

INSCAPE May 2015

©Stillpoint Contemplative Ministries

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ:

May you always be consciously aware of the grace and peace of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the love and mercy of God the Father, and the communion of the Life-Giving Holy Spirit dwelling within your heart!

A MYSTICAL CONSCIOUSNESS—WHAT DOES “HEART” MEAN?

There is the mystical, meta-rational awareness that all authentic mystics of all true religions have passed on in their small band of disciples. It can be called “heart knowledge.” It is what all Eastern Christian spiritual writers describe as the pushing of the mind down into the *heart*.

TO BE IS THE ANSWER

Our Western world is in need of developing the power of simply “being,” in contrast to always “doing.” Yet how few of us have the inner discipline to be wrapt up in contemplating a simple scene of nature, a sunset or sunrise or glowing heavenly stars and planets or ocean waves, the smile of a baby; to hold an acorn and already see the oak tree; observe the tranquility of cattle grazing in mountain pastures; to walk in the rain and be spiritually cleansed of all artificiality that separates us from the raw nature around us? We need to be set free of exclusive “clock time.” Mystical consciousness does not reject time, but gives us freedom from slavery that holds us in bondage to doing things in exact time slots in order to have our identity. It frees us from anxiety and worry of always running out of the commodity of time.

Another important element of mystical consciousness is that of discovering the true uncreated energies of God that he has freely gifted to humanity, the essence of ourselves, of all human beings, of all material nonhuman beings—by passing through the limitations that we imposed by our deductive, rational powers to “uncover” by contemplation the true nature hidden within. Teilhard de Chardin taught Christians to discover Jesus Christ shining “diaphanously” throughout the entire material world. Other writers speak of the transparency of the material creation that allows persons of contemplative power to go through the limitations of concepts and words to arrive at the inner uncreated energies of God and all of creation.

SEEING THE LOGOI IN THE LOGOS

It was Saint Maximus the Confessor who developed the doctrine of a *Logos (Word)* mysticism of finding all of creation, each essence, in the creative Logos of God. This basis for true Christian contemplation is revealed by Saint John the Evangelist and Theologian in his Prologue: “The Word was in the beginning, and that very Word was with God, and God was that Word. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2).

Sin (division, sickness, separation) caused the unity in God’s universe to become splintered into antipodes of the created world versus the uncreated God, the sensible as opposed to the intelligible, the earth against heaven, the world opposed to paradise, masculine as opposite to feminine. We human beings stand between heaven and earth, possessing both spirit and matter. We must first discover within ourselves our unique *logos* in God’s creative *Logos* and then perform our God-given task of mediation between the rest of the created cosmos and its Creator. For us Christians it is through the Logos-made-man that we can effect this unity, first within our own lives, then through our Christified, divinized natures, to creatively release the *logoi* of all creation in the cosmos.

The logos of each creature is its principle of harmony that shows us that relationship of a given creature to God's total order of creation and salvation. The whole universe is interlocked and interrelated, but only we rational beings are capable of discovering the diaphanous, harmonious relationship between the *logoi* and the *Logos*.

In the seventh century, Saint Maximus the Confessor wrote: "Just as the sun when it rises and lights up the world manifests both itself and the things lit up by it, so the Sun of Justice, rising upon a pure mind, manifests itself and the essence of all the things that have been and will be brought to pass by it."

Such knowledge supersedes any and all rational knowledge through deduction. It is a gratuitous gift that necessitates a slow but consistent death to self-love and attachment to worldly possessions. It sees beyond the appearances and unlocks the world to reveal to us the transparent harmony existing among all creatures. Such contemplatives are able to enter into God's very purpose, into God's very mind, to see the *raison d'être* of each created being and then to act lovingly according to that "logos."

A HOLISTIC SPIRITUALITY

The concluding characteristic in a mystical consciousness is that of perceiving all of creation in its "at-oneness" in and through God's uncreated energies and interrelated to each other in the inter-harmony and ultimate unity of all things in God and God in all things. Our mental consciousness, especially through science, has brought about an anthropocentric vision of all reality. Yet we see today the inadequacy of such human-centered view of the cosmos.

The gigantic, almost apocalyptic extent of today's problems, especially in the pillaging of our nature resources, water and air pollution, the increasing list of extinct or endangered species of birds and animals, the far reaching effects of pesticides, the engineering of genetically modified natural food sources while neglecting its ill-effect on human health, the wanton dumping of industrial chemicals on land and sea, the overwhelming accumulation of waste, garbage, and junk, with the spread of poisonous toxins in the air, water and through the earth, call out for another way of perceiving our human relationships to the world around us.

What is needed is our becoming rooted in God in a Theo-centric vision of the universe. Saint Paul reminds us that we are not only stewards of creation but humanity is a royal priesthood. In such a view as revealed by God in the mystical consciousness, all creatures are to be coordinated into a whole, into a dancing harmony. The world from God's viewpoint is one. All creatures, through the creative inventiveness and synergism of us human beings working with God, were meant to be interrelated in a harmonious wholeness. Each part has its proper place within the entire universe. Each creature depends on and gives support to all the others in one great body, all of which has been created in and through God's Word. Through this revelation by God we can understand the world of senses is not the totality of reality, but that through an experience of our own unique oneness with the Indwelling Trinity we are really one with all being.

Having examined some of the different levels of human consciousness, we are now in a position to examine the mythopoetic symbol of heart and prepare ourselves to look at heart knowledge. In this way we will not insist, therefore, on an exclusive rational way to discover the complete essence of any given creature through analysis of our puny rational minds ("Positive Thinking" psychology and philosophy). With the wonderment of children, we can bring our topic of heart knowledge a both/and approach and thus avoid an either/or dichotomy that would betray the best in poetry, art, music, dance, liturgy—and, above all, the best in true spirituality as essentially the entrance into the heart language to authentic love, an entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

WHAT DOES HEART MEAN?

Years ago, during the Nativity Season, Father Maloney reread that childhood classic entitled, "Yes Virginia, There Really Is a Santa Claus." It describes the world of childlike wonder and joy that comes from faith, hope and love of God's Spirit. Fr. George relates:

This world unfortunately becomes lost to most adults once they have become educated to believe that the only knowledge is that which is rational and logical, discursive and understood by our own intellectual powers. Any other knowledge is mere poetry, the fantasy of starry-eyed children before they stop believing in things like Santa Claus.

This little piece first appeared in the fall of 1897 as an answer given by an editorial writer of a New York City paper (now defunct) to the inquiry of a little girl named Virginia. She had written the editor of that paper to inquire whether Santa Claus really existed. The writer explained what would happen without experiences of the heart: "There would be no childlike faith, then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We would have no enjoyment, except in the sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished...Did you ever see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonder there are unseen and unseeable in the world. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men and women can see. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view the picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding."

We are distinguished from other animals by our inexhaustible quest for happiness through self-knowledge, but also through affective experience of our union with God, the Supreme Source of all beauty, intelligence, but all of love itself. We can rove over the earth, conquering oceans, mountains, and all conceivable natural forces. But eventually we must return to ourselves and enter within to search for the talisman that will unlock the hidden treasures of unending happiness. This inner case, or "guha" as the Hindus call the heart is what all cultures have considered as the locus within all human beings where we can discover our unique, beautiful self in joyful union with the Source of all beauty; God Himself.

THE MEANING OF HEART IN ANTIQUITY

That we might be able to enter into the mystery of heart knowledge of which Western culture is in such desperate need, let us begin to see what the ancients considered to be the heart. Our research will have to be limited, of course, but hopefully we will discover some predominant traits that commonly occur in most cultures when in history people of those cultures strove to describe the heart.

First of all, every human being is aware of his or her own physical heart, as were people of ancient cultures. The heart is a physical organ that pumps life-giving blood, saturated with oxygen, throughout the entire person; hence, it is universally taken as the symbol of life but also of inner strength and courage. We see this symbol carried out in a number of ancient societies that had the custom of eating the heart of one's enemy to acquire his strength.

In ancient Aztec culture, and earlier the Maya, the heart was considered to be the most precious part of a person and was offered in religious services to Tlaltecuhli, the lord of the earth, by the removal of a living heart and by shedding of human blood.

Among the ancient Egyptians, the heart was not only the principle organ of physical life but was also conceived as the center of all human emotion, courage, and spiritual life. Thought, will and wisdom reside in the heart. It becomes the locus of what constitutes a human being, a unique person capable of relating to the gods in prayer and love. Memory is stored somehow

in the symbol of heart as it witnesses to the deeds of courage one has accomplished during life.

THE HEART IN FAR EASTERN RELIGIONS

In the *Upanishad* collection that formed a late part of the Hindu Vedic literature, we find not only the heart as the natural symbol of the center of life, but now all the inner faculties of the human psyche find their place in the heart. The heart is described in *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (3.20-25) as the place where everything that exists takes shape such as faith, supra-intellectual knowledge, ontological truth, speech, and all biological life. Hinduism adds techniques of spiritual meditation that have as their goal the passing from the unreal and illusory to the real world of the gods. The heart is the place of divine vision and an entrance into transformative knowledge of union with the Absolute Source of all being through the *Atman* or Divine Breath within the contemplative.

To reach this bliss and union with *brahman*, vigorous asceticism must be practiced to purify the heart of all that clouds it from becoming “a polished mirror” to reflect the divinity that a human person always has within his/her heart.

The ancient Greek world had a much less subtle understanding of heart, where heart (*kardia*) for the Greeks becomes the place of the soul’s life, the affections, emotions, and the feelings. Plato developed the theory of the tripartite soul. Above the diaphragm the mortal soul, the *thumos*, which inspires courageous deeds, exists. Below are the passions, and the immortal principle of the soul is in the head.

Aristotle would situate sensation, all sense knowledge, memory, and imagination in the heart, but the *nous* (eye of the soul) or intelligence, is not attached to any physical organ.

HEART IN SCARED SCRIPTURE

The Hebrew word for heart, *lev*, occurs over a thousand times in the Old Testament, which shows how important a role it played in Hebrew life and literature. The heart is the organ without which there would be no life, since all vital powers are concentrated there. It was both receptive and active, as the place not only of all psychological and intellectual life, but also of moral actions or conscience in relation to God’s law.

It is in the heart that one understands divine things, and hence, the heart is the place for centering, recollecting the presence of God, and remembering God’s wondrous deeds to the people of God and to each individual person. The heart is one’s interior or *qerev* upon which God implants his laws. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in the midst of them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jeremiah 31:33).

The heart, therefore, is the placeless place where God actively implants his moral laws and empowers the individual person to act righteously in keeping with his laws. It is the heart that is the center of one’s religious relationships with God and neighbor. In the heart one learns to fear God and be obedient by acting faithfully according to the *hesed* covenant God has freely entered into with his chosen people. “O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers kept all these things which thou hast promised us for ever, and now turn away our heart from evil, that we may not sin before thee, and prepare our hearts to worship thee. And I David, answered and said thus: O Lord my God, give Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonies, and thy statutes, and to do all these things which I have commanded, and to build the temple for which I have made provision; for thy great name will be hallowed and praised in the world which thou hast created, in the presence of those who worship thee” (1 Chronicles 29:18-19).

During the Hellenistic age with the translation of the Old Testament books into Greek (the Septuagint version), heart took on a new meaning that resulted from the mingling of the Semitic and Hellenic meanings of the symbol. Thus heart, *kardia* in Greek, retained the Hebrew meaning of *lev*, but added Hellenic overtones so that heart became the place for thought and memory as well as for the religious life in obedience to God's holy will through his revealed laws.

HEART IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The writers of the New Testament books effected a synthesis of both the Semitic and the Hellenic understanding of heart, based on the belief that through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit the prophecies of the Old Testament were fulfilled in a new way. Yahweh had promised his people a new heart "A new heart will I give you, a new spirit will I put within you; and I will remove the heart of stone out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:16). The first Christians lived as with one heart and soul "Now the congregation of the believers were of one soul and one mind; not one of them spoke of the property he possessed as his own; but everything they had was in common" (Acts 4:32). Jesus Risen and his heavenly Father came and dwelt in the hearts of the believers. Their very bodies were now temples of God since the Holy Spirit dwelt within them "Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you" (1 Corinthians 3:16) "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit that dwells within you, which you have of God, and you are not your own" (1 Corinthians 6:19)?

Thus belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who died for love of us human beings, whose blood poured out of a pierced heart on the cross, confirms the passionate love of God the Father for his people of the new and everlasting covenant as manifested through the humanity and his human heart. This reality was understood by a new knowledge of the heart given by the outpoured Holy Spirit. The heart, therefore, for Christians becomes now not only the physical symbol of human life including the emotional, intellectual, and volitional powers of the human person, but for the baptized Christians who have received the fullness of the Holy Spirit as dwelling in the heart, the heart becomes a metaphor to indicate the Christian's inner self, where the spiritual life is born and develops and matures unto perfect fulfillment.

THE HEART AS BODY, SOUL, AND SPIRIT

Saint Paul united the Greek concept of body and soul as forming the essence of the human being, yet he added to the Semitic promise of the infusion into us human beings of the Spirit, a new and essential element of what it means to be a fulfilled human being "May the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved without blemish to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Saint Irenaeus in the second century, the first great Christian theologian, built a theological anthropology upon the scriptural teaching of human beings made according to the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27) and this text of Saint Paul's from his first universal epistle to the Thessalonians. According to his teaching, we are naturally made up of the powers of the *body* and *soul*, which form the imageness in all of us. But we are not completely made according to the likeness of Christ, the perfect image of God, until by the power of the Holy Spirit we receive our human spirit relationship to God in the Spirit's regeneration of us into the Father's children by grace.

Saint Irenaeus wrote: “But when the spirit here blended with the soul is united to God’s handiwork (*plasma*), the man is rendered spiritual and perfect because of the outpouring of the Spirit, and this is he who was made in the image and likeness of God. But if the Spirit is wanting to the soul, he who is such is indeed of an animal nature, and, being left carnal, shall be an imperfect being, possessing indeed the image of God in his formation, but not receiving the similitude or likeness through the Spirit, and thus is being imperfect....Those then are the perfect who have had the Spirit God remaining in them, and have preserved their souls and bodies blameless, holding fast the faith of God, that is, that faith which is directed toward God and maintaining righteous dealings with respect to their neighbor.”

TO TOUCH GOD IN THE DEPTHS OF THE HEART

Jesus said in the Gospels: “For how would a man be benefited, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own life? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?” (Matthew 16:26). This means more than to lose one’s earthly life. It means to lose that specific, secret center of our personality where all our values and eternal life, our oneness with the Indwelling Trinity of Father, Son, and Spirit lie.

To find our eternal life means to find our real / by entering into the depths of our heart. It requires a new, spiritual birth, an awaking from the dead or a healing from our blindness. Only a religious, spiritual person who wishes to discover his/her unique depths, by a conversion (*metanoia*) in the heart, can reach this knowledge of his/her true self in Christ Jesus.

It is in the depths of our hearts that we can really touch God in a genuine religious experience. The Gospel incessantly affirms that the heart is the organ to receive the Divine Word as the earth receives the seed that produces great fruit as we cooperate with the transforming working of the Holy Spirit. “For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm. To give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me, and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me, if you seek me with all your heart” (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

In the depths of the human heart under the power of the Spirit, we can touch God and have “heart knowledge” of absolute certitude that we are really children of God. Saint Paul wrote: “Those who are led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God. For you have not received the spirit of bondage, to be in fear again; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Abon, Father, our Father. And this Spirit bears witness to our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:14-16). Here is where the dignity of being called by God to be made according to the image and likeness of Jesus Christ is realized, and through the Spirit we are divinized (*Theosis*) progressively more and more as we are made in our hearts “participators” of God’s very own nature “Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has given us all things that pertain to the power of God, for life and worship of God, through the knowledge of Him who has called us by his glory and excellence, whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of divine nature...” (2 Peter 2-4).

DEEP CALLS OUT TO DEEP

Until we human beings meet God in the depths of our being, in the heart that embraces not only the consciousness but even the unconscious, we will never understand the infinite love of God for us that, when experienced by us as immanently personalized in the self-giving Love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit within us, transforms us into our true selves. We will also never come into an actual and effective knowledge of our own inner beauty and uniqueness to be his

manifestation of beauty and love in a way that no one else except our unique self can bring forth now in time and place and unto the ages of ages, in the life to come, the Future Kingdom.

Saint Paul wrote this type of heart knowledge that is gift from God, yet that transforms us to be filled with God's perfect goodness: "Out of his infinite glory, may he give you the power through his Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may dwell in your **hearts** through faith, and then, planted in love and build on love, you will with all the saints have strength to comprehend the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; until, knowing the love of Christ, which surpasses all knowledge, you are filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:16-19).

DIVINE IMMANENCE

Christianity added a revolutionary element of divine immanence within us human beings that could never have been dreamt of by those of the non-Christian religions. This was not to be an assimilation whereby we would lose our identity as human beings. Rather, we would experience our true identity in loving submission to the Triadic Uncreated Energies of God abiding within us. Jesus Christ teaches that, as a result of living in the heart according to the Word of God, we have a new immanent relation to the Indwelling Triune God "...He who loves me keeps my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make a place of abode with him" (John 14:23).

Christian prayer allows us, by the Holy Spirit's gift of faith, hope, and love, to enter into a continued living experience of being "begotten" in our hearts by the Father in the Word through the Holy Spirit. Thus Christianity, as it evolved in the East, would mingle in a healthy synthesis the two basic polarities of God without and God within. The synthesis between a positive, rational understanding of God and a mystical, heart knowledge that best characterizes Eastern Christian spirituality has been called *hesychasm*.

TRANQUILLITY OF THE HEART

Hesychasm was the form of Eastern Christian spirituality that revolved around the symbol of the heart. Hesychasm comes from the Greek word *hesychia*, which means tranquility, peace, or integration. *Hesychia* is that state in which the Christian through grace and one's own intense asceticism, reintegrates his/her whole being into a single person that is then placed completely under the direst influence of the Trinity dwelling within the Christian. This formed the basic foundation for the spirituality of the men and women who fled into the physical deserts of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Syria in the fourth century to "push their minds into their hearts" as they stood mindful of all the movements within their hearts, which embraced all body, soul, and spirit levels of thought, word, and deed.

As we have already pointed out from the New Testament understanding of heart, such athletes of the desert also saw the heart as that which symbolizes our transcendence beyond the world, the inner stretching power within our spirit to go toward God in thought and loving deed. It is the living out of God's command to love him with our whole heart, mind, soul, and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). They took seriously the words of Yahweh expressed through the prophet Jeremiah: "When you seek me you shall find me, when you seek me with all your heart" (Jeremiah 29:13).

The writers of Sacred Scripture were using a powerful symbol as a point from which, while still rooted in this world, the heart could swing free, moving into the fullness for which it was created, namely, to embrace God in the loving relationship of child to Father. The Fathers of the desert were only being scriptural when they used the heart as the place where we encounter God with all our strengths, but also with all our brokenness and sinfulness that cry

out for healing from God. In their thinking, heart referred also to the “new creation” or, in Pauline terms, “the new man” that was healed, integrated, and transformed into a new creature in Christ Jesus “Whoever from now on is a follower of Christ is a new creation; old things have passed away; and all things have become new through God who has reconciled us to himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-18).

HEART SPIRITUALITY

Pseudo-Macarius, who wrote his *Fifty Spiritual Homilies* in the latter part of the fourth century, is one of the main influences in developing a Christian heart spirituality. He continues the Semitic influence with its accent on the total, existential encounter with God in the “heart,” found chiefly in the Antiochene school of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Antony of the Desert.

God is encountered as the ground of one’s being, primarily in the heart and not in the intellect or mind. Macarius insists on the total encountering in ever-increasing awareness and even “feeling” of that presence of the Indwelling Trinity on body, soul, and spirit levels. The divinizing effects of the Holy Spirit work through grace to lead the Christian into ever-mounting levels of transcendent possibility, and realized human development according to the image and likeness that is Jesus Christ. Pseudo-Macarius described the function of the heart: “God’s very grace writes in their hearts the laws of the Spirit. They, therefore, should not put all their trusting hope solely in scriptures written in ink. For, indeed, divine grace writes on the ‘tables of the heart’... “For you are known to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not on tablets of stone, but on tablets of the living heart” (2 Corinthians 3:3), the laws of the Spirit and the heavenly mysteries. For the heart directs and governs all the other organs of the body. And when grace pastures the heart, it rules over all the members and the thoughts. For there in the heart the mind abides as well as all the thoughts of the soul and all its hopes. This is how grace penetrates all parts of the body.”

Saint Theophan the Recluse (1815-1894), one of the outstanding 19th century Russian mystics, describes the heart in the Marcarian tradition: “The heart is the innermost man or spirit. Here are located self-awareness, the conscious, the idea of God and of one’s complete dependence on him, and all the eternal treasures of the spiritual life...Where is the Heart? Where sadness, joy, anger, and other emotions are felt, here is the heart. Stand there with attention...Stand in the heart, with the faith that God is also there, but how he is there do not speculate. Pray and entreat that in due time love for God may stir within you by his grace.”

THE HEART: CENTER OF ALL HUMAN LIFE

The heart, therefore, cannot be conceived as merely another part of our human makeup. The heart is the hidden, deepest consciousness within us as the religious organ whereby we can encounter the Triune God as the true center of our entire human life, on body, soul, and spirit levels. The heart must be distinguished from: the body, the soul with its emotions, imagination, intellect, memory and will powers and even from spirit level. Heart goes beyond even consciousness to embrace also the unconscious. It transcends all the powers of the body, soul, and even spirit levels of our human existence, and yet permeates all of them as the potential integrating “placeless place” where grace and free will operate to bring about an integrated human person, totally submissive out of feeling love to the Indwelling Spirit of God’s love.

Thus we see that the outstanding and proper characteristic of Eastern Christianity, so rooted in Sacred Scripture and the experience of the early mystics of the church, lies in this—namely, that the mind with its intellectual reasoning powers, is not the ultimate foundation or

core of our human life. An intellectual grasp of God through an intellectual ascent to the reality of God based on Scripture is not the essence of true Christian Spirituality.

Our Western civilization comes to us from the Renaissance which sought to deprive the heart of its central position in the Christian religion. It highlighted the power of the mind, of science and consciousness, while excluding by and large the central role of the heart. Yet it is in the heart that we discover harmony and integration of all other human levels of life, body, soul, and spirit. Saint Paul summarizes the role of the heart and God's grace in giving us a knowledge beyond rational knowledge: "Rejoice in our Lord always; and again I say, Rejoice. Let your humility be known to all men. Our Lord is at hand. Do not worry over things, but always by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ" (Philippians 4:4-7).

Therefore, we can summarize in general the meaning of *heart*. Every verbal definition or description must limp and fail to convey the full meaning of heart. As we have pointed out, heart is a placeless place, where at the core or center of our being, we discover the transcendence that makes us sharers in the very image and likeness of God. It calls us to stretch out in prayer to touch infinity in the life of the Trinity dwelling within us. It is permeated by God's active grace (the total gift of himself to all mankind) to draw us into greater oneness with the Divine Indwelling Trinity and give us our true, beautiful, unique self in our oneness with the Risen Lord Jesus.

THE HEART OF THE NOT-YET

Yet both Scripture and the Living Tradition of the Fathers of the desert and holy mystics down through the ages of ages have described the heart as the "container" of the unconscious, the not-yet material that lies deeply in our roots that link us back, not only through our genetic preprogramming to the first man and woman of the human race, but to the material world from the first "big bang." Jesus himself taught us that out of the heart flow evil thoughts, evil powers that can destroy the divine life living also in the heart, "Do you not know that what enters into the mouth goes into the stomach, and thence, through the intestines, is cast out? But what comes out of the mouth comes out from the heart; and that is what defiles man. For from the heart comes out evil thoughts, such as fornication, murder, adultery, theft, false witness, blasphemy. It is these that defile a man; but if a man should eat when his hands are unwashed, he will not be defiled" (Matthew 15:17-20).

Pseudo-Macarius described the heart as a mansion with many rooms: "For all of us appear to be as one, both those who are with Christ and his angels and those who are with Satan and his unclean spirits. These are, therefore, infinite depths to the human heart. There are found reception rooms, bedrooms, doors and ante-chambers, many offices and exits. There is found the office of justice and of injustice. There is death and there is life. There takes place upright business as well as the contrary."

A BROKEN HEART

The heart is the place of conversion, of healing and integration from our worldly ego or false self into our true self in vital, conscious relationship at all times with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit's gifts of faith, hope, and love. It is a place to confront the inner demons (passions) that rise up as a hostile army within us. It is in the heart that the necessary conversion to Christ as the Divine Physician takes place and the inner healing of all our brokenness (any and all the elements in our lives that prevent Jesus Christ from being totally our Lord and Master of our existence).

The ancient Greeks referred to the *daemon* or *daimon* within all of us. This refers both to the light and the darkness, the already saved and integrated, and the not-yet within us. We have both positive and negative elements stored up in giant proportions to be actualized in creative or destructive thoughts, words, and deeds. We all veer dizzily, now toward sadness, at times, then toward noble love or back to cruel selfishness.

The *daimonic* in all of us can be unto good or evil; often it is a bit of both. It is never totally oriented toward beauty and creativity. We possess much brokenness within ourselves. But in that very brokenness lies unsuspected richness in new love energy.

We find a oneness with the whole world in our brokenness, in “the sin of the world.” We find our darkness to be a part of the world’s darkness. We have inherited it simply by being a part of the human race. But you and I are unique individual persons who have become what we are and what we will be through our actions upon and reactions to other unique individual persons. Our parents, siblings, friends, teachers, wife, husband, children, enemies, and even “indifferent” acquaintances have helped to make us what we are by their attitudes, act, and even, omissions. It is here in the so-called heart that we come face to face with the daimonic in us, that which is part of our broken state of inauthenticity. This also explains the good and the creative in our lives with its great potential for even greater beauty in the future (theosis, divinization).

COURAGE TO ENTER THE DARKNESS

It takes much courage to go deeper into our hearts and there to confront the dark side (Not Star-Wars). For most of us, however, we fear encountering so much ugliness in forms of darkness and distortion, and so we learn tricks whereby we put off the true conversion of the heart. We will deal with this necessary area in another Inscape newsletter as we encounter the *daimones* within our hearts. Suffice it to insist here that whatever the skein of knotted, twisted threads that have fashioned the tapestry of our lives (and so many of such influences have been beyond our control), there lies deep within us another self, the *true-self* of unrealized potentiality.

In confronting our brokenness, we are driven into our creaturely nothingness. What can we do to extricate ourselves from these overpowering forces that have mostly come originally from without, but now lie like unchained, wild beasts within us? Such a confrontation with our inner brokenness and nothingness before such overwhelming forces of negativity and destruction can be the turning point to a new life, a life of crying out for God’s limitless mercy and his healing, perfect and eternal love from the depths of our heart.

Deep within us lies the *real self*, the “person” unrealized as yet, but loved infinitely by the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God’s Spirit hovers over the chaos, the darkness that could blaze forth in an instant flash of illumination, into creative light, peace, and joy if we would only stretch out and follow that thin, silvery streak of godly light out of the binding slavery into true freedom. It is here in our true self that God dwells, making his mansion (John 14:23) within us, as we become more and more spirit, communicating freely in intimate loving communion unto union by God’s Spirit with the Indwelling Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ.

Years and years of sorrow and repentance, tears of fright at our own non-being pour forth gently as God’s soft, healing dew falls upon the cracked, parched earth of our heart (the condition of the soil within our heart where God’s plants his seeds of faith, hope and love) to grow and mature those seeds of new life into reality. Next month, *Inscape* will direct us to “go to the desert in silence—and listen to the real world for the First Time—The Silent Heart. Peace be unto all!

Father John Michael Zboyovski