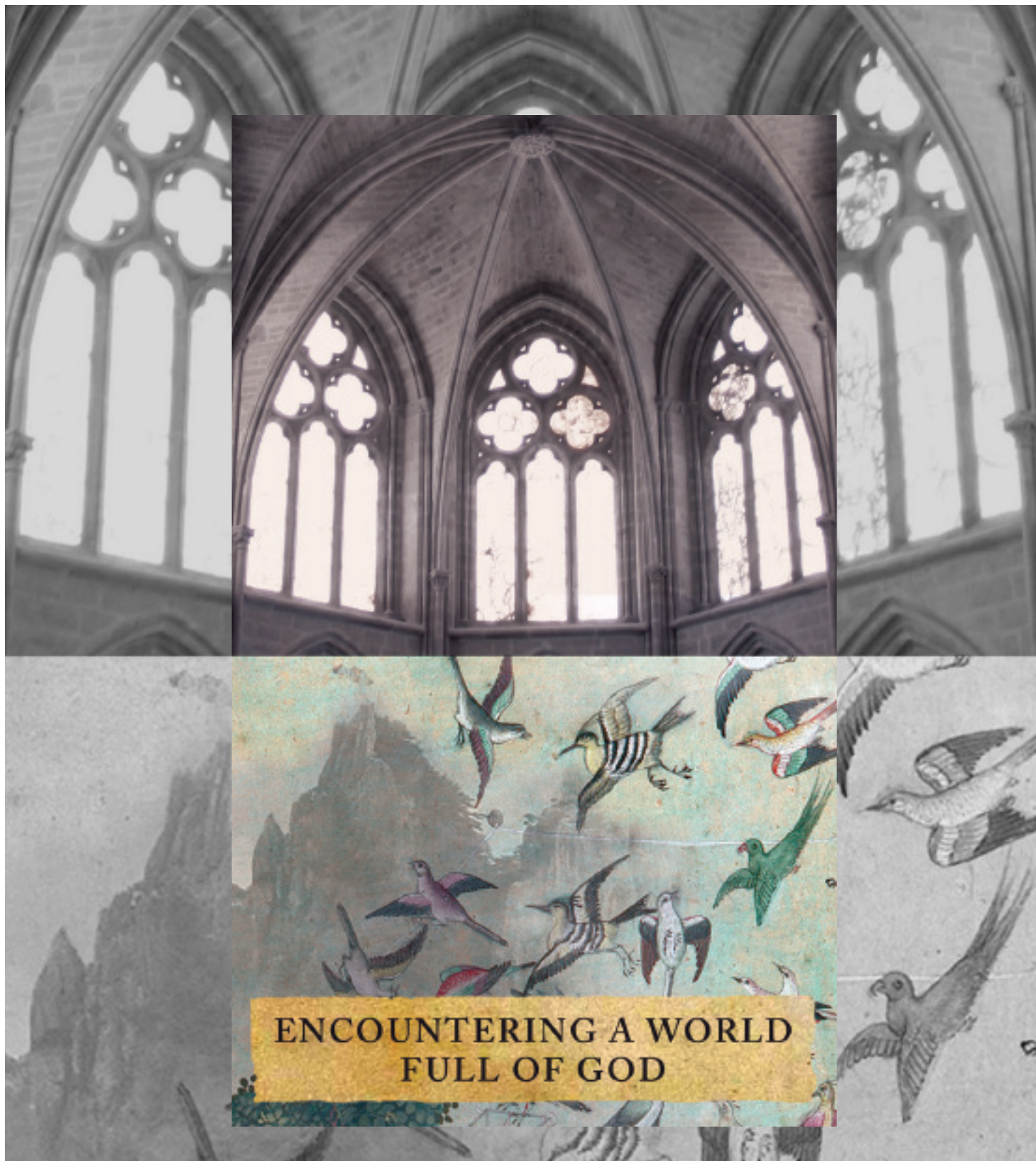


May 2017
Volume 29
Number 5



THE MARK

A Publication of The Church of Conscious Harmony ❖ A Contemplative Christian Community



ENCOUNTERING A WORLD
FULL OF GOD

RIGHT REQUEST

by Tim Cook

Christ invites us to consciously participate in the creative process that shapes our personal experience and contributes our gift to the collective consciousness of our human species. He instructs simply and certainly,

Don't bargain with God. Be direct. Ask for what you need. This isn't a cat-and-mouse, hide-and-peek game we're in. If your child asks for bread, do you trick him with sawdust? If he asks for fish, do you scare him with a live snake on his plate? As bad as you are, you wouldn't think of such a thing. You're at least decent to your own children. So don't you think the God who conceived you in love will be even better? (Matthew 7:7 *The Message*)

Maurice Nicoll in his 1947 paper, "Note on Prayer, Response and Request" expands on the idea:

"... the Universe can be taken as *response to request*. Man requests, and the Universe in all its full and total reality, outer and inner, responds according to the request. ... I wish to draw your attention to this fact: many people are getting responses to requests which they do not understand they

are making. If the Universe, visible and invisible, material and psychological, gross and fine, as apprehended externally by the senses and internally by the mind and heart, is response to request, then you will see how important it is to realize what kind of requests you are making in order to understand why you get the response, from any side of life, that you are actually getting. The Work says: 'Your being attracts your life.' Do you see the connection? Without knowing it, a man or woman may be making request and so getting a response from the total Universe that he or she does not like. They see the response but do not see what excites the response, what it is in themselves that attracts it. People, in other words, may be asking for trouble without being aware that they are. They see only the result – that is, the response. They see only effects not causes. To think only from the effects is one thing. It is how mechanical people think. To think from causes is another thing. It belongs to more conscious thinking. Now the

level of your being enters into request as much or more than your knowledge. You may *ask* intellectually for happiness but not see how factors that govern your being, as love of your negative states, your grievances, your secret jealousies, your laziness, your dislikes, and so on are asking for something quite different and that the Universe is responding to these factors in your being that you are secretly willing and affirming without seeing that you are. Understand that *full request* must contain both thought and will – formulation and emotional desire. The side of knowledge is the side of thought and a man can only think from his knowledge. The side of being wills, and a man only *wills* what he desires. If you love negative states, then your will is of this quality. Your love is your will; it will attract the response belonging to it. Only self-knowledge will make you aware of your state of being and this begins with self-observation. ... a person may be getting *responses* he does not expect or desire without

seeing that he is attracting them because he is making requests for them that he is not aware of.”

Eugene Peterson translates Christ speaking to this very issue in contemporary terms,

You have minds like a snake pit! How do you suppose what you say is worth anything when you are so foul-minded? It's your heart, not the dictionary, that gives meaning to your words. A good person produces good deeds and words season after season. An evil person is a blight on the orchard. Let me tell you something: Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you. There will be a time of Reckoning. Words are powerful; take them seriously. Words can be your salvation. Words can also be your damnation. (Matthew 12:36-37 The Message)

The time of reckoning is not in some far off future. It is now. This moment is the moment of God. Right now is the *kairos*, the Greek word for perfect opportunity, indicating that this is the propitious moment for decision or action. Right now is the opportunity for choice. Every moment of our lives

is our time of reckoning because we are always and only living in our own consciousness, in circumstances drawn to us by our prior consciousness and our own God-given creative power of the word.

Words, whether expressed unconsciously in our deep interior or spoken aloud shape our lives and our experience. The Creation allegory described in Genesis presents God, of whom we humans are image and likeness creations, shaping His nascent universe with the words, *Let there be ... and there was*. Words expressing desire are the very plan by which Creation continually comes into being. Our values, desires and attractions are the motive force behind the words we speak and the concepts we entertain. We are not victims of circumstance beyond our control. We've just been asleep to God's actual Presence and action in our lives and of our powerful, creative role as participants in our own lives and in the unfolding evolution of human consciousness.

What have our lives been attracting? Where is our treasure laid up. What do we long and yearn for? Scathingly honest self-

observation, regularly practiced with real inner sincerity will reveal the roots. But if those revealed roots are shown to be off-the-mark; if we are not longing and yearning for God; the necessary changes in our motives and attention will come to us through our twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer and through participation in silent, Centering Prayer retreats. In the deep relaxation of the Prayer our unconscious conditioning that has been ruining our lives and our world begins to unload, the transformative process accelerates the revelation that Christ is already present within us. As our personal identity is interpenetrated by Christ, our old life, our old consciousness progressively fades. Christ's life becomes manifestly our own. His mind replaces ours. His attention and His values and interests become our own. His only interests are the always present, Transcendent Father and the ever-active Immanent Spirit. Everything we could ever dream of or hope for follows from that total, single-minded attraction. He said, "Follow me." That's the best advice we could ever hope to hear.

continued on page 5

RADICAL TRUST IN A WORLD FULL OF GOD

by Barbara Cook

“Radical trust.” My heart leaped when I first heard Fr. Thomas Keating speak those liberating words. I knew that I was hearing an invitation to a deeper life being offered by a truly trustworthy guide on the spiritual journey. Radical trust; I wondered if I actually lived it each day as I encounter the world. Fr. Thomas’ words offered me an opportunity for an examination of conscience. How much do I really trust God?

Fr. Thomas went on to say that the spiritual journey can be extremely difficult if we don’t know or experience God’s love for us personally and if we don’t understand His desire to give us everything, even the Kingdom of God. We are called out of our ordinary, culturally imposed ways of thinking and knowing in order to be given new eyes, new ears and new hearts. When we accept the Mind of Christ, we are given hearts of flesh to replace our stony, self-protective old hearts. But, as in all things, we must first let go of the old if we are to receive something new. This letting go requires trust.

We place our trust in the One who is inviting us and transforming us.

In one of the very first video conferences, Fr. Keating asks us, “What is your attitude toward God?” This might be a good moment for each of us to do a bit of self-inquiry and to look at just what our attitude toward God is. Whatever it is, it is very likely that our attitude was picked up during childhood and internalized before we had developed our critical thinking faculties or had adequate information. An unexamined God attitude is likely to be childish and simplistic. We could have God in our minds as a judge, ready at the drop of a hat to condemn us to eternal hell; or as a bad cop, looking to arrest and punish us; or even as some frightful monster that plays with us for His satisfaction. Our view of God may also be influenced by our early family life and early experiences of church teachings and school. Childhood influences can condition us to mirror God’s love or produce a cracked mirror that reflects terror.

Once we’ve clearly seen and

reflected on the God attitudes that we’ve brought with us from early childhood; we can, as adults, let them go. We can see that as real as they may have seemed; they are simply childish. We can simply offer them up to God and ask for His help in replacing them with feelings of God’s love that Jesus revealed to us. This is the God who overcame all separation and even death as we know it.

With a frank examination of our personal beliefs and a prayerful turning to the God of love, mercy and healing; we can be touched and inspired to grow in grace and spiritual stature. We can meet God in a real relationship of fearlessness and great expectation as we step further along on our journey toward radical trust. We learn to meet Him in His world of silent presence, love and transformation through our twice-daily practice of Centering Prayer. In this ever-deepening friendship, we discover that we can let go of our tight hold on who we think we are, open to what God knows we are, and truly encounter a world full of God. ☉

continued from page 3

The ecstatic poet, Kabir, expresses it compellingly,

Friend, hope for the Guest while you are alive.
Jump into experience while you are alive!
Think... and think... while you are alive.
What you call “salvation” belongs to the time before death.

If you don't break your ropes while you're alive,
do you think
ghosts will do it after?

The idea that the soul will join with the ecstatic
just because the body is rotten –
that is all fantasy.

What is found to now is found then.
If you find nothing now,
you will simply end up with an apartment
in the City of Death.
And if you make love with the divine now, in the next life
you will have the face of satisfied desire.

So plunge into the Truth, find out who the Teacher is,
Believe in the Great Sound!

Kabir says this:
When the Guest is being searched for,
it is the intensity
of the longing for the Guest
that does all the work.
Look at me, and you will see a slave of that intensity.

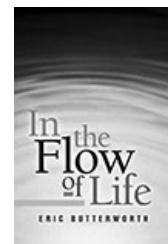
The Universe is response to request. “Lord help me long like
Kabir; intensely for you and you alone!” ☺

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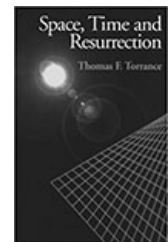
SUGGESTED TITLES FOR MAY



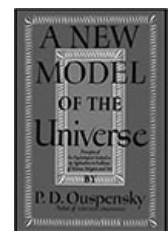
The Heart of Matter
by Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



In the Flow of Life
by Eric Butterworth



Space, Time and Resurrection
by Thomas F. Torrance



A New Model of the Universe
by P. D. Ouspensky

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I find joy in Your testimonies ... Glory to God forever! Psalm 119:14

ANNUAL AIM: COMMUNION

ENCOUNTERING A WORLD FULL OF GOD by Michael Stuart

One thing is clear
and tangible to me in a way
that it seldom has been:
the world is full of God.

From every pore,
God rushes out to us, as it were.

But we're often blind.

We remain stuck
in the good times and the bad times
and don't experience them
right up to the point where
the spring flows from God.

... In everything,
God wants to celebrate encounter
and asks for the prayerful
response of surrender.
The trick and the duty is only this:
to develop a lasting awareness
and a lasting attitude out
of these insights and graces ...
or rather, to allow them to develop.

Then life becomes free,
in that freedom
which we have often looked for.

Alfred Delp, Letter from prison
to Luise Oestreicher, November 17, 1944,
cited in *Ultimate Price: Testimonies of Christians
Who Resisted the Third Reich*

I have no ability, to proclaim anything except the innumerable
prolongations of Your incarnate Being in the world of matter ... You
the Soul shining forth through all that surrounds me.

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Mass on The World*

“I’m mean to everyone.” The set
eyes and firm tone accompanying
these words furthers a tightness
in my gut. I’m sitting across a
laminated table looking into the
eyes of a woman whose outburst just
prompted all who’d come for their
weekly Recovery Circle to clear the
room. Part of me wants to leave
too. But, I’m the facilitator of this
so-called circle, and, thanks in no
small part to my experience with
the Church of Conscious Harmony,
I’m looking for the good in this
situation.

In an adventure that began by
falling into God’s encompassing
love, I’m now a new minister in a
tiny Church in Seattle with deep
roots in contemplation and selfless
service. Years back, the Church

birthed a non-profit called the
Recovery Cafe for people healing
from addiction, homelessness and
mental illness ... which leads to the
circle I’m now trying to facilitate.
I’m not thinking about any of this,
as I look into the eyes across the
table. I’m mainly thinking about
the irony of the position I’m in.

From the time I was very young,
like a little magician, anger became
my go-to spell for attention and
intimacy. I didn’t try this with
everyone – only family. I, too, could
clear a room with a demonstration
of anger. I came to crave the intense
emotion in a well-played argument
along with the care I often received
when making up with whoever
played along. As I grew, I became
convinced my anger was normal and

even healthy. I usually ignored the brief flashes of remorse. Sometimes I'd be aware of a calm watcher, within me, who waited patiently to see if I'd ever turn this around. I was blinded in my own spell and more and more I lost the ability to see the real intimacy that was readily available. This cycle might have remained my habitual lot for life had I not discovered the words of Jesus. But first, I met a girl.

I'd not grown up with much connection to religion and yet this girl, who I very much desired to date, wouldn't go out with me unless I'd go to church. I was a senior in high school and this seemed like a pretty good deal. So I started going to church every Sunday with this girl. Church, though, seemed rather odd. This was a Baptist church with a guaranteed altar call in every service. At the time, I didn't really realize there were other Christian flavors.

As I continued attending, I noticed there were a few Church participants who reflected a warmth and care that seemed rare. More than the Church, the words of Jesus captured my attention—in particular the Sermon on the Mount. Sitting in a park, reading this message, was a seminal moment. I remember feeling great energy and thinking what an amazing way to live. I feel I was blessed to read Jesus' words with a "beginner's mind," void of much theology or interpretation. After a year of careful deliberation, I became a Christian and a Baptist.

I sensed a stirring to Ministry almost immediately and an awakening of something real and deep within me. My Church quickly called me to the work of saving other souls. I was instructed to read my Bible daily, pray and bring others to Church. I was "in" and it was time to focus on this most important work for others. At the same time, my good friend Anger remained deeply entrenched in my life. My first moment of religious shame came after an argument when my father astutely asked if Jesus would get angry like I did.

In practice, I was playing the classic Pharisee's game, working on my outside while ignoring the pain and truth inside. While I did genuinely want to help others, I didn't want to look too deeply at myself, and the system was rather supportive of my desires. The Church, and later seminary, encouraged little self-reflection.

My eyes were not very willing to see, either. Beyond my father asking about my anger, I "slipped" once in my first ministry position when the senior pastor overheard me yelling at my wife—the very girl who had brought me to Church and given me her precious heart in marriage. A week later this gentle man who hated conflict summoned the strength to encourage me to look at my behavior. Living in my own addictive denial, I ignored his request, and even repeated requests from my new bride, that I see a counselor. In part, my anger was

easy to ignore because it never got "that bad" and it was "only words."

God is the master of patience. Ten years later, after moving away from my Baptist roots, I started a Church in Austin. The Church began to grow into a community of people from all walks of life. We started a ministry serving families in poverty. Behind the scenes, significant arguments began to break out between those serving in the Church, and I had no real ability to help with this problem. In trying to teach Jesus' parable of getting the log out of your own eye before you look at the speck in your brother's eye, I actually became angry at one of the leaders. The Board of the Church called me in and requested that I meet with a counselor. I agreed to go.

Soon I lost all my bearings. My counselor didn't care what I thought. He kept asking, "How do you feel?" After fighting his tender question for over 30 minutes, three words came out of my mouth: "I feel sad." He replied with one shocking word: "Good."

In my experience of Church culture, it was rarely good to feel sad. Even on Good Friday we held out for Easter. We lived in Resurrection without Crucifixion. Of course there's no real resurrection without a crucifixion. I'd always been able to smell this fake faith and I'd never liked it. But now, I was seeing it in me. It was horrible. It was hard. It was so freeing I couldn't stop. Jesus now began to

make sense in my bones. I began to wake up to what I'd vaguely known all along. At the same time, everything I'd built seemed to be collapsing.

Someone handed me a copy of *Be Here Now* by Ram Dass. Then I was invited to the Church of Conscious Harmony. Not another odd Church! But this time, what was odd was that most everyone and everything seemed so real. I met with Tim, who joyfully laughed and seemed to delight in my journey. Others in the Church embraced me, too, and soon I was introduced to inner practices. Tools I had needed from Day One were being given.

At the same time, my inner Pharisee was still very strong. I'd watch myself disappear in controlling energy. In a second meeting with Tim, as I shared a few ministry thoughts, he simply replied, "Michael, God doesn't need your help." A wave of anger came forward in me. But, I knew this anger was up to avoid something true. I sat still, knowing I had something to look at more deeply.

Soon I began to recognize my childhood woundings and see the ways my wounded self took the reigns and sabotaged the gift of genuine joy and love that was all around me and in me. I'd sit in silent prayer and rest in amazing Stillness even as tears streamed down my face. I felt true sadness for the pain I'd caused others and grew to know love even in this.

For three years, I quietly practiced with CCH and continued

to serve my Church. I began to bring contemplative practices into the community. Most people left, and I respected their decisions. I'd changed and was changing more.

I began to read about a Church in Washington, D. C. called The Church of The Saviour that began in the late 1940s as a Church committed to, as they called it, the "Inward and Outward Journey." One of their commitments was to be deeply known in a small ministry group. In their own unique way this little Church of contemplatives planted many beautiful ministries for "the least." I began to wonder if our Austin Church was being called to this model. Mainly during this period, I worked to not take the reigns from God and lose touch with the joy and peace that continued to bloom in my heart.

My wife delighted in the changes unfolding in me. Our marriage became emotionally safe. One week she attended a work conference in Seattle and I tagged along to enjoy the city. The day after we arrived, I felt a strong gut feeling that I was missing something important. I decided it was just hunger! Each day, I experienced this same feeling but couldn't make sense of it, so I pushed it away. Finally when I still had this feeling a week after our return to Austin, I sat in prayer and asked God, "What did I miss?" Looking on my computer, I discovered that when I first had this gut sensation, I'd been blocks away from the Recovery Cafe that

was started by a Church of the Saviour community. I literally fell to my knees.

The next day, I emailed the leader, who immediately wrote back inviting me up for a visit. I chose not to share that I'd already been nearby the previous week! A month later I was in the Cafe and simply being with its members. I loved it. They could smell "fake" a mile away and I was grateful for how real and open I was becoming and could be. I discovered a laugh in me that I'd truly never known. I wondered if I was being called to this Church that started the Cafe. In this dance with God, opportunities opened up for my wife and me. We sensed a deep calling together. Almost a year later, we packed our bags and moved to Seattle.

Now, thanks to God's grace and sense of humor, I'm at this laminated table, looking into two angry eyes. Can I get angry at someone for playing my old game? I pray for help. The tightness and heat in my body dissipates some and I ask, "What makes you mean to everyone?" Her eyes soften and well up. "I was not loved. I was not wanted." I look at the ball cap, which covers scars still visible from the blows of a crowbar received decades earlier. I see the wounded Christ. I realize we have both healed and are still healing. I feel deep gratitude that in God's love we can share this moment. The division between us melts away, and we share Oneness. ☺

GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIAN LIFE, GROWTH AND TRANSFORMATION

Fr. Thomas Keating, in his seminal work
Open Mind, Open Heart,
lists 42 principles underlying the Christian spiritual journey.
Fr. Keating asks that these principles be read according
to the method of Lectio Divina.
One principle will appear in these pages each month.

34TH GUIDELINE



Chastity enhances and expands the power to love.
It perceives the sacredness of everything that is.
As a consequence, one respects the dignity of other persons
and cannot use them merely for one's own fulfillment.

SEEDS

The presence of God in His world as its Creator
depends on no one but Him.
His presence in the world as Man depends,
in some measure, upon men.
Not that we can do anything to change the mystery
of the Incarnation in itself:
but we are able to decide whether we ourselves,
and that portion of the world which is ours,
shall become *aware* of His presence,
consecrated by it, and transfigured in its light.
We have the choice of two identities:
the external mask which seems to be real and which lives
by a shadowy autonomy for the brief moment of earthly existence,
and the hidden, inner person who seems to us to be nothing,
but who can give himself eternally to the truth in whom he subsists.
It is this inner self that is taken up into the mystery of Christ,
by His love, by the Holy Spirit, so that in secret we live "in Christ."

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, page 295.



THE CHURCH of CONSCIOUS HARMONY

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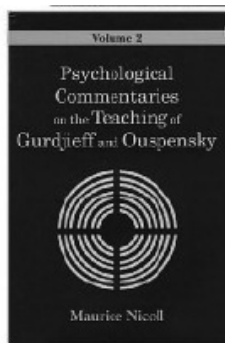
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My Father is still working, and I also am working. ~John 5:17

THE WORK

OF INNER CHRISTIANITY

THE EXTERNAL WORLD AND THE INTERNAL WORLD

People all think the world is outside them. But the world is inside you. The world is how you take it. ... You have two worlds that you experience—one is the external world given by your senses, and the other is the internal world which is how you take this external world. ... I remember Ouspensky once speaking in his early days about some people who were climbing Mont Blanc and they all fell down and were killed. Several people asked him why this happened. He said: “I didn’t know them and I do not see why you should waste so much energy in a negative form about these unknown people.” He added: “At this moment I believe there are millions of Chinese dying from plague and famine.”

... Now if your machine is driven by the external, phenomenal world you are mechanical, but when you begin to select your impressions and only respond to a few of them your internal world begins to grow and you begin to become an individual distinct from life and its events. This is what is meant by

psycho-transformism. But if you are driven by life, by everything that happens in life, depressed by reading the papers, depressed or angry with everything that happens externally in the phenomenal world, you are a machine.

Now the Work says that you can take external impressions coming from the external phenomenal world mechanically or consciously. It also says that unless you begin to take them consciously, you remain a machine driven by life. Every time a typical event comes along to you from the external world you are identified with it and become subject to it, a slave to it. Once you begin to separate from an external impression, if it is unpleasant, you begin to grow in your internal world. This is the first idea of psycho-transformism.

When the events of life are taken mechanically, then there arise in you what are called “problems”—that is, the usual ones. But this happens to all men and women at every moment. If you take in life more consciously you will not have

so many “problems”. This can only be possible if you do not take life and its tricks mechanically. What you have to do with a “problem” is to discard it, not identify with it. Then you have a different inner world from the external world.

But you have to learn not to take the phenomenal world, the world coming in from the senses, in the way you mechanically take it. You have to catch it before it gets you down—i.e. before you identify. Life will give you nothing, save uneasiness and disappointment. The Work, coming between you and life, can give you everything. The first idea of Self-Remembering is to bring the Work and what it teaches in between life and your mechanical reactions to it. Put the Work between yourself and life. Then you will take impressions quite differently. ☉

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, pages 1307-1308. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Work of Inner Christianity* class held Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

YOU ARE INVITED TO ATTEND THE
HYPED SPAGHETTI LUNCHEON & FUNDRAISER

MAY 28

AT CCH IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE SUNDAY SERVICE

HYPED
 (Harmony Youth Practicing Evolving Devotion)
 fundraises each year for their annual pilgrimage
 to The Lama Foundation in July.



You may support their annual fundraiser
 (featuring home-made lunch with gluten-free options
 and musical performances by our teens)
 by purchasing tickets in advance at church
 or on the day of the event.

For more information about our Youth Programs,
 please visit www.consciousharmony.org/offerings/youth.

MULTI-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREATS

June 16-25	10-day	\$725*
Aug 12-13	2-day	\$100
Aug 14-23	10-day	\$725*
Sep 15-20	6-day	\$495**

2-day commuter retreats at CCH include meals (sleep at home).

*Double room occupancy rates at Cedarbrake Retreat and Renewal Center.

**Single rooms available for an extra \$15/night on a first-to-register basis.

Contact the office for further information and registration.

MAY CALENDAR

Visit consciousharmony.org
 for a complete listing of events

SPECIAL EVENTS

ONE-DAY CENTERING PRAYER RETREAT

May 13 8:30 am-4:30 pm
 \$15 Bring a potluck dish to share.
 No need to pre-register.

TWO-DAY COMMUTER RETREAT

May 14 8 am-5:30 pm
 May 15 7 am-4:30 pm
 \$100 Pre-register in the office.

ENRICHMENT MOVIE

May 21 1pm - "Dead Birds"

HYPED Spaghetti Luncheon & Fundraiser

May 28 11:45 am-1:30 pm
 (See details at left)

MONTHLY

1st Sundays

Bring non-perishables for Caritas

Gurdjieff Music

May 16 7:30-8:30 pm

WEEKLY

Sundays

Lectio Divina 8-9 am
 Worship Service 10-11:30 am
 Youth Program 10-11:30 am
 Fellowship 11:30 am

Wednesdays

Prayer Circle 10:15-10:45 am
 Contemplative Lunch noon-1 pm
 Contemplative Communion Service 6-7 pm
 Yoga 7:30 pm-8:30 pm \$10

Thursdays 7:30-9 pm

Work of Inner Christianity Class

Fridays 7:30-8:45 pm

Devotional Service

DAILY

Mondays-Fridays 7-7:35 am

Centering Prayer Service in Theosis Chapel

Recordings of services are available
 through the Bookstore and online at
www.consciousharmony.org



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Title Unknown, by Ladislav Záborsk

*And behold,
I am with you always,
until the end of time.*

Matthew 28:20



THE GRACE OF THE ASCENSION

When they had gathered together they asked Him, 'Lord, are You at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel? He answered them, 'It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has established by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth.

When He had said this, as they were looking up, He was lifted up, and a cloud took Him from their sight.

The Acts of the Apostles 1:6-9

Christ disappears not into some geographical location, but into the heart of all creation. In particular, Christ penetrates the very depths of our being, our separate-self sense melts into His Divine Person, and we are empowered to act under the direct influence of His Spirit.

Thus, even if we drink a cup of soup or walk down the street, it is Christ living in us, transforming us and the world from within.

This transformation appears in the guise of ordinary things and of our seemingly insignificant daily routines.

The grace of the Ascension is the uninhibited faith that believes that God's will is being done no matter what happens.

Thomas Keating, *Manifesting God*