in these classes, to which the two seminarians added another ten hours of supervised work for the second-year seminary course, the material for which had been sent by the fathers and teachers at Jordanville.

A few of the students were unable to concentrate on reading more than a page at a time or to retain what they had read. For them Fr. Seraphim extended himself by having them read interesting books such as Crime and Punishment out loud to him every day, with a brief discussion following. This, he recorded, "had immediate good results, both in level of understanding and interest."

Fr. Seraphim wrote an outline for the third, fourth, and fifth-year seminary courses for the two boys from Jordanville, which were to include all the main classes offered at Holy Trinity Seminary; but he died right before the third-year course was to begin.

We have mentioned how the Platina fathers had taken time out to form the souls of the younger generation by having them listen to classical music. Nowadays, however, it is not only the youth who need such a formation: most of today's parents also have been formed on crude forms of music. At the St. Herman Pilgrimages, therefore, everyone was given a taste of refined Christian culture through the fathers' musical presentations. At the pilgrimage in 1979, when Fr. Seraphim was giving his course on the prophecies of Daniel, he played a recording of Handel's Balshazzar's Feast, based on the book of Daniel; and in 1981, while giving his Genesis course, he played Haydn's Creation Oratorio. Fr. Herman would play other pieces, especially by his favorite composer Mozart, and would talk about them. One 19-year-old pilgrim recalls:

"Before coming to the 1981 Pilgrimage, I had listened almost exclusively to pop and rock music. My first real exposure to classical music came at the monastery. The fathers explained how rock

music is (generally speaking) music of the body; the best classical music is music of the soul; and the music of the Church is the music of the spirit (or higher part of the soul). In order to lead ourselves to the realm of the spirit, we have to rise above the fleshly and prepare the ground of our souls. Presented in this context, it made sense to me why one would listen to classical rather than rock music. I remember that when Fr. Herman played Mozart's 24th Piano Concerto for us, it really moved me in my soul. Something deep inside me responded to it a part of me I had hardly known existed.

"Going back to my dorm room at college, I did not immediately throw out all my old albums, but I did begin a weaning process, listening mostly to classical and good folk music. People down the hall were playing The Rolling Stones, David Bowie, and Bruce Springsteen, while I was playing Rimsky Korsakov, Sibelius, and Celtic harp music. My fellow students began to respond. Their souls, too, had been starving on a diet of fleshly music. They would stop by my room and ask, 'What is that beautiful music you're playing? Can I borrow that album?'"

Even the modern art form of film was used by Fr. Seraphim as a means of forming the soul. As he once explained: "Some parents say, 'Oh, the world is so bad, I refuse to let my children go to the movies; I refuse to have anything to do with the world, I want to keep them pure.' But these children will get involved with the world no matter what, and the fact that they are deprived of any kind of *dushevni* diet - i.e. that which feeds the middle part of the soul-means that most likely they will grab what they can get when they can get it. Therefore, it is better to choose those movies which at least have no evil in them and no inclination to sin."

Right after the Feast of Christmas in the years 1980 and '81, Fathers Herman and Seraphim rented a movie-projector and carefully selected films for the young people to view: classics such as Shakespeare's Hamlet, and Dickens' Nicholas Nickleby, A Christmas Carol, and The Pickwick Papers, as well as Tom Brown's School Days.

With all that Fr. Seraphim said above about Charles Dickens, it should be remembered that, during his early years of Orthodox zealotry, he had been like the monastic aspirant on Mount Athos in dismissing Dickens' works as "Victorian sentimentality." Now, however, after years of warming his heart and regaining his innocence in Orthodoxy, he was free to appreciate The Pickwick Papers as thoroughly as he once had as a boy, when he had stayed up late - at night reading it under the covers. When he saw the English movie of it a year before he died, he became like a child again, chuckling, crying, and relishing every moment.

Once Fr. Seraphim was asked about movies that portray Christian virtue. "There are a lot of them," he replied, "but they don't make them any more. Maybe they do once in a while, but it is very rare. Old movies, especially ones that are dramatizations of novels or classic plays, are often very well done and there is a point to them. Everything in Dickens is that way; it is full of Christianity. He doesn't mention Christ even, but it is full of love. In The Pickwick Papers, for example, the hero Mr. Pickwick is a person who refuses to give up his innocence in trusting people. Finally he gets put in the debtors' prison because he trusted someone. There comes to

him the man who put him in prison and seduced his relative, and Pickwick weeps over him and gives him money so he can buy a meal, because he has no money to buy food in debtor's prison. One sees this criminal, this person who is taking advantage of everyone, and one little tear forms in his eye. At the end Mr. Pickwick is triumphant, because he trusted men; and he wins because people's hearts are changed.

"There are lots of old movies like this which show either the passions of men, the innocence of men, or various Christian virtues. In fact, these 19th-century novels on which they are based are very down-to-earth and real; and they show how to live a normal Christian life, how to deal with these various passions that arise. They do not give it on a spiritual level, but by showing it in life, and by having a basic Christian understanding of life, they are very beneficial. I don't know of any movies nowadays that are that way. Maybe here and there you can find one, but they have all become so weird.... For example, Dickens is heartwarming with regard to normal, everyday life, but the recent movie E. T. is heartwarming with regard to some kind of freakish thing, which becomes something like a saviour.

"I think that we should seek out more of these old movies. For a group-say, a church group-to get together and show these old movies would be very good, especially for the young people."

Besides showing films on special occasions, Fr. Seraphim took time out to bring the young men at the monastery to live performances of classical drama. Noting Fr. Seraphim's spiritual freedom in this and other attempts to form young souls, Fr. Alexey Young recalls:

"Several times Fr. Seraphim came by our house on his way to and from Ashland, Oregon, where he'd taken some of the brothers to see various plays at the Shakespeare Festival there. One of these times-I'm almost sure it was early in the summer he died-he took the 'boys' to see Romeo and Juliet, which they'd been reading and studying beforehand. When I expressed surprise at young monastics being taken to see such a play, he said: 'But why not? They're human beings, and have feelings and passions like anyone else. It's better for them to be exposed to this in a supervised and controlled way rather than just struggling alone with it.'

"This was consistent with instruction he gave me whenever the Theophil came to spend the summer: 'Let him watch TV-even soap operas!-if he wants, and take him to movies. Theophil is fascinated by the world, and it's best that he get it out of his system now. Just be sure that you watch everything with him and discuss it thoroughly so that he can put it in a true spiritual context.' This seemed very wise to me, too. He believed that a small, regulated 'dose' of worldliness could act like a vaccination and might ultimately result in 'immunity' from worldly attractions.

"On one occasion he asked me to take Theophil to see Mozart's Don Giovanni at the San Francisco Opera, which we did; and another time he asked me to take him to Marlowe's Dr. Faust in Ashland. He knew these works very well, and even spelled out for me the specific 'lessons' 1 was to draw from these productions and share with Theophil. Always he requested a

detailed 'report' from me afterwards as to how Theophil (or others) had reacted, whether they'd 'got the point,' etc.

"I also recall how he encouraged Michael Anderson to read Plato and other philosophers, discussing all of this with him in detail - Michael laboriously made his way through these texts. Fr. Seraphim showed him how all of this was linked up with Orthodoxy and Patristics

"Similarly with music: quite early on I'd told him that I supposed we would have to give up Mozart, etc., if we were going to be really serious about spiritual growth. His response: 'You poor man!' I can still hear him say it! Then he explained the place of beauty in the spiritual world, and how great art of any kind works with the totality of man's spiritual nature. This was the first time I'd been introduced to this idea. Later on I discovered it myself in some of the Holy Fathers, and I've often shared it with others in the ensuing years. But until then I'd had a somewhat 'puritanical' view of these things

"Years after Fr. Seraphim left us I came across this verse (II Tim. 1:7) and immediately thought of him, as it seems to summarize his own approach- anyway, as I experienced it-: 'For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind '... In general I would say that anyone who really opened up to him-and unfortunately that wasn't very many-received a veritable treasure-trove of wisdom from him. Little of this was appreciated until after he was dead."

Like any father, Fr. Seraphim suffered over the sons in his care. Each of the young souls he was forming, including those we have not mentioned, had its own secret wounds and scars. One of them had been an unwanted child, formed in a loveless environment with no father and a religiously unbalanced mother; another, although he did come from a loving home, could not seem to "find himself" as he grew into manhood and no longer had his parents to buffer him from the hard realities of life; another young man, who had come from a broken home and been moved about from father to mother, had wounds that still needed healing; and yet another brother had come to the monastery out of a dark underworld of drugs, crime, and black magic-influences which still plagued him.

Late at night, Fr. Herman would often see Fr. Seraphim praying for these young men and for all the troubled people who had entered his life: victims of the nihilistic modern society whose essence he had identified so many years before. The boys themselves would already be sleeping soundly in their beds, while Fr. Seraphim, in the cold, dark church illuminated by a lone candle, would be prostrated before the Holy Table. Weeping, he would implore God to bless, protect, and heal them.

The brothers never knew of this until after his repose, when they fully