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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Epic literature exists within almost every period of recorded history. The literary genre of the epic has evolved through the ages with such masterpieces as Gilgamesh, Beowulf, The Odyssey, the Mahabharata, the Cid, Kalevala, and the Song of Roland. In more recent times, too, epic literature exists as exemplified by The Divine Comedy, The Faerie Queene, Paradise Lost, and Don Juan. But perhaps the most ambitious epic of this age, or for that matter, any age, is The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel by Nikos Kazantzakis. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the spiritual growth of Kazantzakis' epic hero, Odysseus, the background for which will be provided by brief discussions of Kazantzakis' thought and work.

Although its first edition in 1938 numbered only three hundred copies, The Odyssey attracted immediate attention.¹ As a literary work, it was declared a daring sequel to the Homeric epic in a genre usually thought unsuitable to modern taste. Many intellectuals at the University of Athens denounced Kazantzakis for his efforts. He had broken

¹Helen N. Kazantzakis, Nikos Kazantzakis: A Biography Based on His Letters, trans. Amy Mims (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1968), p. 359. Hereafter cited as Nikos Kazantzakis.

convention by taking the work of one of the most revered writers of Greece and grafting on this epic a modern sequel three times as long as the original. Not only were Greek scholars in an uproar over the 33,333 lines of unfamiliar verse, but they were absolutely appalled at the absence of accent marks, which are the mainstay of the Greek language. In his poem, Kazantzakis used accent marks only in cases of acute stress.² Critics were confused also by the special dictionary of almost two thousand words appended to the poem. This glossary defined words which were entirely unfamiliar to highly educated people, but which were in common use by the lower-classes of Greece.³ For example, the base word aspálatos is the name of a common shrub found in Greece. This word, however, undergoes some eighteen changes in the various regions of Greece; Kazantzakis utilizes most of these forms in his poem. The tradition-minded professors who wanted to stabilize spelling, grammar, syntax, and rhetoric claimed that Kazantzakis deviated in order to use esoteric words. He defended himself by asserting that he was safe-guarding the soul of the common people from such things as the dogma of school composition courses and newspaper

²See the "Introduction" by Kimon Friar in Nikos Kazantzakis' Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, trans. Kimon Friar (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958), p. ix. Hereafter cited as "Introduction," Odyssey.

³"Introduction," Odyssey, p. x.

jargon. At any rate, Kazantzakis' work does convey the spirit of the Greek people.⁴

The work itself, however, did not come as a complete surprise. Before its publication, it was well-known that Kazantzakis was working on an epic. By 1938, the direction of Kazantzakis' thinking and the wide scope of his genius was evident; he interspersed his beliefs in many genres-- novels, prose and poetic dramas, travelogues, philosophic discourse, and even translations. These works anticipate The Odyssey, as also do the known facts of his life, both public and private. His experiences in many ways prefigure the adventures of his picaresque hero, Odysseus. After completing his formal education, Kazantzakis became an habitual traveler moving through the continents of Europe, Asia, and Africa to learn five modern languages in addition to his existing knowledge of Latin and ancient and modern Greek. Like Odysseus, he felt the need to renounce all worldly desires; he thus withdrew into ascetic contemplation on Mount Athos.⁵

At one time Kazantzakis had declared: "Create an idealized image of yourself, and try to resemble it."⁶ He

⁴See "A Note on the Author and His Use of Language" by P. A. Bien in Nikos Kazantzakis' Last Temptation of Christ, trans. P. A. Bien (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), pp. 493-494.

⁵"Introduction," Odyssey, p. xxiv. ⁶Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 22.

later put this remark in the mouth of his heroes, especially Odysseus, and at the same time synthesized this belief into his own being. For instance, he had directed a mission to rescue thousands of Greeks from Russia, thus working with much the same messianic zeal as an Odysseus.⁷ But whatever act Kazantzakis performed--political, literary, or social--he did it not in the manner of "one of the three leaders of the human spirit, . . . Faust . . . Hamlet . . . Don Quixote, but [in the manner of] Don Odysseus."⁸

The poem, which, as stated above, consists of 33,333 lines, is opulent in style and profuse in its employment of fable, dream, and digressive incident; yet the main narrative action is relatively simple. Odysseus, having set Ithaca in order, leaves again with a small band of companions. His destination is Sparta, where his friend Menelaus and the beautiful Helen rule. Abducting Helen, who is obviously bored with her domestic life, he takes her to Crete, where he loses her to a member of the new Doric race.⁹ From here Odysseus goes to Egypt, engages in an unsuccessful revolt, then sets out to trace the Nile to its source. After

⁷"Introduction," Odyssey, p. xxiv.

⁸See the "Introduction" by Kimon Friar in Nikos Kazantzakis' Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises, trans. Kimon Friar (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960), p. 25. Hereafter cited as Saviors.

⁹Odysseus leaves his wife, Penelope, in Ithaca. His experiences in Ithaca will be further explained in Chapter III.

crossing a wilderness, he builds a Holy City, which is destroyed soon after its construction. Now completely alone and aged by his experience, Odysseus journeys southward through Africa.¹⁰ When he reaches the sea, he builds himself a boat and sails to the polar regions, where he meets his death. Parallel to this sequence of adventure is the spiritual growth of Odysseus, which is, of course, the concern of this study.

Critics have viewed The Odyssey from a variety of approaches. According to W. B. Stanford, Kazantzakis' "Odyssey offers as much scope for ethical, theological, and artistic controversy as Joyce's Ulysses. Some have seen it as a Jeremiad of decaying Western civilization, or as an apotheosis of nihilistic egoism."¹¹ Since in his works Kazantzakis brings to bear a lifetime of study in philosophy, history, anthropology, history, religion, and literature, the result is that his poem is a catalogue of the central motifs and dilemmas of modern Western literature. But standing above these motifs is the one central theme which Kazantzakis felt was inescapable in all of his works--the spiritual

¹⁰Although Odysseus does not age in years during all of his wanderings, he does age by a process of experiential growth.

¹¹W. B. Stanford, The Ulysses Theme: A Study in the Adaptability of a Traditional Hero, 2nd ed: (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), p. 237. Hereafter cited as Stanford.

struggle of man with the godhead. Kazantzakis himself described this theme: "The major and almost the only theme of all my work is the struggle of man with 'God': the unyielding, inextinguishable struggle of the naked worm called 'man' against the terrifying power and darkness of the forces within him and around him. The stubbornness of the struggle, the tenacity of the little spark in its fight to penetrate the age-old, boundless night and conquer it. The anguished battle to transmute darkness into light, slavery into freedom--all these struggles, alas, are foreign and incomprehensible to the present-day Greek intellectuals."¹²

To illustrate this theme of man's spiritual struggle, Kazantzakis felt he had to create his own ideology. He firmly believed that the Twentieth Century was an epical age, as he proclaims in Nea Hestia: "'As far as I am concerned, no age is more epical than ours. It is in such ages--when one Myth fades away and another struggles to come into being--that epics are created.'"¹³ At a later time, Kazantzakis was to reaffirm his predilection for epic works:

¹²Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 507.

¹³Quoted in Stanford, p. 239.

The great artist glimpses timeless, changeless symbols beneath the flow of everyday reality. Behind the spasmodic, often incoherent actions of mortal men he views clearly the great currents that sweep souls along. He transposes ephemeral events into immortal air. A great master regards realistic depiction as a deformation, a caricature of the eternal.

That is why Classical Greece's great masters--and not only the sculptors--desiring to render contemporary triumphs eternal, transposed history high up into the symbolic atmosphere of mythology. Instead of depicting their fellow Greeks battling the Persians, they brought in the Lapithae and centaurs. And in the Lapithae and centaurs we discern two great, timeless adversaries: mind and beast, civilization and barbarism. Thus a historical event which occurred at one definite moment escaped time, became bound up with the entire race and with its archetypal visions; finally it escaped the race as well, and became an immortal commemoration. Thus, through this symbolic refinement, the victories of the Greeks were elevated to victories for all humanity.¹⁴

Although Kazantzakis felt that the present times were epical, the age itself gave him no ideology which he could accept as myth, religion, or symbol, something which he could integrate into his works. The idea of an epic itself did not produce quite the insight Kazantzakis needed in describing Odysseus' struggle to find pure spirit. Kazantzakis needed a religion, a philosophy, that was logical and boundless. He finally solved this problem by formulating his system of epistemology and metaphysics, which he presented in a book titled The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises. Chapter II will be concerned with the philosophical beliefs of

¹⁴Nikos Kazantzakis, Journey to the Morea, trans. F. A. Reed (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965), pp. 67-68.

Kazantzakis, Chapter III with the theme of spirituality in
The Odyssey.

CHAPTER II

KAZANTZAKIS' PHILOSOPHY: IN SEARCH OF RELIGION

Nikos Kazantzakis' Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises is, indeed, his attempt to formulate an epistemological frame for his beliefs. In epigrammatic form, Kazantzakis takes the reader on a journey into the meaning of God and freedom. Initially, he investigates how a man, a detached soul, prepares for the trek towards true refinement of spirit. Kazantzakis then describes the frustrations and the joys of the trip to enlightenment. After many arduous adventures, man finally reaches the ultimate in spiritual being, which is, according to Kazantzakis, the struggle to find the godhead, freedom, and, thus, salvation. The central theme in this philosophy, then, is man's finding his relationship to God, a relationship characterized by vehement struggle.

The writing of the Saviors of God came only after Kazantzakis had hammered his previous thoughts and experiences into a unified concept. Even in youth, the poet experienced the struggles that took shape in his philosophy:

"From early youth my fundamental struggle . . . has been the unceasing and pitiless battle within me between the flesh and the spirit. Within me are the most ancient, prehuman dark and lustrous powers, and my spirit is the arena where these two armies have met and fought. I felt that if only one of these two conquered and annihilated the other, I would be lost, because I loved my body and did not want it to vanish,

yet I loved my soul and did not want it to decline. I struggled, therefore, to unite in friendship these two antithetical and universal powers until they should realize they were not enemies but co-workers, until they should rejoice so that I also might rejoice with them in their harmony."¹

The struggle between flesh and spirit was but one of the battles that raged within Kazantzakis. He was also attempting to find meaning in life itself.

The course of Kazantzakis' life changed when he took philosophy courses at the College de France and at the Sorbonne. In describing the nature of these courses in a letter to his sister, Kazantzakis stated: "I'm learning the ABC's."² As early as 1910, Kazantzakis planned to translate such works as Nietzsche's Birth of Tragedy and Thus Spake Zarathustra, Darwin's Origin of Species, Bergson's Laughter, and James's Theory of Emotion.³ All of these philosophers were to be an enormous influence on the thoughts of Kazantzakis. But perhaps the greatest reason for their influence was Kazantzakis' almost insatiable mania for self-identification. For example, in a letter from Antibes on May 4, 1957, he recounted his early confrontation with Frederick Nietzsche: "In Paris, at the Sainte-Genevieve Library, an unknown girl came up to me, holding an open book with a photograph. She hid the name beneath the photograph

¹"Introduction," Odyssey, p. xxiii.

²Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 42.

³Nikos Kazantzakis, pp. 49-50.

with one hand and said to me, "Look, here is a photograph of you! Is it you?" I was amazed. It was quite true: forehead, eyes, look were identical. . . . It was Nietzsche. From that day, I studied him greatly, admired him greatly, and wrote a monograph entitled, "Frederick Nietzsche and the Philosophy of Right." I traveled on purpose to follow his trail.⁴ Nietzsche was not the only philosopher with whom he identified: "A young man, Merkati, told me tonight that my face is like Tolstoy's. This moved me, because the essence of Tolstoy's endeavor is my own work."⁵ Kazantzakis thus seemed to pattern himself after these men and others for three possible reasons. First of all, he felt an affinity for their ideas on the meaning of life. They had searched in one way or another for the purposes of existence, and this quest was, of course, one of Kazantzakis' primary aims. Secondly, they were men of stature, and, as such, Kazantzakis admired them as he had Cervantes, Shakespeare, Goethe, and other great men of letters. Last of all he was able to identify with them in physical appearance, a mania that seemed to consume the Greek writer: "My whole life I was dominated by great heroic figures, perhaps because

⁴Pandelis Prevelakis, Nikos Kazantzakis and His Odyssey, trans. Philip Sherrard (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1961), p. 23. Hereafter cited as Prevelakis. Ellipsis not mine.

⁵Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 58.

I read the lives of saints so passionately when I was a child, yearned to become a saint in my turn, and after that devoted myself with equal passion to books about heroes--conquerors, explorers, Don Quixotes. Whenever a figure chanced to combine heroism with sanctity, then at least I possessed a model human being."⁶

Although Nietzsche, Darwin, James, Bergson, and other philosophers influenced Kazantzakis in many respects, he still felt a spiritual and intellectual void. He was searching for some body of belief to accept as his own. His search finally led him to spend two years in ascetic contemplation on Mount Athos with a close friend and kindred spirit, Angelos Sikelianos. Together they roamed this mountain sharing many ideas which were to bear fruit at a later time.⁷ It was a time of despair for Kazantzakis, too, because he was "seething with intellectual revolt and spiritual confusion, all as yet disordered and indecisive."⁸ Furthermore, observing the ephemeral beauty of the world, Kazantzakis questioned the power of God: "What kind of God is this who tosses the beautiful and the ugly, the valiant and the cowardly all on the same dunghill, stamps His foot down on

⁶Nikos Kazantzakis, Report to Greco, trans. P. A. Bien (New York: Bantam Books, 1966), p. 180. Hereafter cited as Report.

⁷Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 53. ⁸Report, p. 179.

them without distinction and turns them all to mud? Either he is not just or not omnipotent--or else He simply does not understand! . . . The young man [Kazantzakis], frequently without knowing it, has secretly begun to fashion within himself a God who will not shame his heart."⁹ Kazantzakis could not accept Christianity or any other moral guideline that spoke of a just and omnipotent God Who, to his way of thinking, illogically controlled the actions of mankind. He was looking for something else that would satisfy his craving for logicality where he thought none had previously existed.

On November 22, 1914, Kazantzakis decided that he must act; he thought it was his duty, first of all, to "reorganize Hellenic asceticism." He also thought on this momentous occasion to tear down "philology, [and] the narrow molds of genres." To Kazantzakis, there was only one way of solving these inadequacies; he must create his own religion, his own guide to the purpose of life.¹⁰ It is significant that at this time in his life Kazantzakis was reading Tolstoy: "Tonight Tolstoy affected me deeply. His tragic escape: a confession of defeat. He wanted to create religion, and all he could create was novels and art. His finest essence--he knew this well--failed to be expressed."¹¹ Unlike Tolstoy, Kazantzakis decided he was not going to fail

⁹Report, pp. 178-179; ellipsis not mine.

¹⁰Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 55. ¹¹Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 56.

in formulating what he, too, wanted to conceive--a logical and boundless religion. It was not until 1923, however, that Kazantzakis was able to formulate his religion into a final form in a small book entitled The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises. It was his spiritual destiny to write such a work, and perhaps, out of all his works, it is the most hauntingly beautiful.

The Saviors of God begins simply with a Prologue that describes two divergent views of life. On the one hand, Kazantzakis depicts the point of view held by many that the goal of life is death--"the dark abyss." On the other hand, he realizes that many believe that the purpose of life is to achieve immortality.¹² But Kazantzakis considers both of these approaches to life as important. Man's primary duty, writes Kazantzakis, is relatively simple: "It is our duty . . . to grasp that vision which can embrace and harmonize these two enormous, timeless and indestructible forces, and with this vision to modulate our thinking and our action."¹³ When man realizes that he must reconcile these two opposing forces, he prepares himself for the ascent toward the attainment of a pure soul.¹⁴

¹²Saviors, p. 43. ¹³Saviors, p. 44.

¹⁴Kazantzakis labeled this reconciliation of opposing forces "The Cretan Glance." For a full discussion, see Report, pp. 464-475. That Odysseus is an embodiment of "The Cretan Glance" is indicated by his synthesis of all the opposing forces he meets. A full explanation follows in Chapter III.

In this Preparation, man has three duties. His first duty is to the mind, which shouts: "'Only I exist.'"¹⁵ Man's mind, according to Kazantzakis, erects bridges over the chaos of the abyss, imposes order on disorder, and struggles to construct boundaries of rationality within which man remains "fruitful, happy, and at work."¹⁶ Man must thus "see and accept the boundaries of the human mind without vain rebellion." The individual must be aware, however, that the mind cannot see the actual essence of things; it can perceive only the appearance of matter, and, thus, it has certain limitations.¹⁷ But the second duty of man is to the heart, which does not contain the boundaries found in the mind. The heart struggles "to grasp what is hidden behind appearances."¹⁸ It rushes to penetrate beyond the surface superficialities of the world and to merge with the Invisible-- i.e., with the intangible qualities of existence.¹⁹ After admitting the dissimilarity between mind and heart, Kazantzakis states that man must free himself from "the simple complacency of the mind that thinks to put all things in order and hopes to subdue phenomena," as well as free himself from the "heart that seeks and hopes to find the essence of things." The individual must also free himself from the hope of achieving the desires of mind or heart.²⁰ A man must

¹⁵Saviors, p. 47. ¹⁶Saviors, p. 48. ¹⁷Saviors, p. 49.

¹⁸Saviors, p. 51. ¹⁹Saviors, p. 52. ²⁰Saviors, p. 56.

then greet the chaotic abyss without any hopes; he must do so with bravery and thus realize that nothing exists, neither life nor death. The central point in this third and final duty is a revelatory synthesis: "I know now: I do not hope for anything. I do not fear anything, I have freed myself from both the mind and the heart, I have mounted much higher, I am free. This is what I want. I want nothing more. I have been seeking freedom."²¹ Freedom is thus the ultimate goal of a tempestuous soul.

After man has performed these three duties, he is set for the March, which is composed of four stages. But before the actual journey, man hears a small voice seemingly within himself that is crying for freedom. The moment man hears the voice, he is ready to ascend on a path of four consecutive stages.²² The first stage man takes is to dive within his own ego until he discovers that the cry is from an endangered being trapped within him. This entity within man seeks liberation. It fervently proclaims: "'I, the Cry, am the Lord your God! I am not an asylum. I am not hope and a home. I am not the Father nor the Son nor the Holy Ghost. I am your General!'"²³ But to free this struggling being, each individual must consider himself responsible for

²¹Saviors, p. 59. ²²Saviors, p. 64.

²³Saviors, p. 67.

saving the world. In this first stage, he must learn to love danger, to obey and to command, and to love the responsibility of rescuing the earth. The pilgrim must love and cherish all others who participate in this struggle; he does not seek friends but comrades-in-arms.²⁴

In the second stage the spiritual traveler, man, no longer concerns himself with just the ego. Man plunges into his own being for an image of the race of men from whom he has originated.²⁵ Because his ancestors have not completed their work, it is the individual's job, according to Kazantzakis, to aid them in the completion of their work. Among these ancestors, he must nominate only those who can help him attain greater heights of spirituality.²⁶ After searching for the proper ancestors and carrying on their work, it finally becomes the task of man to pass this struggling heritage to his son so that he in turn may surpass his ancestors.²⁷

Man's third stage is to unleash himself from the ties of race and to be concerned with a more general category, all the races of mankind. The individual must, at the outset, "let pity overwhelm [him] for this creature who one morning detached himself from the ape, naked, defenseless,

²⁴Saviors, p. 68. ²⁵Saviors, p. 70. ²⁶Saviors, p. 71.

²⁷Saviors, p. 74.

without teeth or horns, with only a spark of fire in his soft skull."²⁸ Furthermore, he must bear the total agonies of all mankind in all ages: "Encompass through one century, then through two centuries, through three, through ten, through as many centuries as you can bear, the onward march of mankind. . . . Immerse yourself in this vision with patience, with love and high disinterestedness, until slowly the world begins to breathe within you, the embattled begin to be enlightened, to unite in your heart and to acknowledge themselves as brothers."²⁹

The fourth and final stage is for man to plunge beyond the agonies of mankind into all the creations of earth: plants, men, sea, sky, and all the other creations that compose the universe.³⁰ Each individual, according to Kazantzakis, is irrevocably tied to the earth: "I might have sunk and vanished amid those roots that suck at the mud blissfully." Whatever spiritual heights man ascends, he is to remain deeply rooted in nature. He is thus to grow downward as he reaches upward.³¹ After traveling beyond the Preparation and the March, man pierces all phenomena to encounter a vision of the God Who has struggled with man on his ascent.

²⁸Saviors, p. 76.

²⁹Saviors, p. 78.

³⁰Saviors, p. 82.

³¹Saviors, p. 83.

According to Kazantzakis, man has now heard the battle within his tempestuous soul; and, as a result, he has waged war with the dead, the living, and the unborn; he has performed these deeds for the sake of the God Who has fought by his side.³² God is not an omnipotent force, but is, instead, a frail creature Who breathes with difficulty in His feeble attempts to struggle onward with His companion-at-arms, man.³³ God--i.e., Kazantzakis' God--"struggles in everything, his hands flung upward toward the light. What light? Beyond and above everything!"³⁴ The essence of God is, in Kazantzakis' own words, "STRUGGLE."³⁵ God cannot be saved unless man attempts to save Him by struggling with Him, and, paradoxically, man can be saved only if God succeeds in struggling. God thus depends upon man to save Him,³⁶ and man depends upon God to save him.

When man has envisioned this struggle, he must then attain the ultimate form of all these theories, Action. Kazantzakis states that this Action manifests itself in three forms: the relationship between God and man, the relationship between man and man, and finally, the relationship between man and nature. In describing the relationship between God and man, Kazantzakis summarizes the picture of his

³²Saviors, p. 87. ³³Saviors, p. 89. ³⁴Saviors, p. 91.

³⁵Saviors, p. 92. ³⁶Saviors, p. 95.

God Who has been struggling with such things as the ego and the race. In brief, God Himself is a circle Who might have been given any name--Abyss, Mystery, Absolute Light, Matter, Spirit, Ultimate Despair, or Silence. He has been named "God" "for primordial reason"; it is an ancient name that has stirred the hearts of all mankind in every age.³⁷ This God is not almighty or all-holy; he is "both man and woman, mortal and immortal, dung and spirit."³⁸ Furthermore, it is not this God Who will rescue man, but it is "we who will save God, by battling, by creating, and by transmuting matter into spirit."³⁹ This transubstantiation of matter into spirit is, of course, the final goal of man in his endless struggle.

Next, man must consider his relationship to other men. Man's duty is, essentially, to struggle continually to God.⁴⁰ Man must realize that love is the force that urges mankind to greater heights, but, ironically, it is injustice, cruelty, longing, and hunger that lead mankind.⁴¹ Man also must formulate two items of ethical conduct: responsibility and sacrifice. It is man's responsibility to liberate the struggling God; it is his sacrificial aim to give up his life for the sake of God because life itself is an instrument of

³⁷Saviors, p. 101.

³⁸Saviors, p. 103.

³⁹Saviors, p. 106.

⁴⁰Saviors, p. 109.

⁴¹Saviors, p. 111.

this freedom-fighting God.⁴² Finally, man must choose his own particular road that leads to salvation.⁴³ It is only through these processes that man can relate to man.

The relationship between man and nature is one of complex antithesis. In this stage of his spiritual evolution, man realizes that the universe is a composite of opposing forces that "meet, fight, conquer, and are conquered, become reconciled for a brief moment, and then begin to battle again throughout the Universe." It is man's task to impose a restrictive order upon these conflicting forces, since it is his ultimate purpose to free their spirits so that they may mingle with his. By imposing this order, writes Kazantzakis, we also "create God."⁴⁴

Through this spiritual evolvment of the Preparation, the March, and, finally, Action, man arrives at the last point in the ascent to deliverance, which is Silence. At this time, soul becomes a flame, and the universe becomes a "tree of fire."⁴⁵ This fire is the "first and final mask [symbol] of [his] God."⁴⁶ This ultimate stage of existence for the soul is called "Silence" because "every person, after completing his service in all labors, reaches finally the highest summit of endeavor, beyond every labor,

⁴²Saviors, p. 113. ⁴³Saviors, p. 117.

⁴⁴Saviors, pp. 120-121. ⁴⁵Saviors, p. 127.

⁴⁶Saviors, p. 128.

where he no longer struggles or shouts, where he ripens fully in silence, indestructibly, eternally, with the entire Universe," with which man finally merges, and as a result, he is completely free.⁴⁷

The Saviors of God is thus a powerful affirmation of the soul's progress to spirituality. It shows Kazantzakis' belief that the soul, or, rather, the soul's struggle, is the primary principle of life. Late in his life, Kazantzakis wrote: "I marvel at the human soul; no power in heaven and earth is so great. Without being aware of it, we carry omnipotence within us."⁴⁸ It seems to have been Kazantzakis' goal to make mankind aware of its own omnipotence, which it may achieve by attaining pure soul.

At any rate, when Kazantzakis and Sikelianos read Dante on Mount Athos, Kazantzakis decided that he must have a divine purpose and must write about it: "To make a book like the Cathedrals of Rodin. Our spiritual pilgrimage to Mt. Athos. How we lived our race and the faith of our fathers; how we everywhere elevated the soul, how we hailed life rising like an arrow of divine grace toward things heavenly."⁴⁹ The result of these thoughts was The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, in which Kazantzakis' philosophy mounted

⁴⁷Saviors, p. 129. ⁴⁸Report, p. 478.

⁴⁹Nikos Kazantzakis, p. 56.

into poetry under the ardor of his inspiration. The integration of this philosophy into The Odyssey is one of the primary concerns of Chapter III.

CHAPTER III

AN ANALYSIS OF ODYSSEUS' JOURNEY TO SPIRITUALITY

Kazantzakis' Odyssey is an epic based, in a sense, on a return, a homecoming. Odysseus, the central figure in The Odyssey, lives between a civilization that is dying and one that is about to be born. As Odysseus is to grow spiritually, a new political order is to emerge and grow with him. Odysseus thus vacillates between the world of the spirit and the world of the new political order. The purpose of this chapter is to examine Odysseus' journey to spirituality.

In the Prologue to The Odyssey, the poet invokes the sun, the ultimate symbol of purified spirit, to observe the feats of Odysseus as he travels in search of the ultimate freedom, spirituality:

O Sun, my quick coquetting eye, my red-haired hound
sniff out all quarries that I love, give them swift chase,
tell me all that you've seen on earth, all that you've
heard,
and I shall pass them through my entrails' secret forge
till slowly, with profound caresses, play and laughter,
stone, water, fire and earth shall be transformed to
spirit,
and the mudwinged and heavy soul, freed of its flesh,
shall like a flame serene ascend and fade in the sun.
(Prologue, ll. 23-30)

The poem itself becomes a long metaphor as Kazantzakis closes the poem with an Epilogue to the Sun, who has watched the relinquishment of flesh for spirit: "Then this earth

vanished, the sea dimmed, all flesh dissolved, / the body turned to fragile spirit and spirit to air" (Epilogue, ll. 14-15). The poem thus opens and closes with the sun, a metaphoric symbol of the transubstantiation of all matter into flame--i.e., spirit. The theme of spirituality pervades the entire poem; its vehicle is Odysseus.

In Book I of The Odyssey, Odysseus has returned to Ithaca after twenty years of adventure in an abstract world of mythological entities. In Ithaca, he attempts to cope with the problems of a concrete, tangible existence; he feels, however, a limitation of order in Ithaca. He is accustomed to the perils of warfare. But life in Ithaca is tame. As a result, he initially experiences an alienation of family, friends, and environment. For example, there is, first of all, the matter of the townspeople who curse Odysseus in short epithets such as "barbarous butcher" (I.68). Kazantzakis, too, reaffirms Odysseus' brutality by continually referring to him as "harsh sea-battler" (I.111), "cruel man-slayer" (I.159), "house-wrecker" (I.281), and "soul-grabbing king" (I.340). Frightened by Odysseus, the populace of Ithaca gathers in the marketplace to hurl opposition at their newly returned king:

"We've welcomed him too well, my lads, that barbarous
butcher!
Behold his gifts: a sword, a shield, three flasks of
poison:
One to be drunk at dawn, one at high noon, the third
most bitter one, dear Gods, to be drunk in bed, alone."
(I.68-71)

As indicated by the passage above, the people who first voice opposition to Odysseus are the widows of the victims of the ten years' war in Troy. Later in Book I, Kazantzakis catalogues the townspeople by describing, initially, the older men: "Town elders lay stretched out in pride on fat sheepskins; / with pale, exhausted faces and with bloodshot eyes" (I.1011-1012). The poet depicts the women, too, with somewhat unsavory qualities:

The chattering female flocks sat down by farther tables,
 their fresh prismatic garments gleaming in the moon
 As though a crowd of haughty peacocks played in moonlight.
 (I.1021-1023)

The people of Ithaca thus do not seem to possess any redeeming qualities. They are, at best, degenerate vagrants. Moreover, it is a simple matter to see that in this stifling environment, Odysseus, already symbolically "cleansed and calmed," finds himself alienated (I.112).¹

Odysseus does not find warmth in the presence of either his wife or son. Penelope is afraid of Odysseus' brutal nature. As she prepares for their first night in bed, she gazes on Odysseus "with fear" (I.468). Telemachus believes that a king must dispense "bread and freedom justly to all men" (I.175). But Odysseus rejects this method of rule, and in strict accordance with his creator's remarks in The Saviors of God, he tells Telemachus:

¹After slaying Penelope's suitors, Odysseus bathes to cleanse himself of the blood.

"I've done my duty as a son, surpassed my father, now in your turn surpass me both in brain and spear, a difficult task, but if you can't, our race must perish, and then our turn shall come to fall prey to the mob."

(I.205-208)

Telemachus does not come to terms with Odysseus' fervent declaration because he, like the townspeople and Penelope, is too predisposed toward demotic discipline and order. Odysseus' father, Laertes, also represents an alien force which, in Odysseus' own words, has been reduced to "'shame, filth on the earth'" (I.504).

Odysseus' conflict with the Ithacans is much more than a matter of personality. At a feast celebrating Odysseus' return, a minstrel reveals that Odysseus has been separated from the Hellenic race from birth. According to this minstrel, Odysseus was blessed by "three great Fates" (I.1167). First of all, Tantalus, the "forefather of despairing mankind" (I.1184), endowed Odysseus with his "abysmal heavy heart" (I.1186). Secondly, Prometheus, the Titan who gave fire to mankind, "sowed the seed" of the mind's blazing intellect within Odysseus (I.1193). But the third Fate, Heracles, freed Odysseus from Tantalus' heart and Prometheus' mind. Heracles bathed Odysseus in the fire of the spirit's laborious struggle and was his "salvation's wonder" (I.1207). Within this mythological frame, Odysseus has been prepared for his ascent to spirituality. His first duty was to the heart (Tantalus); his second duty was to the

mind (Prometheus); and finally, he was freed of both the mind and the heart (by Heracles). The gifts of the Three Fates are, indeed, the identical duties man must perform in his Preparation according to Kazantzakis' Saviors of God.²

The minstrel's relation of the story of Odysseus' birthright clarifies several earlier passages of the poem. For example, throughout much of Book I, Kazantzakis contraposes the action of Odysseus' heart and mind. This contraposition first occurs after Odysseus slays Penelope's suitors:

His own eyes calmly gazed in the starry eyes of night,
 who from the mountains with her curly flocks descended,
 till all his murderous work and whir of arrows sank
 within his heart in peace, distilled like mist or
 dream,
 and his wild tiger heart in darkness licked its lips.
 After the joy of bathing, his mind grew serene.
(I.45-50)

This contraposition of the mind and the heart appears again as Odysseus tries to console the townspeople:

The murderer [Odysseus] glared into his people's eyes,
 but spoke not;
 two roads within him opened up for possible action:
 should he unleash on the coarse herd his lion-mind
 that men and demigods and even gods disdained,
 or pity his poor people, open his arms wide,
 and merge serenely with his flock like a good shepherd?
(I.316-321)

The reader thus realizes that this conflict of heart and mind is the result of Odysseus' birthright.

²See pp. 15-16 above.

Closely allied to this preparatory stage is the policy of noncommitment maintained by Odysseus. As previously mentioned in Chapter II, Kazantzakis stated in his Prologue to The Saviors of God that man must harmonize or, rather, reconcile all of the opposing forces.³ He should not fully commit himself to anything except the struggle of attaining freedom of soul; the self thus remains free to fulfill itself. Early in The Odyssey, Odysseus reveals this position to an old man: "Now learn old man, my warp is No, my woof is Yes, / and what I weave all day I swift unweave by night" (I.831-832). This statement is an ironic reference to the trick Penelope used to hold off her suitors, ironic because she now fears this noncommitted Odysseus.⁴ But it must be remembered that Penelope was not blessed with Odysseus' birthright. Just as Odysseus represents a different breed of man, she represents, as does Telemachus, the old Hellenic order. At any rate, Odysseus stands in the middle of his present existence and, in that position, is able to declare that "all roads are good" (I.833). In his

³See p. 14 above.

⁴See Edith Hamilton, Mythology (New York: The New American Library, 1942), p. 204. In Homer's Odyssey, Penelope weaves a shroud by day and unweaves it by night. She tells her suitors that she will marry them when the shroud is finished. This is one of several thinly veiled allusions Kazantzakis makes to Homer's Odyssey. Kazantzakis does not relate the details of Penelope's trick.

following adventures, Odysseus is to be obsessed with and tortured by the multiplicity of roads open to him. It is his purpose to seek the roads that will lead to his redemption.

Inevitably, this concern with the self leads Odysseus to the negation of all divine authority. He tells the townspeople:

"In all my wandering voyages and torturous strife,
the earth, the seas, the winds fought me with frenzied
rage;

I was in danger often, both through joy and grief,
of losing priceless goodness, man's most worthy face.
I raised my arms to the high heavens and cried for help
but on my head gods hurled their lightning bolts, and
laughed.

Old comrades, O young men, my island's newest sprouts,
I drink not to the gods but to man's dauntless mind!"
(I.1039-1044, 1059-1060)

In a typical mood of revolt, Odysseus abjures the power of the Greek gods. He has been confronted with many perilous adventures; it was not the gods who were his salvation, but his own fortitude and courage. Odysseus must now forge his own god, his own entity, who will aid him in his struggle to find a meaning to the very purposes of existence. Book I closes with Kazantzakis depicting Odysseus as a "crude soul," but he is not destined to waste his life in Ithaca (I.1302).

At the beginning of Book II, Odysseus relates his past achievements and sufferings to his family. Especially significant is his description of the three disguises of

death.⁵ Odysseus' first confrontation with death was with Calypso. He came to realize that his sexual union with her was dangerous because it dehumanized him: "'I quaked in fear of being made a deathless god / without man's springing heart, without man's joys or griefs'" (II.153-154). On the other hand, his sexual union with Circe, who obviously represents the bestial in man, threatened Odysseus' potential spirituality: "'How to forget, dear God, the joy that shook my loins / when I saw virtue, light, and soul all disappearing!'" (II.315-316). With the third mask of death, Nausicaa, Odysseus apparently felt that the ideal balance had been found: "'She neither raised me to the empty sky nor hurled / me down to Hades, but we walked the earth together'" (II.413-414). To Odysseus, Nausicaa represented the most subtle of the masks of death. Nausicaa wanted order; she wanted Odysseus to lead a calm, unadventurous life, while, on the other hand, he felt a strong desire for adventure and rebellion. Normality, symbolized by Nausicaa, is thus untenable to Odysseus.

Odysseus' narration of these Homeric incidents is especially important because their recollection brings him to an awareness of his place in Ithaca:

Odysseus sealed his bitter lips and spoke no more,
but watched the glowering fire fade, the withering
flames,
the ash that spread like powder on the dying coals,

⁵Calypso, Circe, and Nausicaa represent a death of inactivity to Odysseus. In three different ways, they impede his struggle to spirituality.

then turned, glanced at his wife, gazed on his son
 and father,
 and suddenly shook with fear, and sighed, for now he
 knew
 that even his native land was a sweet mask of Death.
 (II.429-434)

Important, too, is Odysseus' choice of Nausicaa as the proper wife for the normal, unassuming Telemachus. In effect, Odysseus has symbolically joined two emblems of normality, Nausicaa and Telemachus, who symbolizes the normalcy of Ithaca.

Closely associated with Odysseus' dread of the three masks of death is his view of his position in relation to time and place. When he experiences any feelings at all, he feels a sense of detachment. He realizes that the life to which he once belonged has changed. In Book II, a bard expresses this sentiment extremely well to Odysseus and the Ithacans:

"Athena's helmet [symbolic of the old Hellenic order],
 boys, has now been smashed to bits
 nor can it ever again contain the whole world's head.
 All the strong gods you met on your slight voyages
 are smoke that rises from a lord's contented roof
 or the long shadow of a startled slave at nightfall."
 (II.1338-1342)

Odysseus also sees himself as being at the end of an era:

Watching his son before him run to find a bride,
 feeling his father's body rot in the grave behind him,
 and he at the dead center, bridegroom both and corpse,
 he shuddered, for his life now seemed the briefest
 lightning flash.
 (II.621-624)

Odysseus thus expresses once more his attitude on noncommitment. But the seeds of spirituality have been planted within Odysseus by the Three Fates; in order that the seeds may grow, he must act upon this sense of detachment.

As mentioned in Chapter II above, Kazantzakis stated in The Saviors of God that, in the struggle to attain freedom of soul, each man must seek comrades-in-arms.⁶ Odysseus searches in Ithaca for kindred souls who will aid him in his struggle. The first of these comrades is Captain Clam, a "shaggy, battered sea-wolf" (II.744). He, too, concerns himself with the explorations of the soul: "'The soul is like a woman who not even can not, / but will not resist warm words that lure her like a man'" (II.774-775). Odysseus next meets a bronzesmith, Hardihood, who pledges devotion to Odysseus because he will be led to the new god, Iron, who "'now leaps and shouts in flames!'" (II.790). The third companion Odysseus meets, Kentaur, represents a carpe diem philosophy.⁷ He fervently proclaims:

"Turn poisonous cares away, let fate bring what it may!
 Eat all your oxen to the bone, gulp down your wine,
 and steal a breast stroke on the girls, for life is
 short,
 The black cock soon shall crow, and death shall dawn
 too soon."

(I.1232-1235)

Orpheus, the flute-player, is the fourth person to join forces with Odysseus. Orpheus represents an epicurean

⁶See p. 17 above.

⁷See William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, A Handbook to Literature, rev. Hugh Holman (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1960), p. 72. Hereafter cited as Thrall and Hibbard. A carpe diem philosophy is a belief in the immediate pursuit of experience.

philosophy of life.⁸ He tells Odysseus: "'To eat, drink, sleep, and love: this is the life of man!'" (I.1238).

The last to join Odysseus at this point is Granite, a lonely individual who has killed his brother over a woman. Burdened with guilt over his murderous deed, Granite totally rejects women:

"A woman's body is a dark and monstrous mystery;
between her supple thighs a heavy whirlpool swirls,
two rivers crash, and woe to him who slips and falls!"
(II.1017-1019)

These men have their own philosophies of life, which affect Odysseus's search. Each man becomes a comrade-in-arms to Odysseus, who is now ready to set sail on both a physical and spiritual voyage.

In Book II, Odysseus and his five companions sail away from the shores of Ithaca with no actual geographical destination in mind. As they sail, Orpheus begins a fable that is highly relevant to the nature of Odysseus' spiritual voyage. The story is about two worms, who are the "'much-suffering Lord and Mother, forebears of all mankind!'" (III.104). The worms are thus the Kazantzakian counterpart of the biblical Adam and Eve. The God Who deigns to look upon these creatures is not benign, but a "'murderer [who] rules the sky, jealous of Mother Earth'" (III.116). Filled

⁸See Thrall and Hibbard, p. 176. An epicurean philosophy is a belief in the pursuit of pleasure.

with vengeance, this God seeks to destroy the worms through the tortures of fire, hunger, flood, and death. The worms, however, represent man's tenacious spirit, and as such, they thwart the malevolent destruction of this God. Orpheus' fable is allegorical in that this story is analagous to Odysseus' plight during his ten years of perilous wandering after the Trojan War before he returned to Ithaca.

Because Odysseus has previously announced in Ithaca that his life has changed, it is obvious that only he can accurately finish the worm-Odysseus allegory. Odysseus describes the male worm as a "'god-battling worm'" (III.344), a description very similar to Kazantzakis' depiction of Odysseus as a god-battler. At any rate, Odysseus recounts how the worm travels to the ice-laden fringe of civilization, where the worm feels compassion for mankind when he sees the pitiless God completely destroy a village. The worm then discovers the "'black bronze, iron, which rules the world now'" (III.389), and with an iron sword he slays the "'old decrepit god in heaven'" (III.431). Odysseus recognizes this worm to be the archetype of his struggle:

"And now my gallant lads--I don't know when or how--
that worm's god-slaying sword has fallen into my hands;
I swear that from its topmost iron tip the blood still
drips!"

(III.432-435)

Odysseus and his cohorts set their course for Sparta when the beautiful Helen beckons to Odysseus in a dream. Upon their arrival in Sparta, Helen becomes extremely important

to Odysseus in attaining his goal of spirituality. First of all, she is, in one way, a kindred soul to Odysseus. Living with her old, decrepit husband, Menelaus, Helen longs for another life:

"I cannot bear this life, my tight and curly basil
withers and dries without the stroke of manly hands.
I was not made for solitude and household cares."
(III.235-237)

Odysseus had expressed similar feelings in Ithaca. More important than Helen's similarity to Odysseus, however, is her significance as an aesthetic symbol; she represents ideal form, or beauty. Odysseus' relationship with Helen is not one of carnal passion:

But he [Odysseus] had never longed to embrace lascivious
Helen,
for this seductress drew him far from carnal wars
to the high valor of the mind, the peaks of passion.
(III.670-672)

Even though Odysseus' soul is detached--noncommitted--it is Helen of Sparta who is to drive him to achieve particular deeds. Helen is, indeed, an aesthetic phenomenon, as indicated by this passage:

Like travelers who shut weary eyes and lose themselves
in scent of jasmine flowers blooming far away,
Odysseus breathed in the atmosphere of phantom Helen.
Her features changed and winked in air, gleamed like
a star,
for still the mind of man had not yet brought to proof
whether her flesh had truly blossomed in Troy's walls
or whether friend and foe had fought for an empty shade.
(III.833-839)

Odysseus will retain the desire to act in the sight of an aesthetic phenomenon until he lands in Egypt in Book IX.

It should be noted here that at the conclusion of Book III, as Odysseus prepares for sleep, he feels a sudden love and charity for mankind:

and now, for the first time, he felt he loved all men;
 he loved their eyes, their bodies, and their clay souls,
 all--
 loved the whole wretched earth and all its precious cargo
 and as he lay stretched out on Helen's luxurious rugs,
 his eyes and brain filled up and brimmed with all man-
 kind.

(III.1444-1448)

These lines are reminiscent of man's third step in the March. At this point, however, Odysseus has not actually entered the March as defined by Kazantzakis in The Saviors of God.⁹ Although Odysseus is constantly aware of the external presence of his God--"a new god mounts from the soil now and rules the earth!"--he has not yet identified the actual presence of this entity within himself (III.1226). It is important to remember that although the Three Fates have propelled Odysseus toward the ultimate goal of spirituality, it is his responsibility to discover the God within his being. This awareness will come to Odysseus at a later time. These lines have no other purpose, perhaps, than to presage Odysseus' voyage to the liberation of spirit.

Books III and IV are of particular importance in their depiction of the individual vitality of Odysseus, primarily through the use of Helen's husband, Menelaus, as

⁹See pp. 16-18 above.

a character antithetical to Odysseus. Menelaus is a staunch determinist. He is fully aware of his rise and decline as a monarch:

"Yes, I've begotten children, conquered towns and cities;
my life, like a strong arrow, mounted toward the sky,
but now the earth allures it to a sweet descent;
man is a weather vane, his life an arrow's flight."
(III.1171-1174)

Furthermore, Menelaus believes that man should perform deeds in accordance with the pronouncements of Fate: "'May God forgive me for this weighted word I fling: / he is a god who follows his fate to its far end'" (IV.408-409).

On the other hand, Odysseus, at this stage in his development, believes in free will:

"I think man's greatest duty on earth is to fight his
fate,
to give no quarter and blot out his written doom.
This is how mortal man may even surpass his god!"
(IV.411-413)

Odysseus cannot be a determinist believing in Fate because he is, as already noted, a nonconformist in a world of conformity. He is also the product of an age of decomposition. Ithaca lies behind him; the Greek gods are but remnants of the decay of both Ithaca and Sparta. He is a child of unbelief, of revolt, and as such, he pursues the father of his freedom, the God Who struggles with him to pure spirit. Odysseus is the young worm who "pokes through earth and squirms out of its shroud" (IV.259). Menelaus stands as a reminder to Odysseus that he must leave behind the degenerate opulence of the Hellenic order.

Before Odysseus abducts Helen from Sparta, he enlists a new companion, Rocky. Odysseus admires the young goatherd because he is markedly different from the other members of his crew: "The archer [Odysseus] marveled at the godly race of man, / at this sharp, swordlike body fed with rain and sun" (IV.344-345). He is also the last to join Odysseus. Of Odysseus' crew, Rocky stands alone as the most akin to Odysseus in character; both represent dynamic forces irrevocably tied to Mother Earth, the same earth that is the arena of their struggle. Now that his forces are complete, Odysseus abducts Helen, leaving behind him the obsolescent Greek civilization. Odysseus' clan--Orpheus, Captain Clam, Kentaur, Granite, Hardihood, Rocky, and Helen--sail to another civilization, Crete.

In Book V, Odysseus and his companions are motivated once more by Helen, their "'vessel's gorgon figurehead,'" to leave Sparta (V.81). They eventually land in Crete after suffering the perils of a storm hurled at them by a vindictive God. Odysseus declares that this island is the only place in the world where gods are sold as merchandise:

"Brothers, I've roamed the world, my eyes have joyed
in much,
yet never have I seen bazaars where gods are sold;
but it was foreordained that I should gape at gods
spitted like crabs on reeds and sold in clustered groups.
Here mortals may choose gods for every single need:
gods of the sea, gods of the earth, gods of good health,
one to cure goiter, belly-aches, or falling sickness,
another to cure jaundice, sore-throat, fever, dropsy.
Here gods are sold in rows, nostrums of every kind."
(V.429-437)

It is ironic that Odysseus' derisive tone soon turns to respect when he meets a peddler in a Cretan marketplace who sells him "an ivory god with seven heads," one placed upon another. Each of these heads represents a step to spirituality (V.588-589). The first of these heads, at the base of the statue, denotes the essence of bestiality: "Below, the most coarse head, a brutal base of flesh, / swelled like a bloated beast bristling with large boar-tusks" (V.598-599). Above the head of bestiality is a head "like a warrior's crest," which represents the savagely martial side of man in his ascent to attain the freedom of spirit (V.601). The third head delineates lust or a voluptuous nature; it "gleamed like honey with voluptuous eyes, / its pale cheeks hallowed by the flesh's candied kisses" (V.605-606). The fourth head is emblematic of the flowering mind, or, in other words, pure intellect: "Its neck grew slender and its brow rose tall as though / its roots had turned to flower, its meat to purest mind" (V.609-610). The fifth head is tragic sorrow or despair; its "towering brow was crushed with bitter grief, / deep trenches grooved it (V.611-612). The sixth head represents a serenity beyond all joy or grief. It is "like an all-holy, peaceful, full-fed, buoyant spirit" (V.617). The seventh and final head of this God is the ultimate form of the soul:

The final head shone, crystal-clear, translucent, light,
and had no ears or eyes, no nostrils, mouth or brow,
for all its flesh had turned to soul, and soul to air!
(V.627-629)

For the first time, Odysseus aspires to attain the metamorphosis of spirit exemplified by the seven-headed God:

"Ah, my dear God, if only my dark soul could mount
the seven stories step by step and fade in flame,
but I'm devoured by its beast and filled with mud and
brain!"

(V.632-634)

Odysseus is not to languish in vain hopes of attaining this step by step trek to spirituality; in Crete, he will begin a spiritual journey that is synonymous with the steps symbolized by the Cretan God. (His involvement with the seven-headed God has no exact parallel in The Saviors of God. At this point, Kazantzakis' prior description of Odysseus as a "man of seven souls" (I.651) becomes clear.

Crete, Odysseus discovers, is similar to the kingdoms of Sparta and Ithaca in their degenerate opulence:

Between tall double-axes on a high throne, the prow
of a great sea-battling ship, the monarch [King
Idomeneus] proudly sat
like a majestic sea-god carved from a huge pearl
and leant upon a coral tree that rose to his right.
On low thrones round him, old sea-skippers sat and stank
like withered apples with their hairless senile flesh;
behind them sat plump eunuchs, guards of God and maids,
sly dream-interpreters, and bath-attending lords.
Naked young pages, all adorned with peacock plumes,
some holding incense-burners, others long-stemmed lilies,
bedecked the throne like rich festoons and shone like
snakes.

(V.1187-1197)

Unlike the Spartans and Ithacans, however, the Cretans do not worship gods made in their own image. Instead, they worship in a mystical rite the Bull-God, a primitive manifestation of their orgiastic lust.

Against the intoxicating fervor of the Bull-rites, Odysseus' soul attains its first incarnation--bestiality--according to the ideal represented by the symbolic seven-headed God. This first incarnation occurs in Book VI when Odysseus participates in the orgy. Bestiality manifests itself here in one of King Idomeneus' daughters, Diktena. She is (like most women, according to the poet) a woman who "can not, even will not resist the beast" (VI.865). Diktena claims Odysseus as her partner in the orgy; in accordance with this ancient Cretan rite, she stuffs Odysseus' mouth with "godly loins [a bull's testicles] to eat for virile strength" (VI.828). Then, as they engage in carnal passion, Odysseus experiences the wedding of his essence with the bestiality represented by Diktena:

Odysseus joyed in all things then with fearless lust,
for he felt god and beast merge fiercely in his loins,
clamped tight with sweet caresses like a man and maid.
(VI.848-850)

Odysseus eventually spurns once more the crumbling foundations of civilization. This time, however, the weakening structure of civilization is not Greek, but Cretan. Pondering over the revolt which he feels he must lead in Crete, Odysseus hears for the first time the God Who now exists within him. The God moans to Odysseus: "'I cry out! Can't you hear? I'm lost! Come down to help me!'" (VII. 227). God finally appears to Odysseus: "between the columns stood his god, / his jaw hung loose and chattered with numb

fear, and his eyes glazed with tears" (VII.236-237). Odysseus' God is a timid, fearful creature who seeks liberation. Odysseus commands this God: "'Crawl in my guts once more! Stop crying! I'll save you, fool!'" (VII.247). Now, according to The Saviors of God, Odysseus has completed the Preparation and has finally heard God's voice: he is ready to ascend the path of four consecutive stages--the March.¹⁰ From this moment, Odysseus, each time he is in a productive mood--i.e., has the desire for dangerous deeds or the urge to create--believes that he either sees or hears God.

In Book VIII, with the help of a new, rising political order, the Doric barbarians, Odysseus and his companions overthrow the decadent realm of King Idomeneus. At this point, Odysseus loses two of his companions. Captain Clam dies in the rebellion; Hardihood is placed upon the throne of Crete. Odysseus feels that Hardihood's coronation is the epitome of glory because one soul has thus found its individual road to freedom: "'The sweetest fruit of all that ripened on this day / is that one soul has found its freedom and cast me off!'" (VIII.773-774).

Also important to Odysseus' struggle is the appearance of Death in Book VI and again in Book VIII. As Odysseus sleeps at the conclusion of Book VI, Kazantzakis personifies

¹⁰See pp. 16-18 above.

Death as Odysseus' companion:

Death came and stretched full length along the archer's
side:

weary from wandering all night long, his lids were heavy,
and he, too, longed to sit and sleep awhile beside
his old friend near the river, by a willow's shade.
Throwing his bony arms across the archer's chest,
he and his boon companion slowly sank in sleep.

(VI.1265-1270)

Death is to be extremely important in Odysseus' journey to spirituality. Death becomes, at this point, the very flesh and bones of Odysseus himself; Death will follow him throughout the rest of the poem as a constant reminder of Odysseus' mortality. Again in Book VIII, Kazantzakis relates that Odysseus "felt himself sail onward toward Death's mystic springs / to find the deathless water that his soul might live" (VIII.1334-1335).

Leaving Helen in Crete with her new husband, a Dorian, Odysseus sails to his last decadent civilization, Egypt, which is not ruled by a lustful Idomeneus but, conversely, by a weak, timid youth. The Pharaoh tells Odysseus his philosophy of life:

"I don't want slaughter to besmirch my freshening bath,
I don't want warm blood splattered on a tender song.
My road's the road of milk and honey. . . ."
(X.716-718)

Odysseus, of course, rejects the Pharaoh's cowardly road. Furthermore, like the Cretan's god, the Egyptian's god--a crocodile--has no semblance of reality in that it is not an image of mankind like the Ithacan's Hellenic gods. There is more than a casual similarity between the decaying kingdoms

Odysseus has visited: in all of them, the people are starving, the rulers live in dissipation, and the kingdoms are eventually overrun by the Doric barbarians. The destruction of these civilizations becomes, in one way, grist for Odysseus' spiritual mill. Indeed, each experience in the civilizations of Ithaca, Sparta, Crete, and Egypt leads Odysseus to some point of awareness about his destination, his God, or his inner self.

In Egypt, Odysseus is freed from the aesthetic influence of Helen; the demon of Hunger now becomes his guide:

"The more I roam this earth and spread my claws, the
 more
 I feel that the herald of my hunting god is Hunger.
 Forward! It's time to cut the river's current, brothers,
 for I divine before us much of God, much more of
 Hunger!" (IX.236-239)

Human suffering--that is, the hunger of the Egyptian slaves--touches the heart of Odysseus for the first time. There was hunger and other deprivations in Crete, but Odysseus was not moved because his herald was Helen (or aesthetic phenomenon). Now he allows the will of history to direct him. Odysseus reaffirms the presence of a new stimulus after his companions nostalgically claim that they regret the loss of Helen:

"Brothers, my heart breaks too, but mends as soon as
 broken.
 Hunger's a mighty goddess; she, too, will lead as well.
 She strides straight on with a black banner, her dugs
 hang down,
 behind her crawls a horde of pallid children screaming,
 but from their shrieks one day a brave new tune will rise.
 If I could choose what gods to carry on all my ships,
 I'd choose both War and Hunger, that fierce, fruitful
 pair!"

(IX.996-1002)

From this point, Odysseus is to be led by a system of moral principles, a code of ethics. This new phase in his growth can be traced up to the destruction of his ideal city in Book XVI.

Also while Odysseus is in Egypt, he begins to meet representative forces in the lives of men. They are not too carefully veiled from the reader in their identities. The first individual Odysseus meets is Nile, an Egyptian revolutionary who is reminiscent of a communistic demagogue such as Lenin or Stalin. He tells Odysseus: "'It's time to set the world on fire, to free our hearts, / for who knows, friend, what man's despairing heart can do?'" (X.520-521). Nile is the herald of equality, a materialist, sure of his aims and methods, hostile to idealism and mysticism, one-sided, and most important, fanatical in his attempts to persuade Odysseus to commit himself fully to communism. But Odysseus still struggles with his God and seeks to "'purify wild flame to light'" (XI.146). Nile, naturally, jeers at such a theology and morality:

"The world, with brains like yours, grows wild, unpruned, unclipped,
but we don't spoil the earth with fondling, for we
fight her,
and water all good things she bears, and kill all evil.
Earth has no heart, mind, ears or eyes, but we, the
leaders,
a mere fistful of souls, have heart, mind, ears and eyes,
and one day earth will take our hearts for her example."
(XI.1005-1010)

Odysseus wins his first battle of belief when he calmly replies:

"Joy to that brain that holds all things and does not
faint!
God spreads the enormous wing of good from his right
side,
the wing of evil from his left, then springs and soars.
If only we could be like God, to fly with wayward wings!"
(XI.1012-1015)

Odysseus will weigh his beliefs with other representatives
of various beliefs throughout the poem.

Odysseus cannot align himself fully to Nile's mes-
sianic impulses because of his perpetual nonattachment. That
Odysseus' soul is noncommitted is reemphasized on several
occasions during a revolt in Egypt, the first example oc-
curring in Book X when Odysseus dreams that a General tells
him to remain noncommitted during the rebellion:

The General seized and held the left-right-handed man:
"O flaming lion-fox, you won't fight on the right
with my illustrious host, for then your glance turns
left,
nor will you strike left at the foe, for then your eyes
with swift and cunning claws swerve sharply toward my
host.
What shall I do with you to keep your soul from waste?
Go freely back and forth, purveyor to both armies,
drive on, and bear supplies to both battalions then!"
(X.586-593)

This problem later plagues Odysseus once more; he reflects:

"Ah, God was right to have no trust and weigh me well.
If only I could fight with both my friends and foes,
join in my heart God, anti-God, both yes and no,
like that roused fruit which two lips make when they
are kissing!"
(X.804-807)

Typically nonattached in his relation to the physical
forces about him, Odysseus finally seeks to terminate basic
conflicts, as always, in terms of his own ascent to spirit-
uality. Before Death ravages Egypt in Book XI, Odysseus

confronts the Pharaoh with a mask he has fashioned out of Odysseus' own image. Kazantzakis describes the Pharaoh's reaction:

It was as though Death screamed, as though our little
 life
 flashed for a moment in the light, a gay goldfinch
 from whose bright beak all its erotic rapture flowed.
 Hearing the cry, the comrades raised their eyes and
 screeched
 to see the dark contorted mask hung on the wall,
 cackling insanely in the dawn with blood and mire.
 "It's War!" they cried, and reached their longing hands
 with greed,
 but the barbarians yelled "It's God!" and staggered back.
 (XI.879-886)

Odysseus thus reaches the second step of spirituality corresponding to the second head of the seven-headed God, a savagely martial nature. His pursuits continue to be savagely martial until he enters the jungles of Africa in Book XIII.

In Book XII, Odysseus places himself in the role of a biblical Moses by undertaking an exodus into the desert. The band that he leads, unlike that of Moses, is a herd of desperadoes:

Ripsnorters of rope and rod, whoremongering pimps,
 long-fingered fleecers, pirates even of empty air,
 free hearts that had no fear of demon, man, or god.
 With these came stout horse-wenches, lumbering
 monkey-sluts,
 harridans, sirens, gypsies, and homebreaking tarts,
 brazen and flaunting whores, frail sisters big with
 child,
 and troop on straggling troop of demon-seeded bastards.
 Their guide had skimmed the land and gathered all the
 scum!
 (XII.33-40)

Odysseus' choice of traveling companions emphasizes once again his flaunting of society's norm of morality. At best,

Odysseus wants only the dregs of society to continue with him on his journey: "'He who has never killed or stolen or not betrayed / or murdered in his mind, let him now rise and leave!'" (XII.73-74). Before setting out, the group symbolically bathes in a river, just as Odysseus cleansed himself in Book I: "'Wash away dishonor's crust and slavery's mire; / our God now seeks to pierce new flesh and lie ensheathed'" (XII.92-93). A feast on raw meat follows, and God takes this opportunity to seize Odysseus again; afterwards, he says:

"Friends, when I held God's mask lashed to my giddy
 skull
 I saw our secret goal and where our road must lead:
 earth's fate shone clearly in my heart, all roads sprang
 open,
 till now I hold the future etched in my lined palms.
 I stoop and see wild beasts and wars, sorrows and joys,
 and a huge city dangling from my slender thumb.
 But it's most shameful to unlid or tell with words
 the secret will of God or what man's heart can do;
 we shall unwind the yarn of fate as we march on!"
 (XII.135-143)

It is somewhat paradoxical, perhaps, that Odysseus, who once defended a policy of free will before Menelaus, now believes in the pronouncements of Fate as indicated above. But Odysseus now has a God (the seven-headed God) in whom to believe. His road to spirituality lies within his grasp:

"'Comrades, it's no use quarreling now what road to choose / for fate has taken the lead and chosen without our leave!'" (XII.756-757). To this point, Odysseus has undergone several changes (primarily, from aesthetic to ethic concerns). As a result, his God begins to function more differently than

previously. God exists within him. No longer is He weak and timid; He is now a forceful creation Who brings tidings of future events. Later, God elicits another prophecy from Odysseus. Odysseus relates this prophecy to Granite: "'One day, my friend, I'll carve on every skull and stone, / and on all tree trunks, the commands of our dread god!'" (XII. 1258-1259). Both this prophecy and the one above--the formulation of God's canons and the building of a city-state--become reality in Books XV and XVI.

On the way to the Nile River, Odysseus confronts God in his third stage, Lust. This stage is the third head on the seven-headed God. Here God assumes the mask of a dark jungle. Kentaur is the first to recognize this new mutation of God: "'Again God changes face and tries to scare our souls / with garments of rank mud, mildew and stinking slime'" (XIII.273-274). The jungle is symbolic of rape and lust, as evidenced by Kazantzakis' artistic depiction of the landscape in sexual images:

Earth's orgiastic juices soaked the tepid soil,
vine-twisted trees sprang lushly with damp hollowed
trunks,
thick snakes swam in the marshes and small scorpions
dashed
with joy to ripen their soft stings in moldy humus.
(XIII.289-292)

Against this backdrop of sexual lust, Odysseus is a spectator to the primitive, as yet unattainable lust of the black Africans:

They were black braves who had not yet enjoyed the taste
of a girl's body and who in wastelands strove with dance
to rape the ripe maid of their roused imaginations.
They shrieked and growled like rutting beasts, their
filed teeth gleamed,
they swayed their lean arms like the black swan's sup-
ple neck
and stroked invisible forms with their red-painted palms.
(XIII.964-969)

Odysseus and his group eventually overcome the tortures of
hunger, exhaustion, and mirages of both desert and jungle to
reach the source of the Nile, where Odysseus ascends a moun-
tain (in Book XIV) to seek out the new God and then, like
Moses, to bring the tables of his law to his people. Injus-
tice, cruelty, and hunger have led mankind; Odysseus must
now seek a more refined directive from his God so that he
may lead the people in their construction of an ideal city-
state--i.e., a utopia. Odysseus climbs the mountain with only
a leopard cub for companionship. He feels a kindred rela-
tionship with the cub:

'No son of mine has ever so sweetly soaked my heart;
only with you, my cub, have I felt my fatherhood;
in your sharp claws, your tumblings, and your eye's
swift sparks,
daughter, you hold the seed of my dread race immortal!"
(XIII.836-839)

As mentioned previously, the flame is the emblem of Odysseus'
God; and the female leopard cub corresponds to the flame in
the animal kingdom. Before Odysseus dies, he welcomes the
leopard as the symbol of pure spirit in the animal kingdom:
"'Thrice welcome, O twin sister, welcome, O twin eyes, / a
thousand welcomes to the starved unsated flame!" (XXIV.1201-
1202).

Book XIV contains the gist of Kazantzakis' ascetic philosophy which, as stated in Chapter II above, he formulated in The Saviors of God: Spiritual Exercises. Although Odysseus has already begun a spiritual voyage, as indicated by the seven-headed God and by his growth from aesthetic to ethic relationships, Kazantzakis relates Odysseus' growth in Book XIV according only to the tenents outlined in The Saviors of God. Odysseus spends the first day on the mountain in the heights of exaltation over his new environment. The sun, the symbol of the spirit, watches over Odysseus as always: "'O sun, great sun, my brain's high peak, my crimson flag,' / he murmured, and his banner-bearing mind rejoiced" (XIV.96-97). Odysseus then decides to dedicate the day to a fervent exaltation of life. He daydreams of "his most secret wish," immortality (XIV.140). But a small worm climbs up Odysseus' chest and reminds him that he is mortal. For Odysseus, there is neither immortality nor death, but merely the reconcilment of the two so that his essence may dissolve into the universe, into creation. This scene is thus a practical depiction of the Prologue to The Saviors of God.¹¹ Odysseus is ready to undergo the process of the Preparation.

In the Preparation, man has three duties. His overall purpose, of course, is the reconcilment of the mind

¹¹See p. 14 above.

and heart. This reconciliation occurs separately from the reconciliation of immortality and death. As Odysseus sits in ascetic contemplation, he experiences the battle of the heart and mind. The mind, first of all, erects bridges over the chaos of the abyss, imposes order upon disorder, and struggles to construct boundaries of rationality within which man can logically function. Odysseus' mind vociferously tells his heart to construct logical boundaries:

"O poor but haughty heart, for shame! When will you
 build
 your castle on this earth with gallantry and grace?
 You march off as though haunted chaos were for shores,
 as though God were a gaudy bird that flies through air:
 heart, don't you know that God and cliffs are your own
 fancies?"

(XIV.304-308)

But the mind cannot see the actual essence of things; it can perceive only the appearance of matter, and thus it has certain limitations. It is the illogical which can grasp the intangibles hidden behind appearances. Odysseus' heart states:

"I'm choking, no frontiers can hold me! I'll smash
 the yoke,
 I scorn to plod the threshing floor of patience now,
 or like the calf be yoked to winnow chaff from wheat;
 beyond firm earth and bread I yearn for the dread abyss!
 I will not bend to yokes, I smother in your [the mind's]
 good soil;
 far off, beyond all boundaries, I hear monstrous wings,
 I hear sweet cries and weeping, but a thick wall parts
 us;
 I want to smash that wall and perish all together!"
 (XIV.299-302, 211-314)¹²

¹²See p. 15 above.

The Preparation is complete when Odysseus finally hears within him the voice of God, Who cries (similar to the appearance of God during the revolution in Crete): "'Help me!'" (XIV.316). At this point, according to The Saviors of God, man must dive within his ego and discover the endangered God Who cries for liberation. Man must also love and cherish all the comrades-in-arms who struggle with him to a true refinement of spirit.¹³ Kazantzakis deviates in the poem, however, in depicting Odysseus' concern with his own ego. For no apparent reason, Odysseus initially concerns himself with his ancestors. This concern is, of course, the principle concept found in the second step, the Race.¹⁴ At any rate, Odysseus' mind reaches into his ancestral past to revive the forebears who have given him a worthwhile heritage. First of all, he opposes those of his ancestors who have delighted in material values. This group pleads with Odysseus:

"Give us your blood to drink, set us on earth once more
that we may sip a drop of water, eat sweet bread,
and once more touch a woman's warming flesh at night!"
(XIV.329-331)

He thus totally rejects these forebears, who include his father, Laertes: "'Father, you've earned your holy wages well on earth, / you've lived and shaped a son better than you. Enough!'" (XIV.338-339). Odysseus finally concerns

¹³See p. 17 above. ¹⁴See p. 17 above.

himself with the Ego stage in his development by briefly reminiscing about two of his comrades-in-arms, Captain Clam and Hardihood.¹⁵

Kazantzakis next depicts Odysseus' involvement with the Race. As mentioned above, in this stage it is the spiritual traveler's task to select his greatest ancestor or ancestors and thus seek to complete their various missions in life. At this point, Odysseus chooses Heracles as his greatest ancestor. Heracles tells Odysseus that he, too, has struggled to turn flesh into spirit:

"Forward, don't brood, my grandson [a title of spiritual kinship], for all things go well!

I've battled both on land and sea, I've longed to be a deathless god on earth, but my strength broke, and now I've raised two topless pillars in mid-road for signs that you may see how far I've gone, and go still further.

The final labor remains--kneel, aim, and shoot!"

(XIV.420-425)

Heracles has thus failed in this thirteenth labor, the attainment of pure spirit. It is left to Odysseus to attain the spirituality that Heracles found unobtainable. His confrontation with Heracles ultimately leads him to an awareness of his immediate goal:

"The black seas lie unharvested, the mountains sweat, my body is a ship weighed down with myriad souls, and I, the captain, sail to war and death with rapturous joy.

Astern, the dead push like north winds till the planks creak,

abaft, my grandsons gambol like white gulls on waves,

¹⁵See p. 16 above.

and at the prow my tribe's own spirit flaps its wings.
 I stoop and gaze at my own entrails, my deep hold:
 hoarse voices, starving beasts, and fiercely rowing
 souls,
 and pile on pile of wine kegs, food casks, and dark
 slaves!
 Push on, O parents and grandsons both, I hold the
 tiller,
 pull at the oars, a north wind blows, the port's in
 sight!"

(XIV.494-504)

Odysseus then plunges beyond his own particular race into a feeling of kinship toward all the races of mankind (similar to the love of mankind he exhibits in Sparta). He realizes that he and all men are but part of a cosmic stream of evolutionary growth:

Races of men seethed in his bowels, battalions moved,
 the soul spread everywhere, plunged deep, struck deeper
 roots:
 "It's not I or my forebears who set out within me,
 for in my bowels I feel white, yellow, and black hands
 that sway above the abyss and cry to me for help."
(XIV.635-639)

Odysseus thus attains the third step in his spiritual progression, a compassionate feeling for all mankind.¹⁶

The final step is for man to travel beyond the agonies of mankind into all the creations of earth: plants, animals, sea, sky, and the other creations of the universe.¹⁷ As Odysseus undergoes this half-day stage of transition, the poet relates:

"Ah, who thrusts us to die with such sweetness, God?"
 the archer [Odysseus] sighed, rejoiced, and stretched

¹⁶

See pp. 17-18 above.

¹⁷

See p. 18 above.

on a huge rock,
 and felt birds, male and female scorpions, insects,
 beasts,
 throughout all earth, in the dense trees, in the deep
 air.
 He cast his few poor rags aside and longed to touch
 the earth through all his length, like a nude snake,
 and merge
 with those huge muddy dugs which pour man's milky
 sleep.

(XIV.724-730)

To this point, Odysseus has been exposed to myriad strains and counter-strains which guide him to a revelatory synthesis. Whatever spiritual heights Odysseus ascends in this manner, however, he is to remain deeply rooted in nature, as indicated by the above quotation. He is to grow downward as he reaches upward:

"I'm not left hanging in the sun, hovering in air,
 for deep roots bind me to the earth and my veins climb
 like tangled ivy out of ruins and hug my soul."
 (XIV.462-464)

After traveling beyond the mind and the heart, beyond the ego, race, mankind, and creation, Odysseus must, according once more to The Saviors of God, pierce all phenomena in order to encounter a vision of the God Who has struggled with him on his ascent.¹⁸ The poet formally addresses Odysseus in this important declamation:

Much-suffering man, you heard God's anguished cry and
 climbed
 man's steep ascent from crag to crag to its high peak.
 First, in the small tent of your puny flesh, you warred

¹⁸See p. 19 above.

As a "great lawmaker," Odysseus constructs his city according to two basic rules (XV.581). First of all, the aim of the state is inexhaustible creation and the impulsion of the citizen to surpass himself. Secondly, whatever obstructs the goal of saving God is condemned harshly. But basic to the laws of the city are the Ten Commandments which Odysseus carves on stone:

"God groans, he writhes within my heart and cries for help."

"God chokes within the ground and leaps from every grave."

"God stifles in all living things, kicks them, and soars."

"All living things to right or left are his co-fighters."

"Love wretched man at length, for he is you, my son."

"Love plants and beasts at length, for you were they, and now

they follow you in war like faithful friends and slaves."

"Love the entire earth, its waters, soil, and stones; on these I cling to live for I've no other steed."

"Each day deny your joys, your wealth, your victories, all."

"The greatest virtue on earth is not to become free but to seek freedom in a ruthless, sleepless strife."

(XV.1161-1172)

The tenth and last mandate is not verbal but is, instead, the symbol of an "arrow speeding high toward the sun with pointed thirsty beak" (XV.1174). This emblem is, of course, the embodiment of Odysseus' own spiritual struggle. It also serves as a direct contrast to Menelaus' prosaic depiction of life as an arrow that rises and falls.²⁰

Book XVI is the most important of all the books in The Odyssey because it brings Odysseus to the culmination

²⁰See p. 38 above.

of his spiritual growth.²¹ As the construction of the city begins, several evil omens of imminent disaster occur--for example, all of the animals exit the city. And, soon after the city's completion, it is destroyed by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. The fruition of Odysseus' aspirations are swallowed into the same deep chasm as the city. This tragic experience, compounded by the deaths of Rocky and Kentaur, hurls Odysseus into the depths of tragic sorrow. Indeed, the very shock of the experience turns his hair "white in the grim dark" of the night (XVI.264). Odysseus thus attains the tragic sorrow that is synonymous with the fifth head of the Cretan God. Angry at the God Who made the world so imperfect, Odysseus tells Him of the supreme role man plays in forging his own destiny:

"You shaped the boundless sea, but we the cleaving ship,
 you shaped the raging river, and we the steadfast bridge,
 you shaped the savage horse, and we the rein and bit.
 You shaped coquetting and unbridled womankind,
 that dark high-buttocked beast, and we shaped sacred
 love;
 you let Death loose on earth--but fool what can he do?--
 we shape our sons, your murderer, and they sack his
 strength!
 Smash us with flames and thunderbolts, we'll find some
 cure,
 and if your blade pierce to the bone, it'll not go
 further!

(XVI.147-155)

²¹The succeeding books of The Odyssey (Books XVII through XXIV) are anti-climactic in considering Odysseus' spiritual growth. Their main concern is in his elaborate preparations for meeting Death and his debates with people who reflect various philosophies of life. See pp. 62-71 below.

Odysseus had built the city to guard his God. He did not want his vision of a Supreme Being to be an ephemeral one. Ironically, however, it is God Who destroys the city. As a result of this fall and what he thinks is God's betrayal, he finally decides that he is better without God:

his mind marched beyond all sorrow, joy, or love
 --desolate, lone, without a god--and followed there
 deep secret cries that passed beyond even hope or
 freedom.

(XVI.405-407)

Odysseus thus attains a state beyond tragic sorrow--serenity. This state is the sixth level of spirituality, which is comparable to the sixth head of the seven-headed God.

Within this state of serenity, Odysseus attains the height of his concern for the self. This concern, however, does not originate in Book XVI. From the beginning of the poem, Odysseus has stressed the needs and demands of the self. Typical of this concern is Odysseus' fascination with the limitless potential of each individual ego and his somewhat fanatic drive to explore his potential without any reservation. In other words, the voyages of Odysseus have been, in a sense, interior voyages. The subjective level of these voyages has been made unmistakably explicit by the poet. For instance, when Odysseus reached the Nile in Book IX, he characteristically internalized the experience, censuring his companions for not perceiving its true significance: "'Blockheads, you see but river! It never swipes your brain / our soul's the river, and that we mount but

soul alone'" (IX.1315-1316). The most lucid example of these inner reflections appears when Odysseus, alone now, becomes for the first time a "great ascetic" some time after the city's fall (XVI.683). Odysseus involves himself in an intricate inner-contemplation. His eyes are the principle vehicle for this ascetic fulfillment. Odysseus tells his eyes that they have seen all the wonders of earth, but that now they view only the pure essence of the self:

"Now like an eaglet you perch high on the mind's crags
till earth seems much too narrow, outer wealth too
poor,
and you turn back to inner jungles, O orbed flame!
My dear unslaked, unsated eyes, may you be blessed!"
(XVI.497-500)

In a like manner, Odysseus revels in other inner-sensory images so that "for the first time he felt he lived and had a soul" (XVI.475). And thus another major phase of Odysseus' trek to spirituality is traced, a metaphysical state in which Odysseus concerns himself only with the essence of matter. Previously, in his ethical phase, Odysseus had been drawn to the constructive work of building a city and formulating laws--guided by Hunger and a deep-rooted concern for struggling mankind. And, of course, there had been the aesthetic influence of Helen, who led Odysseus through his first voyages. Even though Odysseus now delves primarily into his own being, he still recalls his earlier struggles:

The great ascetic plunged his eyes in inner wealth,
followed his entrails' roots, bent down and then recalled
how arm in arm with Mother Earth he once had climbed

the dark ascent, passed flames, trees, beasts, until
 both
 took from the mind's tiny light well one small drop of
 air.

(XVI.848-852)

Concerned now with the essence of being, Odysseus embarks on a new road of nihilism--a total rejection of all established laws and institutions. In a series of related passages, he talks to his soul and his God:

"My soul, your voyages have been your native land!
 With tears and smiles you've climbed and followed
 faithfully
 the world's most fruitful virtue--holy false unfaith-
 fulness!"

"I've no compassion for his [God's] sweat or even my
 own soul,
 and I disdain all toys, nor do joys lure me. Enough!
 I've passed beyond the bounds of virtue or of hope."

"By God, I made you [God] with such craft, such cunning
 wiles
 that for a time, like Orpheus, I was almost fooled!²²
 But I was born in a charmed hour, great freedom's son,
 and raised my fist before you had time to gulp me
 whole."

(XVI.959-961, 1057-1059, 1089-1092)

His nihilism asserts itself further in his frenzied affirmation of a godless world to a crowd: "'No master-god exists, no virtue, no just law, / no punishment in Hades and no reward in Heaven!'" (XVI.1241-1242). The only deity Odysseus recognizes is the "savage Flame, no light, no air, no fire / scornful and superhuman in man's hopeless skull" (XVI.1181-

²²See XIII.631-763. Orpheus builds a god and worships it. He fools himself by thinking that this god will save mankind.

1182). This entity is the spirit represented by the seventh head of the Cretan God--the last in Odysseus' triumphal march. At the conclusion of Book XVI, Odysseus, standing on a cliff, has a vision of this ultimate state of being: "Unnumbered flaming sword-sharp hands flailed round his body / and seven crimson heads in tiers flashed in the air" (XVI.1254-1255). With this vision, he is able to declare: "'Well-met now, desolate wastes! Welcome to both your eyes! / A thousand welcomes now to savage freedom's freezing breath!'" (XVI.1268-1269). Although Odysseus has not become pure spirit, he has attained the symbolic refinement of spirit through his disregard of matter, his position concerning nihilism, and his glorification of an absolute freedom. It is important to note, however, that The Saviors of God does not indicate nihilistic struggle; it delves into a struggle to pure spirit with both God and man. If Odysseus can be viewed as Kazantzakis' practical representation of man in a spiritual struggle, then perhaps this difference lies in afterthoughts the poet may have had at a later time.²³

At any rate, the result of Odysseus' metaphysical state as depicted in Book XVI is his absolute freedom of

²³Although The Odyssey was published fifteen years after The Saviors of God (1923), he wrote his first draft in 1925. See Prevalakis, p. 177.

soul as well as his vision of a godless and hopeless world. The forms of liberty Odysseus had achieved before this time were many. To begin with, in the early portion of the poem, he rebelled against every conformity. Upon returning to Ithaca, he thought that he could turn time back. But he cannot remain in Ithaca. His wife, his father, his son, and his kingdom are all meaningless to him. He wins a physical liberty by refusing to submit to the Ithacan values, but physical liberty does not bring him peace. His motivation is more that of a rebel than that of a completely free man. Another form of liberty Odysseus achieves is dissatisfaction. For example, Odysseus rejects the social and political freedom represented by Nile, the Egyptian revolutionary, because of dissatisfaction. Indeed, he frees himself by disassociating himself from ideas that do not seek to turn matter into pure spirit. Odysseus finally discovers that freedom sometimes coincides with necessity. The building of his ideal city is a clear example of his belief that physical acts are born out of the necessity of hunger and injustice and that, ultimately, these acts can free God. At the first misfortune, however, Odysseus rebels against God as if He had broken a Supreme Promise. The world's absurdity then becomes an unshakable reality to Odysseus. He believes that there is no God and that there is neither virtue nor justice. His entire being is supported only on a void--"His soul hung over the cliff" (XVI.1281). This void is the absolute freedom

Odysseus has been seeking and is the cause of his undying exaltation of life and of freedom:

"O trees, get drunk and burst in bloom; girls, swell
your breasts;
and you, brave youths, hatch in your minds all your
desires--
life's but a lightning flash, my lads, and death is
endless!
I gaze on earth and love her, I don't want to die!
I gaze on a man's and a maid's body, and I shout:
'Fill it with joys and sorrow, daring dreams and deeds,
raise high the crimson sun and the mind's soaring kite,
light up the high head's magic lantern till it glows!'
I love to stroll and watch maids at their window sills,
to see the fragrant smoke arise at dusk from roofs,
to hear beds creak and crack at midnight in the dark.
I pass by towns and lands, bless them and shout in air:
'O mankind, joys and tears, warm bodies, O my chil-
dren!'"

(XVI.1309-1321)

Odysseus' spiritual voyage reaches its conclusion with his arrival at a final comprehension, Silence: "'The circle is now complete, the snake has bit its tail'" (XVI. 1370).²⁴ Consequently, Odysseus' final travels in the succeeding books do not reflect his own spiritual evolution but serve to measure his Weltanschauung, or, in other words, his world-view, against that of others--for example, Prince Motherth, Margaro, the Hermit, Captain Sole, and the Negro fisherman. Each of these individuals embodies differing opinions concerning existence, and more important, they espouse diverse beliefs on life after death. In effect, these succeeding encounters amount to Kazantzakis' defense of

²⁴See pp. 21-22 above.

Odysseus' world-view. Explorations into Odysseus' confrontations with all of these individuals is not necessary within the scope of this study; however, a study of two of these people, Prince Motherth and the Negro fisherman, will reveal three clearly defined facts about Odysseus' spirituality. First of all, the scenes involving these two indicate that Odysseus' religion, in the end, becomes so unshakable that no idea or act can destroy it. It is supported on a void. Unlike the process described in The Saviors of God, Odysseus abjures the presence of God, hope, and eternity. To him, each moment is immortal, and as a result, he has no need of a conceptual belief in immortality such as that depicted by Motherth and the Negro fisherman. Secondly, Odysseus' subsequent debates with Motherth and the Negro fisherman indicate his spiritual supremacy on a subjective level. Last of all, the lack of enmity Odysseus expresses toward Motherth and the fisherman underscores once more his love of all the diversities of mankind. The basic humanity of Odysseus' spirituality thus becomes clearer.

Prince Motherth first appears in Book XVIII leading an elephant caravan. Obsessed with finding the answer to the malevolent forces of Death, Motherth seeks counsel from the great ascetic, Odysseus. He tells Odysseus: "'All day and all night long I see Death loom in air, / I stoop to drink and see his face float in the bowl'" (XVIII.852-853). Odysseus then tells Motherth that he, too, has watched Death

but in a different manner:

"My son, I too watch Death before me night and day;
the proudest joy which now unites us here on earth
is that we've emptied both our hearts of gods and hope,
yet you sink nerveless to the ground, for loneliness
has driven you wild, and freedom cleaves your head in
two.

But I hold Death like a banner and march on!"

(XVIII.899-904)

At this point, Motherth is still uncertain of the significance of Odysseus' doctrine. When Odysseus later tells Margaro, a famous prostitute, that there is a seven-stepped path to spirituality, Motherth fails to understand the evolution of man's soul and decides that the shortest road to spirituality is the renunciation of all things:

"Seven well-hidden paths lead to salvation's grace
and I shall take the straitest road of black despair
and empty my full heart of sorrows, passions, joys.
Motherth, abjure your eyes, your ears, your nose, your
tongue,

forswear, Motherth, all virtues, glories, deeds, and
minds!

Forswear all earth's creations, they're but fantasies,
for we chase shadows, mounted on swift shadowy steeds;
Death is a shadow, too, that hunts the shadow, Life;
O Motherth, shut your eyes, your ears, your nose, your
mouth:

for even this One--do you hear?--this One is empty air!"
(XVIII, 1225-1234)

Although both Motherth and Odysseus are nihilistic in their individual renunciations, Motherth journeys to the extreme by renouncing life.²⁵ Odysseus, on the other hand, does not renounce life but hurls himself headlong into it: "'Forward!

²⁵Motherth is a personification of Buddhism.

Though life's an empty shade, I'll cram it full / of earth and air, of virtue, joy, and bitterness!" (XVIII.1238-1239). Indeed, he rejects Motherth's shorter path to pure spirit to the point that he labels the Prince an "'immature soft soul'" (XVIII.1236). He does not, however, exhibit enmity towards Motherth's renunciation of everything.

In Book XXI, Odysseus confronts the last of the personages who represent some body of belief, the Negro fisherman. Kazantzakis depicts the fisherman as "a slender virgin-lad with flaming fawnlike eyes" (XXI.113). The fisherman preaches love to all mankind as well as the existence of one eternal Father:

"Blessed be the grace of God, our one eternal Father!
It's He who from His love created fish and sea,
it's He who brims our nets and fills our hearts with
joy;
O comrades, raise your hands on high and cry, 'Our
Father!'"

(XXI.1132-1135)

Odysseus hears these words of gratitude as the fisherman continues to tell his disciples that if someone strikes him on one cheek, he will turn his other cheek. Odysseus immediately strikes "the unsuspecting lad hard on his tingling cheek" (XXI.1233). The fisherman's tranquil view of life causes Odysseus to debate the preachings of the youth. The youth questions Odysseus: "'How can one man alone save his soul here on earth / unless all souls are saved together?'" (XXI.1269-1270). Odysseus' final retort is that man should struggle ceaselessly to turn matter into spirit:

"Man has his body only, a flask filled with sweat
that glows like phosphorous softly in the endless
night;
I bow to its great grace, it flames and fades like
lightning."

(XXI.1310-1312)

The nihilism of Motherth was familiar to Odysseus; the loving-kindness of the fisherman has brought him relief:

"Your song is good, my friend, and it's refreshed my mind"

(XXI.1329).²⁶ Kazantzakis thus positions the Negro as a character antithetical to Motherth. The Negro believes in one God and the ultimate salvation of all mankind; Motherth has a natural affinity to the grave, and as such, he believes only in despair and renunciation. The poet again places Odysseus in the middle of these two extreme world-views. As always, Odysseus is guided by a revelatory synthesis. In this frame, Odysseus does not feel enmity towards any man or belief: "'Let us each take his own road now'" (XXI.1332).

Odysseus prepares to welcome his companion, Death, in the succeeding books of the poem (XXII through XXIV). In Book XXII, he marches toward the southern polar regions of the world in the same manner as the worm in the fable of Book III.²⁷ Odysseus stops only briefly between the mountains of Yes and No to view the symbols of the antithetical

²⁶The Negro fisherman is thus a personification of Christianity.

²⁷See pp. 34-35 above.

limits within which he has struggled throughout the poem (XXII.278-289). Sailing to his final destination, he laments the impending banishment of the sun because it is a creation only of his mind. In one of his most poignant inner reflections, he beseeches the sun:

"Sun of an inner sky and sea, peak of an inner world,
 O mind, I rose and sank in your world-famous head,
 roamed round your walls and thus encircled the whole
 world,
 but now I'll vanish with you, too, and drown in waves!"
(XXIII.78-81)

Odysseus' friends--all of the people and animals he has communed with--come to observe his death and dematerialization. His substance is transmuted from matter into spirit in an image of a dancer's leap, reminiscent of one of Zorba the Greek's dances of freedom:

And the great mind leapt to the peak of its holy free-
 dom,
 fluttered with empty wings, then upright through the
 air
 soared high and freed itself from its last cage, its
 freedom.
 All things like frail mist scattered till but one brave
 cry
 for a brief moment hung in the calm benighted waters:
 "Forward, my lads, sail on, for Death's breeze blows in
 a fair wind!"
(XXIV.1391-1396)

At last, Odysseus consumes himself in the ultimate form of his spirituality, nothingness.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine Odysseus' journey to spirituality in Kazantzakis' epic, The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel. Kazantzakis' poem covers a considerable period of time. Crowded with important events, it ranges from Odysseus' return to Ithaca to his death in the southern polar regions. In such a long period, the protagonist changes. The vitality of his spiritual involvement must be stressed. The theme of spirituality operates on three levels. First of all, Odysseus follows a level to pure spirit by involving himself in the intricate process outlined in Kazantzakis' Saviors of God. Secondly, Odysseus follows a level of seven well-defined stages which are synonymous with the seven-headed God he bought in Crete. Finally, Odysseus follows a level to spirituality through a progression from aesthetic relationships to ethic concerns to, finally, a metaphysical state. These levels of spirituality will be elucidated and defined.

Perhaps the most important of the levels of spirituality occurs with Odysseus' growth through the processes depicted in Kazantzakis' Saviors of God. Out of the three levels, this level is the predominant one found in The Odyssey. Initially, the reader is told that the seeds of

spirituality have been planted in Odysseus by the Three Fates--Prometheus, Heracles, and Tantalus, who personify the three duties man has in his Preparation. There are, however, several differences in Odysseus' Preparation and the Preparation outlined in The Saviors of God. First of all, an external force (the Three Fates) prepared Odysseus for his inevitable search to find the meanings of spirituality. Kazantzakis declares in The Saviors of God that it is man alone who must prepare himself. Perhaps this difference can be solved when the reader remembers that The Odyssey delves into the lives of mythological creations. As such, Odysseus, a protagonist from Greek myth, finds himself prepared for his ascent by three mythological beings. There is also a second contradiction in this preparatory stage. Odysseus is a man of revolt. He disparages any belief in the Greek gods as early as Book I. In this frame of reference, he is much like Prometheus and Tantalus, who were condemned by the gods for their individual revolts. Out of the Three Fates, it was only Heracles who was defended by the Hellenic gods. And yet it is Heracles, according to Kazantzakis, who was Odysseus' ultimate salvation; indeed, it is Heracles whom Odysseus chooses as his greatest forefather in Book XIV. It seems wholly incongruous that Heracles would be the proper choice for Odysseus, a man who abjures the Greek gods in every moment.

There are, perhaps, two other contradictions between Kazantzakis' depiction of spirituality and his philosophy in The Saviors of God. Although Odysseus has been prepared for his ascent by the Three Fates in Book II, Kazantzakis takes him through the process of Preparation once more on the mountain in Book XIV. Also, the Ego stage of Odysseus' March as depicted in Book XIV is somewhat reversed. At this point, Odysseus concerns himself more with the second stage, the Race. Kazantzakis states in The Saviors of God that man should systematically concern himself with the Ego and then the Race. All of these inconsistencies indicate that, for the most part, Kazantzakis is not a systematic philosopher.

Concepts of thought presented in The Saviors of God may be found throughout The Odyssey, as evidenced by the appearance of Odysseus' comrades-in-arms and his constant struggle to surpass his forefathers. Kazantzakis develops the core of his philosophy in Book XIV, in which he transposes his philosophy into poetic diction; herein lies the beauty of the poem. Kazantzakis takes the reader on a poetic voyage into the Preparation and the March. The Saviors of God, then, is an indispensable text for the full comprehension of Kazantzakis' Odyssey.

Perhaps the most consistent of the levels of spirituality is the progression symbolized by the seven-headed God. When Odysseus buys this image from a Cretan peddler, he is deeply moved by the metamorphosis of spirit it symbolizes.

He attains its first step, bestiality, in Crete when he engages in carnal passion with the embodiment of the bestial, Diktena. He reaches the martial stage of his God in Egypt, where he shapes a savagely martial mask. On his way to the Nile River, Odysseus confronts the third stage of his God, lust. The fourth stage, the flowering mind, is embodied in the symbolic pear tree in Book XV. After the destruction of his ideal city and the deaths of two of his comrades, Odysseus confronts the overwhelming despair which is indicative of the fifth head of the Cretan God. He finally turns his thoughts more deeply inward to his own essence and thus attains a sixth stage of spirituality, a serenity beyond joy and sorrow. At last in Book XVI, he has a vision of the ethereal spirit, the seventh stage. His position of nihilism, his concern for the essence of matter, and his glorification of an absolute freedom bring Odysseus to a symbolic refinement of his goal. He does not physically become spirit until his de-materialization in Book XXIV.

The last level of spirituality is the broadest in definition of all the levels. In the first eight books of The Odyssey, Odysseus is driven by the sight of phenomena. He returns to Ithaca and is repulsed by the degenerate townspeople, his cowering wife, and his decrepit father. Driven away from the phenomena in Ithaca, Odysseus travels to Sparta, where he abducts the symbol of his aesthetic motivation, Helen. She leads him through the revolts in

Knossos. Leaving Helen in Crete, Odysseus' aesthetic motivation is at an end. His ethical phase begins in Book IX. The demon of Hunger becomes Odysseus' guide, and for the first time he feels empathy for starving mankind. Furthermore, he is drawn to constructive work for mankind; he builds a city-state, decrees new laws, and builds foundations upon which to put forth roots. But earth swallows up his state. Heaven's fury kills two of his friends. In Book XVI, Odysseus is thrown into despair. He turns entirely inward, cutting himself off from the world. Whereas Odysseus' voyages have up to this point been exterior ones, they now become predominately interior travels. His attitude may be labeled metaphysical--only the essence of things interests him. These three successive phases finally bring Odysseus to absolute freedom. In one way, then, they are roads to spirituality, of which there are several.

One may speak of contradictions in the soul of Odysseus. But these contradictions are resolved in the unity created by his overwhelming love of life and by his passion to surpass human nature. As complex and diverse as his three-level spiritual voyage is, its unity lies in Odysseus himself. The greatness of Kazantzakis' work, The Odyssey: A Modern Sequel, rests on his translation of a traditional hero from the Hellenic world to the realms of spirituality.

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