

The Hidden Man of the Heart
Excerpt from Chapter 1: The Mystery of Man's Heart
Fr. Zacharias Zacharou¹

1 All the ordinances of the undefiled Church are offered to the world for the sole purpose of discovering the 'deep heart' (cf. Ps. 64:6), the centre of man's hypostasis. **2** According to the Holy Scriptures, God has fashioned every heart in a special way, and each heart is His goal, a place wherein He desires to abide that He may manifest Himself. **3** Since the kingdom of God is within us (cf. Luke 17:21), the heart is the battlefield of our salvation, and all ascetic effort is aimed at cleansing it of all filthiness, and preserving it pure before the Lord. **4** 'Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life', exhorts Solomon, the wise king of Israel (Prov. 4:23). **5** These paths of life pass through man's heart, and therefore the unquenchable desire of all who ceaselessly seek the Face of the living God is that their heart, once deadened by sin, may be rekindled by His grace. **6** The heart is the true 'temple' of man's meeting with the Lord. **7** Man's heart 'seeketh knowledge' (Prov. 15:14), both intellectual and divine, and knows no rest until the Lord of glory comes and abides therein. **8** On His part God, Who is 'a jealous God' (Exod. 34:14), will not settle for a mere portion of the heart. In the Old Testament we hear His voice crying out, 'My son, give Me thy heart' (Prov. 23:26); and in the New Testament He commands: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength' (Matt. 12:30). **9** He is the one Who has fashioned the heart of every man in a unique and unrepeatable way, though no heart can contain Him fully because 'God is greater than our heart' (1 John 3:20). **10** Nevertheless, when man succeeds in turning his whole heart to God, then God Himself begets it by the incorruptible seed of His word, seals it with His wondrous Name, and makes it shine with His perpetual and charismatic presence. **11** He makes it a temple of His Divinity, a temple not made by hands, able to reflect His 'shape' and to hearken unto His 'voice' and 'bear' His Name (cf. John 5:37; Acts 9:15). **12** In a word, man then fulfills the purpose of his life, the reason for his coming into the transient existence of this world. The great tragedy of our time lies in the fact that we live, speak, think, and even pray to God, outside our heart, outside our Father's house. **13** And truly our Father's house is our heart, the place where 'the Spirit of glory and of God' (1 Pet. 4:14) would find repose, that Christ may 'be formed in us' (Gal. 4:19). **14** Indeed, only then can we be made whole, and become hypostases in the image of the true and perfect Hypostasis, the Son and Word of God, Who created us and redeemed us by the precious Blood of His ineffable sacrifice. **15** Yet, as long as we are held captive by our passions, which distract our mind from our heart and lure it into the ever-changing and vain world of natural and created things, thus depriving us of all spiritual strength, we will not know the new birth from on High that makes us children of God and gods by grace. **16** In fact, in one way or another, we are all 'prodigal sons' of our Father in heaven, because, as the Scriptures testify, 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Rom. 3:23). **17** Sin has separated our mind from the life-giving contemplation of God and led it into a 'far country' (Luke 9:15). **18** In this 'far country' we have been deprived of the honour of our Father's embrace and, in feeding swine, we have been made subject to demons. **19** We gave ourselves over to dishonourable passions and the dreadful famine of sin, which then established itself by force, becoming the law of our members. **20** But now we must come out of this godless hell and return to our Father's house, so as to uproot the law of sin that is within us and allow the law of Christ's commandments to dwell in our heart. **21** For the only path leading out of the torments of hell to the everlasting joy of the Kingdom is that of the divine commandments: with our whole being we are to love God and our neighbour with a heart that is free of all sin.

¹ Disciple of St Sophrony of Essex +1993, who was a disciple of St Silouan the Athonite +1938. Sentence numbers added. Not in the book.