



Atma-Cristo

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Europe already has so many material things, but of the wisdom of Christ there's very little. Anyone having been there and seen it for himself or herself, there isn't really any living truth there which could lead to peace and tranquillity. There are only things which continually make one's mind confused and troubled. The stubborn refusal to take climate threats serious and cut pleasure travelling by air for example. And the limited moral and ecclesiastical version of Christianity one usually encounters as another example.

Europe is already materially prosperous, it has so many things to offer which are sensually enticing - sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures. However, people ignorant of Christ mind atmacristo only become confused by them. So today I will offer you some points to take away home.

What is Christ wisdom? It is that fact of Christ presence which can cut through the problems and difficulties of mankind, gradually reducing them to nothing. That's

what is called Christ mind atmacristo and that's what should be studied throughout our daily lives so that when some mental impression arises in us, whether we like it or not, we'll be able to deal with it and go beyond it.

Problems are common to us all whether living here in Europe or in other countries. If we don't know how to solve them, we'll always be subject to suffering and distress. That which solves problems is wisdom and being grounded in Christ presence. To have this wisdom we must look at the Scriptures and develop and train the mind.

The subject of spiritual practice isn't far away at all, it's right here in our body and mind. Westerners and eastern peoples are the same, they both have a body and mind. A confused body and mind means a confused worldly person and a peaceful body and mind, is a peaceful person.

Actually, the mind, like rain water, is pure in its natural God-given state, before the infection of the fall in the pristine garden of great simplicity. If we were to drop green coloring into clear rain water, however, it would turn green. If yellow coloring it would turn yellow.

The mind reacts similarly. When a comfortable mental impression "drops" into the mind, the mind is comfortable. When the mental impression is uncomfortable, the mind is uncomfortable. The mind becomes "cloudy" just like the colored water.

When clear water contacts yellow, it turns yellow. When it contacts green, it turns green. It will change color every time. Actually, that water which is green or yellow is naturally clean and clear, like our original God created mind. This is the natural state of the mind, clean, holy and pure and unconfused. It becomes confused only because it pursues sensual-mental impressions; it gets lost in its moods!

So Christ is the living natural water running through our hearts and minds. When you do not let any troubling mental impression color this natural and clean holy baptismal water into some color of stress, pain, fear or some form of wordly happiness, then your life is free and loving whatever circumstances surround you.

Let us say we are sitting in a peaceful forest. If there's no wind, a leaf remains still. When a wind blows it flaps and flutters. The original Christ mind is similar to that leaf.

When it contacts a mental impression, it, too, "flaps and flutters" according to the nature of that mental impression and human attachmens to things in the world.

In the Garden we were naturally mindful of the divine state of bliss. Then comes the devil in the form of the snake and suggests things. That is the wind coming. We get decieved and want to taste the fruit of the distracting Tree of opinions about good and evil, about power and satisfactions. The leaf start to flutter and becomes confused. That is the original fall of mankind. It develops into a depressed culture of violence, competition and loss of meaning.

The less we know of truth and the pristine simplicity of the mind in its original state, the more the mind will continually pursue mental impressions and distractions of opinions. Feeling happy, it succumbs to happiness. Feeling suffering, it succumbs to suffering. It's constant confusion!

In the end people become neurotic. Why? Because they don't know! They just follow their ego-constructed moods, more or less involuntary, and don't know how to look after their own being, their God-given minds. When the mind has no Holy Spirit to

look after it, it's like a child without a mother or father to take care of him. An orphan has no refuge and, without a refuge, he's very insecure. She or he becomes the lost lamb that Jesus talks about. When the lost lamb is found by the Shepherd, the natural Christ mind becomes present and all problems go away.

So if the mind is not looked after through practicing the prayer of the Name, if there is no training of attention or maturation of heart, no right understanding of the mind, it's really troublesome for the mind, the emotional life and even the physical health.

The method of training the mind which I have given to my students is the old traditional one: praying the Jesus prayer without ceasing. It sounds hard to pray so much but the true mind will love it. Think of it as a basic primary activity that can be combined temporarily with others during the day. First you do this prayer and then you add conversation with other, handling other things, performing work tasks and chores while you are in touch with the ongoing prayer. It is a method of staying in touch with our being, letting the mind find Itself in the Name and in this very process be peaceful

and tranquil. It's for you to use until you find the prayerful body praying by itself. It becomes as natural and spontaneous as breathing.

Our being is, viewed in a very simple way, composed of two parts: one is the body, the other, the mind. There are only these two parts. What is called "the body", is that which can be seen with our physical eyes. "The mind", on the other hand, has no physical aspect. The mind can only be seen with the "internal eye" or the "eye of the mind". These two things, body and mind, are since the great divergence, in a constant state of turmoil. This is what we historically and in mythology call the fallen state, the state of ego-illusion, the disunited state. We don't have to engage discursively into mythology, just focus on the turmoil of the present mind.

What is the mind? The mind isn't really any "thing". It is not fully explained neither by biochemistry or neurology or neuropsychology, fascinating as those disciplines are for science. Conventionally speaking, it's that which represent the world, feels it or sense it in various ways. Thus it senses, receives and experiences all mental

impressions of various affective qualities. Right at this moment this mind is active in representation and reaction. As you read this, the mind acknowledges what I am saying, represents it, is affected somehow by it. As you introduce the Jesus prayer the quality of the mind will change and the Holy Spirit begins to work on you. Most probably you will stop reading for a while and go into the state of prayer, returning later to the reading.

This mind, remarkably enough, doesn't really have any ego, self or substance. It doesn't have any form to identify with. We can vaguely believe that an "I" is having the experiences, but truly it is not there, that is just a complication of terms. There are in fact merely experiences, representations, affective, emotional and mental activities, that's all! Through the constant practice of the Name we teach this mind to acquire right view, and soon it has fewer problems. It will be more at ease.

True mind is Christ mind. Emotions are emotional movements. Mental objects are mental objects. Mental objects or emotions are not the peaceful still Christ mind. This we understand after some time of prayerfull

attention. The Christ mind is not mental objects, nor any reaction towards them, nor any desires. In order to clearly understand our minds and the mental objects in our minds, we say that the mind is that which receives the mental objects which pop into it and create emotional reactions. We are just a vessel, a container for those movements, always changing.

When these two things, mind and its object, come into contact with each other, they give rise to emotions. Some are good, some bad, some cold, some hot, all kinds! Without wisdom through the practice of the Name to deal with these feelings, however, the mind will be troubled. Breathing in and doing the Name will restore everything to peace in the mind-heart.

Meditation on the Name and the short phrase breathing in and breathing out is the way of developing the mind so that it may be a base for the arising of wisdom. Here the breathing is a physical foundation. We call it "mindfulness of the Name in breathing". Here we make breathing our mental object together with the Name. We take this object of meditation because it's the simplest and obvious life of Christ in us, the very spirit --

inspiration -- of the Father through the Son and the Spirit, and because it has been the heart of meditation since ancient times with the desert prayerful fathers of the early Christian faith.

When a good occasion arises to pray in stillness and solitude, say to yourself, "Now I will let go of all my burdens and concerns and give them over to Christ within me and as me". You don't want any thought or reaction that will cause distraction, disturbance and worry. Let go of all concerns for the time being.

Now fix your attention on the breath. Then breathe in Christ life with his Name and breathe out the prayer phrase. In developing awareness of breathing, don't intentionally make the breath long or short. Neither make it strong or weak. Just let it flow normally and naturally, knowing it to be Jesus Christ breathing as us. Watchfulness and self-awareness, arising from the mind, will know the in-breath and the out-breath as true Christ-life manifestations: "I am the Way".

Be at ease. Don't think about anything. No need to think of this or that. The only thing you have to do is fix your attention on the breathing in and breathing out. You have

nothing else to do but that! Keep your mindfulness fixed on the in-and out-breaths as they occur. Be aware of the beginning, middle and end of each breath. On inhalation, the beginning of the breath is at the nose tip, the middle at the heart, and the end in the abdomen. On exhalation, it's just the reverse: the beginning of the breath is in the abdomen, the middle at the heart, and the end at the nose tip. Develop the awareness of the breath: 1, at the nose tip; 2, at the heart; 3, in the abdomen. Then in reverse: 1, in the abdomen; 2, at the heart; and 3, at the nose tip.

Focusing the attention on these three points will relieve all worries. Just don't think of anything else! Keep your attention on the breath praying the Name. Perhaps other thoughts will enter the mind. It will take up other themes and distract you. Don't be concerned. Just take up the breathing prayer again as your object of attention. The mind may get caught up in judging and investigating your moods, but continue to practice, being constantly aware of the beginning, middle and the end of each breath.

Eventually, the mind will be aware of the breath at these three points all the time. When you do this practice for some time, the mind and body will get accustomed to the work. Fatigue will disappear, Christ mind will prevail. The body will feel lighter and the breath will become more and more refined as he carrier of he Name. Mindfulness and Christ-awareness will protect the mind and watch over it. The Shepherd has found the lost sheep.

We practice like this until the mind is peaceful and calm, until it is One with the One. This means that the mind will be completely absorbed in the Name-breathing, that it doesn't separate from the breath prayer. The mind will be unconfused and at ease. It will know the beginning, middle and end of the breath and remain steadily fixed on it.

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The Jesus prayer was developed among the desert fathers in Mount Sinai, and the Egyptian Skete desert, later spreading south,

east and north, even to the wooded mountains of Kaukasus. In those days monks had few duties and ceremonies to perform. They lived in caves like St Anthony or in forest huts without permanent resting places. There they could devote themselves entirely to the practice of meditation and the breathing prayer of the Name.

In those times one rarely encountered the luxuries that are so commonplace today among monks, there simply weren't any. One had to carry water from a river or a well, walk distances to find bread and vegetables to eat, make fires to warm oneself, be aware of wild animals. Lay people seldom came to visit. Health care, medical and social care did not exist, neither homes for elderly. Often the holy praying solitaries died unawares. One didn't want or expect much and was content with what one had. One could live and breathe meditation on the Name and live in Christ mind awareness ! That was perceived as the utmost meaning of human life.

The monks of course suffered many privations living like this. If someone caught malaria and managed to go somewhere to ask for medicine, the teacher would say, "You don't need medicine ! Keep practicing". Besides, there simply weren't all the drugs

that are available now. All one had were the herbs and roots that grew in the desert or the forest in the valley. The environment was such that monks had to have a great deal of patience and endurance; they didn't bother over minor ailments. Nowadays you get a bit of an ache and you're off to the hospital or the monastery clinic !

The desert fathers practiced with patience and endurance alongside the many dangers that lurked in the surroundings. There were many wild and fierce animals living in the forests and there were many hardships for body and mind in the ascetic skete or forest-dwelling monk. Indeed, the patience and endurance of the monks in those days was excellent because the circumstances compelled them to be so.

In the present day, circumstances compel us in the opposite direction. In ancient times, one had to travel by foot; then came the oxcart and then the automobile. Aspiration and ambition increased, so that now, if the car is not air-conditioned, one will not even sit in it; impossible to go if there is no air-conditioning! The virtues of patience and endurance are becoming weaker and weaker. The standards for meditation and practice are lax and getting laxer, until we find that

meditators these days like to follow their own opinions and desires. When the old folks talk about the old days, it's like listening to a myth or a legend. You just listen indifferently, but you don't understand. It just doesn't reach you!

Prayer life really is about the heart of Christ; to develop the Christ mind, is to develop your own heart. This is very important. It's not metaphysics, not theology, not about defining concepts or problems. This training of the heart is the main emphasis. The Jesus prayer is the practical religion of the heart. Only this! Reality turns out to be only Him. One who practices to develop the heart is one who practices the Christ mind.

This heart of ours lives in a cage, and what's more, there's a raging tiger in that cage. If this maverick heart of ours doesn't get what it wants, it makes trouble. You must be reborn in Christ mind if you want peace and love. This is a training of the Heart, prayer of the Heart. With it comes the wonderful ethical precepts of Jesus, contrasting strongly with the world of opinions, conflicts and confusion. When you don't let yourself be renewed in Christ mind there is doubt, anguish and conflict.

I always advice my family, just as I do with my students. Eat little! Sleep little! Speak little! Whatever it may be of worldly habit, lessen them, go against their power. Don't just do as you like, don't indulge in your thought. Stop this slavish following the world. You must constantly say the Name with breathing and go against the stream of worldly busyness and ignorance. This is called "discipline of the heart". When you discipline your heart, it initially becomes very dissatisfied and begins to struggle. It becomes restricted and oppressed. When the heart is prevented from doing what it wants to do, it starts wandering and struggling. Suffering becomes apparent to us.

This suffering, is actually the call to birth in the Christ mind. So this initial resistance and suffering is what brings us wisdom; it makes us contemplate. It's much better than worldly happiness which tends to make us close our eyes and ears and get even more frantic with worldly affairs. It never allows us to develop patience. Comfort and consumer happiness make us careless.

When you start living with the contemplative Jesus prayer you may not understand what is happening or what the point of it is. But when the fathers of the great

desert prayer tradition, still alive, tell you to do it, then you may consider it. Study the Philokalia and start to live with continual prayer. You will soon develop the virtues of patience and endurance.

When you begin to pray without ceasing you naturally want peace and tranquillity. You can say with psalm 104: « Glory to the Holy Name ! May those be glad who search for Him ! » But often you don't get much peace or gladness. You don't get any because you have never practiced this way. Your heart says, "I'll sit with the Name until I attain tranquillity and gladness". But when tranquillity doesn't arise, you suffer, even if you sit in church and follow the service. And when there is this suffering of not finding peace and tranquillity, you get up and run away! To practice like this can not be called "developing the heart". It's called "returning to the world of distractions".

Instead of indulging in your moods, however, just keep on practicing. Use beads, or, like the forest hermits, pine cones, or stone pebbles to count your prayers and breath cycles. Don't you think that this is a better way to help the distraction to end? The Russian pilgrim got a certain number of his

starets and when he mastered them he could pray freely.

The other way, the way of following your moods and wordly thoughts, will never reach the truth, love and peace of Christ mind. If you practice the constant prayer of the Name, then whatever the mood may be, you keep on practicing, constantly practicing, sitting, walking, doing things where you happen to be.

When we follow our own distracted views on life, our own opinions about what gives meaning, we can never see clearly what is right and what is wrong. We don't know our own heart. We don't know ourselves. We suffer from restlessness.

If you indulge in following your own pick from wordly views of life you will keep on thinking and doubting a lot. You think to yourself, "I don't have very much merit. I don't have any luck. I've been a Christian for years now and I'm still not very peaceful or tranquil. I still haven't seen the new life in me". To practice with this kind of attitude, even if you often go to church, cannot be called "developing the Christ heart". It could be called "developing wordly disaster".

If, at this time, you are like this, if you are a believer who still doesn't really know the

Christ mind, be assured, because you've been practicing wrongly. Now you are open to the right simple practise of the Jesus prayer.

Now you can start to develop your practice constantly! Breathe in with the Name of Jesus, breathe out with the phrase « have mercy on me a sinner». Then, after some time of practice all your doubts, all your uncertainties, will eventually vanish. Like the desert fathers say: All demons shy away from the holy Name of Jesus Christ. They can't stand it !

Your doubts will never vanish through thinking, nor through theorizing, nor through speculation, nor through discussion. Nor will doubts disappear by not doing anything, just softing around. All defilements will vanish through developing the heart, through simple prayer of the Name.

The way of prayerful living in simple circumstances is the exact opposite of the way of the modern consumer world. This practice comes from a pure heart, originating from the publican Jesus told about in a parable. A pure heart, wanting to be free and unattached to the defilements of the world, in need of compassion, expressing this in a few words, over and over again. That is is the Way.

When you must bow your heart to the Christ mind. The prayer leaves the head and goes down to your heart, so to speak. I use to recommend tilting your head a bit and listen to you heart « down there » as you pray the Name. Now and then you can tilt the head the other way.

The virtues of meditators are the Christ precepts: love you enemies and everyone else, forgive those who hurt you, be mindful, glad, collected and content with exactly what happens around you. Help the poor and oppressed as far as you can. Invite the stranger, don't judge anyone, not even yourself.

Deviating from these precepts stop us on the Way. They stop the prayerful habit of the heart. If you don't bother to train your heart, then it remains wild, following the ways of the world and becomes destructive.

Think of the example of trees. If you pray as a solitary in the woods this example comes naturally. If we just leave trees in their natural state, then we would never be able to build a house with them. We couldn't make planks or anything of use in building a house. However, if a carpenter came along wanting to build a house, he would go looking for trees. He would take this raw material and

use it to advantage. In a short time he could have a house built.

Meditation and developing the prayer of the heart are similar to this. You must take this untrained mind, body and heart, the same as you would take a tree in its natural state in the forest, and train this natural heart so that it is more refined, so that it's more aware of itself and is more sensitive. Everything is in its natural fallen state to begin with. When we understand nature, then we can change it through insight and faith and will to change, we can detach from the fallen quality to reach for the risen quality, the resurrection and ascension into Him. Then we won't suffer anymore.

The nature of our fallen heart is such that whenever it clings and grasps there is agitation and confusion. It wanders over there, then it wanders over here. On and on. When we come to observe this agitation, we might think that it's impossible to train the natural fallen heart and so we suffer accordingly. We don't understand that this is the way the heart is to start with. It is meant to be bad so that we could go for the good one. That is the paradox of creation. From darkness to light. That's the way it is.

When we have contemplated many times the nature of the heart, then we will come to understand that this heart is just as it is and can't be otherwise. We will know that the heart's ways are just as they are, drawn by a negative force in order to propel us towards divine comfort. That's its nature in God's project.

If we see this clearly, then we can detach from thoughts and feelings, discern with the help of the Spirit. And we don't have to add on anything more by constantly having to tell ourselves that "that's just the way it is". When the heart truly understands through the prayer practise, it lets go of everything in our freedom to be ourselves. Thinking and feeling will still be there, but that very thinking and feeling will be deprived of power.

This is similar to a child who likes to play and frolic in ways that perhaps annoy us. We should understand that it's natural for a child to act that way. Then we could let go and leave him to play in his own way. Then our troubles are over. How are they over? Because we accept the ways of children. Our outlook changes and we accept the true nature of things. We let go and our heart becomes more peaceful. We have "right understanding".

If we have wrong understanding with a false independent ego, dwelling on thoughts and reactions and following desires, then even living in a deep, dark silent cave would be chaos. The heart can only be at peace when there is "right understanding, acquired through years of praying the Name with breathing. Then there are no more riddles to solve and no more problems to arise. We just spend waking time praying and often night time too. This is the way it is. You detach. You let go. Whenever there is any feeling of clinging, we pray and detach from it, because we know that that very feeling is just as it is. It didn't come along especially to annoy us. We might think that it did, but in truth it is just that way.

If we start to think and consider it further, that too, is just as it is. If we let go, then external forms are merely form, sounds are merely sounds, odor is merely odor, taste is merely taste, touch is merely touch and the heart is merely the heart. In it all we experience His presence and so we pray his Name with the breathing rhythm.

It's similar to oil and water. If you put the two together in a bottle, they won't mix because of the difference in their nature. The holy oil of His Name will always be genuine

and separate us from attachment to the world. We become fixed through this holy oil, saved from the fallen destiny of mental worldly affairs.

Oil and water are different in the same way that a wise holy man and an ignorant busybody of the world are different. The desert fathers lived with form, sound, odor, taste, touch and thought. They prayed all day and sometimes all night. They turned away from external things important to people of the cities and villages, often including temples and churches. The hesychasts turned away and detached themselves little by little since and understood that the heart is essentially one with the Christ mind while worldly thoughts and reactions are just distractions, even religious distractions. They didn't confuse and mix them together.

The heart is just the heart; that is where Christ inhabits us. Thoughts and feelings are just thoughts and feelings, projections of an individual ego is just that, nothing more. Let things be just as they are! Let form be just form, let sound be just sound, let thought be just thought, let identifications with a false ego be just that. Why should we bother to attach to them or react to them? We simply pray without ceasing and enjoy Christ mind.

If we practice this way, then there is detachment and separateness, we walk the Jesus path and the world is busy as usual. Our thoughts and feelings will be on one side, in the Christ mind, and our heart will be in His holy heart. Just like oil and water - we live in the world but not of the world.

Jesus and his disciples lived with ordinary, unenlightened people, often close to the poor and sick. They not only lived with these people, but they taught these ordinary, unenlightened, ignorant ones how to receive love and healing mercy from God. They could do this because they knew how to practice. They knew that it's a matter of the heart.

So, as far as your practice of the Jesus prayer goes, don't bother to doubt it. If we run away from family life and society to live a solitary prayer life, it's not running away to get lost in delusion. Nor is it out of cowardice or fear. It's rather running away in order to train ourselves to find Christ mind, in order to bless the world with Christ presence.

If we have an understanding like this, then we can follow the Way, the Truth and the Life. The Christ mind will become clearer and clearer. The one who understands this mind, understands himself who now can say: « I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I

now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. »

In reality, the Christ mind is everywhere, since He is the One from whom everything is that is in the universe. As Col. 1 says: «...the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in Christ all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. Christ is before all things, and in him all things hold together. » There is no need to escape to somewhere else. Christ mind is omnipresent. If you want peace for yourself and the world, then let it be this peace of wisdom. That's enough!

Whenever we see the Christ mind as ourselves, then there is the right way, the right path. Defilements are just defilements, the true heart is just the true heart. Whenever we detach and separate through the prayer of the Name so that there are just these things as they really are, then they are merely objects to us, the way reality configures. When we are on the right path, then we are impeccable and justified through Christ living

as us. When we are impeccable, there is openness and freedom all the time.

There isn't anything which is not Christ mind. Love and hate are Christ mind, happiness and suffering are Christ mind, like and dislike are Christ mind; all of these things, no matter how insignificant, are Christ mind. When we practice the Christ mind, when we have faith and understand, then we can let go. And thus we can comply with the NT teaching of not clinging to anything, just practicing Christ mind. Everything subsist in Christ as Col. 1:16 says.

All temporary conditions that are born in our heart, all conditions of our mind, all conditions of our body, are always in a state of change. Do not cling to any of them. Jesus taught that his Kingdom was not of this world. Having faith in this, we detach from all conditions and do not try to attain to any specific order of any conditions. Christ mind is before all things, the primary peaceful order. Everything is already at peace in Him.

If we follow the NT teachings we are right. We are right but it is also troublesome in a world where religions compete with each other. It's not that the teachings are troublesome, but it's our mental defilements and opinions and desires which are

troublesome. The defilements wrongly obstruct us and cause us trouble. There isn't really anything troublesome in following any benign teaching. In fact we can say that clinging to the path of the NT doesn't bring suffering, because the path is simply "let go" of every single teaching and just be lived by the Christ mind !

Don't carry anything around! Put all burdens on Christ who has already taken care of it. Detach! If you see badness or goodness going on in the world, let it go. It means that we have to practice the prayer of the Name and let go of everything else. There will always be turmoil in the world. In our time it comes near through media. In the constant prayer breathing we live in the Name of the One for Whom everything exist.

To develop the Name contemplation path we include contemplating the constant flow of changes in our own body and heart. The Christ mind isn't anywhere else. It's right here! Not someplace far away. It's right here in this very body and heart of ours.

Therefore prayer must be practice with some energy. Make the heart grander and brighter with love for everyone — we are all one. Make it free and independent. Having done a good deed, don't carry it around in

your heart, let it go. Having refrained from doing an evil deed, let it go. Christ taught us to live in the immediacy of His presence, in the here and now. Don't lose yourself in the past or the future or in an ideology of the here and now. Take up the prayer of the Name and breathing whenever possible.

The teaching of NT that people least understand and which often is in conflict with their own opinions, is this teaching of abandoning everything for the prayer of the Name. When Jesus says that we have to hate mother and father, sister and brother in order to follow Him, that we have to leave whatever we are finding important to follow Him, people revolt and go instead to a church which honors family values and nice company, having feasts and lotteries and easy-going meetings. But they misunderstand. What Jesus says is that if we want truth and peace, He comes first, that we should always pray and remain with Him in the heart at all times. This is difficult for most. Because this is detaching from the world. They don't see the beauty and truth of the Way.

When we conceive of the spiritual and religious life in worldly terms, we become confused and think that we can do anything

we want as long as it seems ethically reliable. Christianity becomes a moral programme with nice churchy activities and some good company.

It can be interpreted this way, but its real meaning is closer to the story of Pilgrim's Progress by Bunyan: we are carrying a heavy burden on our back. After a while we begin to feel its weight but we don't know how to let it go. So we endure this heavy burden all the time. It is a mixture of guilt, shame, disappointment, lack of meaning, lack of energy. Some call it the burden of human existence. But rather oddly, if someone tells us to throw it away, we usually say or think, "If I throw it away, I won't have anything left!" If we are told of all the benefits to be gained from throwing it away, and the beauty and peace of the Holy City, we wouldn't believe them but would keep thinking, "If I throw it away, I will have nothing! I will lose myself. " So we keep on carrying this heavy burden until we become so weak and exhausted that we can no longer endure it, then we turn to the prayer of the Name and we drop it.

Having dropped our burden for a while, we suddenly and surprisingly experience the benefits of letting go. There is a sudden light

in the darkness. We immediately feel better and lighter and we know for ourselves how much of a burden we have been carrying. Before we let go of the burden, we couldn't possibly know this. We could not estimate the benefits of letting go, the benefits of faith in the Name of Christ, in the Christ mind.

So if someone tells us to let go, as unenlightened men we wouldn't see the purpose of it. We would just blindly clutch at the rock and refuse to let go until it became so unbearably heavy that we simply have to let go, hopefully before death-bed.

Knowing the Christ mind to take over all burdens a person can feel for herself or himself the lightness and relief and thus know for herself or himself the benefits of letting go and breathe the Name. Later on we may start carrying burdens again, in help of others around us. But now we know what the results of meditation and prayer will be, so we can now let go more easily. This understanding will simplify life to the essentials. Obvious will be the uselessness of carrying burdens around and busying oneself with the cares of the world, as Jesus taught to Mary and Martha. Praying always and letting go brings ease to all around us and brings lightness to ourselves.

Our sinful pride, our sense of self that we depend on, is the same as that heavy burden on our back. If we think about letting go of this wordly self-conceit, we are clearly afraid that without it, there would be nothing left. Culture, nationality, personality, social standing, role in society, imagined and experienced self-worth etc. — all things symbolic realities disappear when we can finally let go in prayer. Many of us can't stand such a thing. Too radical !

In following the Christian desert father's training of the heart, we mustn't cling to either praise or blame, to either identity or role, to this mental impression or that. To want certain mental impressions, to want respect and praise and avoid blame is the way of the world. The Way of the Christ mind is to live for others, without accepting or avoiding praise or blame, without attaching to one set of mental impressions or another.

For example, in raising a child it's very good not to just correct and scold all the time. Some people correct or scold too much. A wise person knows the proper time to scold and the proper time to praise. Our heart is the same. Use intelligence to know the heart. Use skill in taking care of your heart. Then you will be one who is clever in the training of

the heart, which often is like an unruly child. And when the heart is skilled, it can rid us of our suffering. Suffering exists right here in our hearts. It's always complicating things, creating and making the heart heavy. It's born here. It also dies here.

The way of the Christ heart is like this. Sometimes there are good thoughts, sometimes there are bad thoughts. The heart is deceitful. Don't trust it! Instead look straight at the conditions of the heart itself. Accept them as they are. They're just as they are. Whether it's good or evil or whatever, that's the way it is. If you don't grab hold of these conditions, then they don't become anything more or less than what they already are. If we grab hold we'll get bitten and will then suffer.

With "right view" there's only peace. Christ mind is born and wisdom takes over. Wherever you may sit or lie down, there is peace. There is peace everywhere, no matter where you may go.
