



# THE MARK

May 2007  
Volume 19  
Number 5

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



The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

7406 Newhall Lane Austin, Texas 78746

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# Mastery Through Meekness

by Tim Cook

In 1921 the British Empire reached the zenith of its world dominating power. It ruled over about one-quarter of all the people on earth and controlled nearly one-quarter of the land mass of the entire globe. A look at the world map of that time shows how literally true it was that “the sun never sets on the British Empire.” Their naval, military and economic might had proved overwhelming to most of their colonial possessions, of which India was the most prized of all. They thought of it as “the jewel in the crown” of their empire and had controlled it for nearly 200 years. They had no intention of letting it go and it was unthinkable that any other power could take it from them.

But in 1947 that is just what happened. It was taken from them by a power they could not even see and most certainly did not understand. It was the power of nonviolence wielded by Mahatma Gandhi and it blew the British away. In Gandhi’s own words, “Non violence is the greatest force at the disposal of mankind. It is mightier than the mightiest weapon devised by the ingenuity of man.”

The end of British control in

India was a contemporary demonstration in world history of the very real power of meekness. It was expressed in the ancient wisdom of Psalm 37 like this, “*But the meek shall inherit the land and enjoy great peace.*” And also by Jesus in the third of the Beatitudes, “*Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth.*” But this historic act on the stage of the world could never have happened at all if Gandhi had not first confronted and overcome the anger in himself through that very same meekness.

Since the world at large has an age-old proclivity to power and might, we’ve all been culturally conditioned to see might making right and meekness as weakness; so let’s be sure we know what we mean when we say meekness. We’re very likely inclined to automatically and unconsciously associate it with passivity and inaction. Nothing could be further from the truth.

St. Thomas Aquinas defines meekness as, “a virtue which moderates the passion of anger according to reason, and calms the desire for revenge. ... It restrains one from wanting to inflict injury for injury. It enables one, relying

on the Father’s will, to remain tranquil in the face of wrongs done him.” In other words, it lets us keep our cool and respond to a situation from God’s guidance, intelligently and not reactively. Most important of all, a meek disposition lets us *respond* to a situation while remaining consciously at home and at peace in the earth of our own interior Promised Land, the Kingdom of Heaven within us. When we *react* to insult, injury or injustice with our own version of the same, we lose ourselves, and nobody wins anything.

Contrary to appearances, the showy muscle flexing that is currently in vogue in movies and in the grand theater of national and international political drama is not a demonstration of true strength. Attempts to terrorize with overwhelming displays of violence intended to invoke shock and awe are actually pitifully weak and rooted in fear. Anyone can be a brute but it takes true strength and real courage to overcome the mechanical tendency to violent reactivity in ourselves.

Before I encountered the empowering teaching of the Work, the only way I knew to meet

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violence was with more of the same. I'm not talking about physical violence here, but the principal is the same whether it is played out between countries with guns and bombs or people quarreling in a home. The violence in my life was the mental and emotional violence that was played out repeatedly, recurrently and seemingly without end in my marriages. Anger was met with anger, shouting with shouting, and silence with stonier silence. There seemed to be no way out but divorce and then another divorce.

Then, by grace I met the living ideas of the Work and found an open door to an adventurous, interesting and exciting experience of interior transformation. I learned that, "The study of violence in oneself is a lifelong study. Mechanical Man is rooted in violence and one meaning of rebirth is to be born beyond violence - to become conscious in thinking and feeling on a level beyond violence. On the level of violence, in the plain, so to speak, we have many enemies. That is, at our ordinary mechanical level we have many dangerous, violent 'I's that are our enemies and seek to destroy our understanding. For nothing destroys understanding more than violence. But if we rise above this plain, if so to speak, we ascend the mountain a little way, we are no longer subject to violent 'I's.

Our difficulty then is to keep our thought strong enough to remain at that level. So we fall down in our thinking very soon - at least for many years - partly because we have not yet understood the secret; namely, that to get to a different level, we must give up certain habitual ways of thinking and feeling. We do not see that psychological movement is as real as physical movement and that both demand effort. To ascend the mountain in oneself requires effort and to maintain the position reached requires effort." (Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*.)

Who knew? What a surprise!  
My enemies are within not without.  
There are higher and lower levels in myself. I can move within myself. I

can make efforts within myself. I can let go of habitual, mechanical ways of feeling and thinking. I can grow in interior strength. And ... this will take years and years.

Looking back, now, after more than thirty years of daily study and application of the Work ideas, I am amazed at what God has done in and through my life. There is peace and interior freedom. I have been relieved of the mechanical necessity of reacting in kind, and the time it took seems like nothing at all. What is most clear to me, though, is that the Work opened the Gospels for me and gave me the "how to" access to the absolutely true promises they make. I didn't have to throw the British out of India; I simply got rid of the enemies in myself. ☺

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## CCH Bookstore

Get ready for your summer travel  
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*Method of Centering Prayer* with Thomas Keating – 2 disks \$48.00

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# The Meek Shall Inherit the Earth

by Barbara Cook

I used to think that the Beatitudes were guidelines that only a mature Christian could live by. But now, after practicing Centering Prayer for a few years, I see that they are the instructions that lead to maturity. They teach us how to become totally self-giving, like the Father, as demonstrated by Jesus. When Ronald Rolheiser was here in January he stated it clearly: "If you want to feel like God act like God." Be totally self-giving, too.

When we act from the false self, our self-centered, selfish place, we tend to think we are God and we act in a controlling way, thinking we know best. Then we have to protect and defend our thoughts and actions, which requires us to act superior and brash. I know that from personal experience. That kind of action has a certain, recognizable, inner taste and it is certainly not meek.

As a Westerner I have often confused the idea of meek with weak or "milk toast." Weakness can be a character defect, but meekness is not. Nor was Jesus suggesting that we become passive. Look at St. Paul or Jesus; their strength came from God and

they acted from faith so they did not have to reactively defend themselves in the difficult situations that confronted them.

Centering Prayer teaches us to be non-reactive. We practice "listening" and we learn to take the listening disposition into everyday life. We listen interiorly to God first, then to what is being said or done outside of us. That lets us stay open to the true wisdom of the heart and helps us avoid simple mechanical reactions. Sometimes it leads us to do nothing in response, but this nothing is not passivity; no response takes strength and discipline. Remaining meek and calm makes for clearer responses and conscious action

Formerly, when I read "The meek shall inherit the earth," I associated earth with this planet we live on. Now I realize that it is referring to this organic body I am living in, the body temple. I now know that when I am living from the false self and its ideas I am not in unity with my deeper self, God, others, or my body.

It is by learning to become passive to our false self and its self-centered reactions and programs for happiness that our God self is

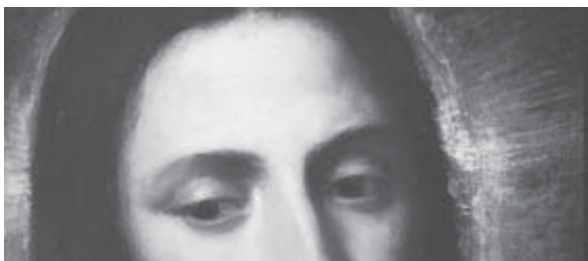
exercised and grows into maturity. If we want to feel like God we must learn to think and act like God: generous, unconditionally loving, all forgiving, patient.

By sitting in Silent Prayer twice a day and simply opening to God's Presence we are letting go of and becoming passive to our false selves. By not continually reinforcing them they become more able to actually be meek. We can then inherit the earth and be of one body, soul and spirit; a unity with our true selves, God and His creation. ☺

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*'Blessed are the Meek.'*  
*This refers to an inner state,*  
*not to an outer posturing,*  
*a modest look; it means a state*  
*of absence from resentment.*  
*To add: If we resent,*  
*as we largely do mechanically,*  
*we cannot practice external*  
*considering.*  
*This Work word appears*  
*in the New Testament as*  
*'considerateness.'*

Maurice Nicoll, Page 1446, Vol. 4,  
*Psychological Commentaries on the*  
*Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.*



# God's Love Will Always Meet All of My Needs

by Mikail Davenport

*How blessed we are to simply remember God.*

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My Lenten experience of riding alone across Texas bringing awareness of disabled Texans' issues before the state Legislature proved to be the greatest spiritual test and experience of my life. Pockets of trauma and pain, stuffed into my body from childhood trauma decades ago, melted away or at least were shaken loose. False-self attachments flew from my psyche like black crows frightened out from a cornfield.

Riding 725 miles across Texas on a handcycle with semi-tractor trailers, SUVs, and cars racing past me at 55-75 mph, while I crept along the shoulder at 8-10 mph, was an incredible test of my attachment to survival and security. Welcome, welcome, welcome....

My attachment to esteem and approval was over-fed by strangers and the media, showering me with kudos, praise, and comments that would puff up the deflated ego of

a Casper Milquetoast, while I worked hard to emphasize the "message," not the "messenger." (I already have an ego the size of Detroit....) Combine this with hours of solitary, lonely riding. Welcome, welcome, welcome....

The tests were many, sometimes coming moment to moment, but always with the perfect resolution and grace that comes from focusing on our offertory prayer: *"God's love has always met and will always meet all my needs. I give freely and receive joyfully. How blessed we are to simply remember God!"*

Let me relate a few of the tests that the Father resolved as only He could:

... coming down with severe bronchitis, coughing up pink and green stuff, with 38 miles to go in a 74-mile day, a stranger stops, asks if he can help, goes home to get his pickup truck, returns, loads me and my gear, and drives me to

my next night stop motel... refuses remuneration... wishes me "God bless" as he drives away!

... while recuperating one day later in another rest stop motel, I hear a voice in my head saying, "just rest here a few days; do not carry onward"... during the next three days when I should have been on the road, the areas in which I would have traveled experienced a snow storm, a hail storm, and a sand storm!

...the next day a friend from Austin arrives to visit, bringing with him his significant other, who "just happens" to be an energy worker... she heals my bronchitis by at least 75%!

... when I pinched a nerve in my shoulder traversing severe hills near Gonzales, the wife of one the cyclists riding along the route, without batting an eye, carried me and my gear to the next overnight stop so I could have the shoulder

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checked out at a hospital!

For almost 30 years I have attempted to surrender to God's will and be grateful for every blessing coming my way, no matter what it looked like, but my 'I's somehow kept getting in the way. Funniest thing, huh? This intense Lenten journey brought me that awareness and acceptance of God's unconditional, unfailing love and support for me, no matter what I am like or what I am doing at the time. The Father is always here... always here for me... always here for all of us. His unyielding, unfailing grace is constantly showering down like soft rain, even though at the time it may seem like a hurricane.

For the first time in my life, Lent and Easter did not represent just another traditional religious observance; it was a deep and profound spiritual experience that reflected how God resurrects us moment by moment, if only we will stay out of the way and allow Him to do the work. Miracles happen unceasingly... may we all be on the lookout for them.

God bless you all for your prayers during my journey. I felt you each day.

God's love has always met and will always meet all our needs!  
AMEN! ☺



## PENTECOST

*Jesus said to the disciples,*

*'Peace be with you.*

*As the Father has sent me, so I send you.'*

*And when He had said this, He breathed on them and said to them,*

*'Receive the Holy Spirit.*

*Whose sins you forgive are forgiven them, and whose sins you retain are retained.'*

John 20: 21-23

The peace of the Lord is the supreme gift that is offered to us on this feast.

Peace is something greater than joy or any emotion.

It is beyond joy and beyond suffering.

It is the rerooting of our entire being and self-identity in its Source so that the feeling of being separated from God is dissolved.

There is no more feeling of separation from God once the grace of Pentecost has done its work.

Peace is defined as the tranquility of order: everything in its right place.

The right order for human beings is to see, hear, touch, feel, and taste God in everything that happens . . .

The grace of Pentecost enables us to hear God speaking in every human being and in every event.

'Here He comes! I embrace Him – hidden in this trial, in this dreadful person, in this stomach ache, in this overwhelming joy.'

He is in the present moment no matter what the content of the moment is.

~ Thomas Keating, *Reawakenings*

Gloria in Excelsis Deo!



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# Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild

by Stewart Johnson

*“Gentle Jesus, meek and mild, Look upon a little child; Pity my simplicity, Suffer me to come to Thee. Lamb of God, I look to Thee; Thou shalt my Example be; Thou art gentle, meek, and mild; Thou wast once a little child. Lord, I would be as Thou art; Give me Thine obedient heart; Thou art pitiful and kind, Let me have Thy loving mind.”*

~ Gentle Jesus, Meek and Mild by Charles Wesley

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So, what does “meek” mean anyway? The lines “meek and mild” from this hymn formed my idea of meek very early in my life. It rhymes with weak, goes with mild (which rhymes with child). It was another of those mysterious paradoxes; somehow, the Lord of the Universe was meek?

Then there was a song by a Canadian band that I discovered when I was in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, on the same night I raided my parents’ liquor cabinet for the first time. The album *2112* by *Rush* was just out. The most memorable lyrics, for me, following a lengthy instrumental overture and preceding a story about life in a dystopian theocracy, are a paraphrased 3<sup>rd</sup> Beatitude from Matthew: “. . . *And the meek shall inherit the Earth . . .*” These lyrics still haunt me.

So, when does THAT happen? HOW does that happen and what does it mean?

In *The Cloud of Unknowing*, the author speaks of meekness:

“In itself, meekness is nothing else but a true knowledge and awareness of oneself as one really is. For whoever truly saw and felt himself as he really is, would truly be meek.” (13<sup>th</sup> chapter)

It goes on in chapter 14 to say: “Strain every nerve in every possible way to know and experience yourself as you really are.”

The Work tells us that this is an arduous path. “This seems a long process according to a slow standard of time in which a day can seem a lifetime and a short one according to another standard of time that sees one’s lifetime as a day.” Nicoll, *The Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, p1522

My spiritual journey *really* began as a result of my participation in Godly Play. I came to the YES program after an

announcement that there was one more position available. I had felt the calling before and I thought I would somehow know when the time was at hand. I felt quite a bit of apprehension.

I had been an actor, and was able to memorize large texts very quickly. So I rationalized that being a storyteller would be easy. My first year went smoothly and I thought I had it made.

*But it’s trouble ahead if you think you have it made. What you have is all you’ll ever get.*

*And it’s trouble ahead if you’re satisfied with yourself. Your self will not satisfy you for long.*

*And it’s trouble ahead if you think life’s all fun and games. There’s suffering to be met, and you’re going to meet it.* (Luke 6; 24-25, The Message)

Then, on three consecutive times, that picture of myself as storyteller came tumbling down. I felt humiliated, disrespected,

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incapable, and unworthy – at the hands of 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> graders.

On the third occasion, I abandoned the story and the Godly Play format, and took the kids outside. Somehow, I had failed. I decided that I should not be a storyteller. I would serve the program any way the directors deemed appropriate, but I had failed as a storyteller. Afterwards, I walked the property below the church and got on my knees. I prayed to God a prayer about death. I was not sure what I was praying for at the time. I had not yet deeply considered the three forms of death:

- ♦The “walking” death, the sleep I suffer from my attachments, scattered attention, identification, illusions of separation, and the pursuit of my programs for happiness that can’t possibly work.

*Work hard for sin your whole life and your pension is death* (Romans 6:23 *The Message*)

- ♦The death of the physical body.

- ♦And the death of the false self, the false personality, the acquired, the self-image, self-concept, my story, my script.

I got up, walked back to my life, and wondered what was next. Soon after that, I went to a men’s retreat at Cedarbrake. I made the commitment to begin a centering prayer practice, and to stop

“nibbling at the fringes” of the teachings and offerings of this community.

I began attending the Introduction to The Work class again, this time with aim and intention, and prayed for a work partner to set daily aims by phone every weekday morning.

As a result, my life, my past, and my relationships have become more available to me and I to them.

When I was a toddler my dad was charged with international money laundering but was not arrested since the FBI was able to use his testimony to convict those responsible. We spent the next few years in the witness protection program, enduring three trials, death threats, and personal humiliation in a small west Texas town until he was cleared.

We later relocated to Austin and my father left town to train in a new career. My mother was pregnant with my brother, and spent most of those months in bed. I remember her unavailability very well. When my father returned, things were tense. As my father was raised with rage, violence and abuse - despite his best efforts and intentions - that’s what he perpetuated. I did not understand. I began to protect myself. I began to harden myself within.

As a little boy I felt I was shown

love through being fixed and corrected: foot braces and corrective shoes, knee devices, orthodontic headgear and braces, eye correction, all kinds of therapies that seemed to be to make me whole, more loveable, more acceptable. I am thankful for straight teeth, the attempts to straighten these feet, legs, and hips. “Life happens in the only way it can” and my parents, like all of humanity, are multiplicities. They were both victims of abuse and anger mismanagement. They did their best and were good enough.

During pre- and peri-rational development, I was unable to interpret and integrate these experiences. I once overheard my grandmother tell my parents to “break that boy’s will, like an animal’s.” These “errors of conception” of being “fixed” to be more loveable and acceptable grew into programs surrounding approval, affection, esteem, and pleasure – and disapproval, rejection of intimacy, pain, *etc.* These feelings reside in what Father Thomas refers to as programs of the 2<sup>nd</sup> energy center.

As a child I was given aptitude tests which projected me to be a stockbroker, accountant, business manager, financier, attorney or politician. I felt that’s who I was supposed to be. I turned and went the other way.

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In my late teens I swung from active participation in the charismatic renewal, to fundamentalism, to working as a male stripper. I modeled and worked for an escort service. I attended theatre school in L.A. I competed as a powerlifter, ballooned up to 260 pounds, and lost it all to run marathons and mountain bike. I meditated. I fasted. I lived in the mountains in a tent, while waiting tables and working as a personal fitness trainer. I learned yoga. All as a form of saying “no” to “who I was supposed to be,” to keep life at a distance.

I explored Asian medicine, eastern religion, new age philosophy, and meditation - and thought I was living in the here and now. I used these teachings to keep the present moment at arms length, to stay out of relationship. I became as the Pharisee that prayed: “Oh God, thank you that I am not like these poor successful people that are addicted to career, status, culture, worldly values, *etc.* Thank you that I can devote time and attention to spirituality and presence.” I lived that lie.

I began to wake up a little while serving a 24-month sentence on possession/import charges in an overseas jail. Something ‘broke’ inside of me as I began to take responsibility for my actions.

Just before Lent this year, my wife gifted me by sharing her truth, baring her soul to me about what she saw as my narcissism, an “all about you attitude.” She spoke to me from deeper within herself than she ever had before because she had never felt safe. She called me to be in relationship. As I listened, my bones informed me of the truth of her words as they washed over and into me. I felt this gift; grace visited me. Inner rigidity broke and yielded.

“Healthy are those who have softened what is rigid within; they shall receive physical vigor and strength from the universe” (3rd Beatitude, *The Prayer of the Cosmos*, by Neil Douglas-Klotz.)

I began to see how I controlled my relationships to follow my script of being unlovable, unworthy, and unloving. I perpetuated emotional abuse.

“The meek are those who do not get angry in the face of insult or injury and who have begun to dismantle their need or demand to control other people, events, and their own lives. When they experience an insult or humiliation, they do not feel it as a loss of power.” (Father Thomas Keating, *The Mystery of Christ*)

I have begun reconciliation and forgiveness with my parents. We have begun talking about our feelings, our past, and our

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## May Calendar

Visit [consciouharmony.org](http://consciouharmony.org)  
for a complete listing of events

### Special Events

#### One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat

May 12 8:30am-4pm  
The cost is \$15. Bring your own lunch.

#### Baptism Class

Saturdays May 5-26 11:30am-1pm  
Baptism May 27 1:30pm  
Contact the office for details.

### Monthly

#### Tuesday Enrichment 7:30-8:30pm

Sacred Chanting May 1  
Gurdjieff Music May 15

#### Community Workday

May 19 9am-12noon

### Weekly

#### Prayer Circle

Wednesdays 9:15am

#### Contemplative Knitting Circle

Wednesdays 10:30am-12noon  
All levels of experience are welcome to knit items to send to Pine Ridge in the fall.

#### Contemplative Lunch

Wednesdays 12noon-1pm

#### Mid-Week Communion Service

Wednesdays 6-7pm

#### Fr. Keating Spiritual Journey Video Series

Wednesdays 7:30pm begins May 2

### Daily

#### Daily Centering Prayer Service

M-F 7-7:35am

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relationship. We are beginning to *have* relationship.

I have spent much of my adult life in avoidance, confusing not doing with a higher level of being. The apprehension I felt about participation in Godly Play was: Could I be reliable? Would the kids like me? How about the parents? Was I worthy? I felt the uneasiness in my belly, but was not conscious of it beneath the 'don't worry be happy' veneer. This has been my life story. How has it served me? My family?

I have rebelled against institutions, responsibility, and accountability. I lived in bondage to the hardened unforgiveness of a little boy who did not understand. The rebellion, the bondage, the hardness, and unforgiveness can now be nailed to the cross.

I wish to be truly meek, to release my resentment, and my story.

I can love that little boy, show him everything is okay now. He is loveable, loving, fully adequate. He is love. And so am I. ☺

*'Blessed are the Meek.'*

*This means that those who are meek will get bliss, inner happiness, will get something that everyone is looking for because no one is happy internally, no one has this strange source of inner happiness called bliss.*

*People often think blessedness is what is going to happen later on but from the Work point of view as well as from the Gospel point of view this is not the right way to take the profound idea that is indicated here.*

*You can get a source of inner happiness if you apply the ideas of the Work to yourself.*

*Now what does 'meek' mean in the original sense of the Greek word?*

*It means 'not resentful':*

*'Blessed are those who are not resentful.'*

Maurice Nicoll, Page 727, Vol. 2,

*Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky.*



The Church of Conscious Harmony  
A Contemplative Christian Community

7406 Newhall Lane  
Austin, Texas 78746  
512.347.9673  
512.347.9675 fax  
info@consciousharmony.org  
www.consciousharmony.org

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OFFICE  
Mon-Fri 8:30am-4:30pm  
Donald Genung, Business Mgr  
bizmgr@consciousharmony.org  
Lisa Genung, Office Mgr  
officemgr@consciousharmony.org  
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bookmgr@consciousharmony.org

NEWSLETTER  
Joyce Jane Weedman, Editor  
jweedman@austin.rr.com  
Carol Hagar, Design  
lifeisart@austin.rr.com