



THE MARK

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The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community
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God Sent Us A Rescue Mission

by Tim Cook

Each year, every year I write 12 newsletter articles. Of those 12 there are two that are the most difficult of all for me to express. They are the article for Easter and this article for Christmas. You may wonder why they pose the greatest difficulty. I think the answer is that they deal with the most extraordinary events ever to occur in the history of the human race. The drama that unfolds for us through them is so profound and so absolutely and utterly meaningful for the entire human family that it feels nearly impossible for me to do justice to them. I am sometimes tempted to simply toss off a quick and superficial look at these extraordinary interventions by God in this suffering world, as a way to avoid this confrontation with the stupendous Mystery of God and man. But Truth in my soul won't let me do that. Truth calls on me to struggle to express as clearly as I am able, with the help of Spirit, the unfolding of that vast Mystery as it progressively reveals itself to me.

The incarnation of Christ, in the person of Jesus, heralded a new destiny for the deeply wounded and fatally flawed experience of the human race. Up until that moment we, as a family, whether female, male, yellow, brown, black, white, rich, poor, in whatever nation or tribe, had conceived of ourselves in limited and finite terms that always included the final limit of death in that self-conception. Human beings,

unlike animals whose nature is simply a given, are self-developing organisms. The familiar saying from Proverbs, *For as a man thinks within himself, so he is.* (Proverbs 23:7), could be restated in the more contemporary terms, "Thoughts held in mind produce after their kind." In a world which had until that time been based entirely on self-conceptions in which death had the last say, we could only, imitatively, conceive of ourselves by limited sensory information; in which it was perfectly obvious that everyone died. We did not know that we had been created in the image and likeness of the very Creator of the universe and that we are always and have always been deathless, eternally alive Spirit whose purpose here on earth is to develop into the, until then, inconceivable reality of Christ within, our hope of glory. In short, we did not know what we are and what our purpose and destiny are.

God's infinitely creative and merciful capacities sent a rescue mission to the people of Earth in order that we might know ourselves as God knows us; not as we had previously known and conceived of ourselves in such falsely limited, dead-end terms. That rescue mission has sometimes been referred to as "the greatest story ever told." But that story remains ever incomplete until each of us has merged our own personal story with the staggering realization that it is

God's story, too.

How it is possible for the experience of one human being to change the destiny of all human beings has to do with the Mystery of God's Oneness. There is no place, no circumstance, no person and no possibility that is separate from God. God is in all and through all. The entire human race, being spiritual in nature, is one in and through God's Oneness. So, even though, to our senses, the human race seems currently separated into seven billion unique individual human stories, and even though, looking back into time, we imagine countless unique individual human stories, they collectively compose the story of man. Remember all those references in the Bible where Jesus refers to himself as *the Son of Man*. That's what He was referring to. His personal story was the story of Jesus. In the deeper story, it was the story of Man, the human being. The story of any one of us is actually a small part of the story of all of us. We are all the Son of Man, and through Christ within, we participate in the life of God, The One.

Each of us is born with two kinds of DNA. One is the DNA that comes to us genetically through our parents, grandparents, great grandparents and beyond; back farther than recorded history into the dawn of human time. That DNA has been evolving and changing as our ancestors have

*Christ is fully human
and fully divine at the same time.*

interacted with the ever-changing environment of which they were a part. The product of that DNA is our body, our type and our characteristics. That's the part we pay most attention to and the part we're most identified with. But there is infinitely more to us than our personal story

Our other DNA is the changeless and eternal "Divine DNA," our true human nature, with which the human species was endowed by our Creator. In Christ's incarnation in Jesus, God manifested His complete Oneness through joining in one human being the fullness of human nature and the divine nature. Christ is fully human and fully divine at the same time. And through Christ each of us has the opportunity to join our personal story, the "son of man" part to the Son of God part, and to eternal life in The Kingdom of God.

How then do we unite our lives to God's life? It's a process in which our daily participation in our human world of society and politics and economics is joined to the risen Christ within us in our daily times of silent prayer. And through participating daily in the Work of Inner Christianity, in which we gradually see that our identity, our 'I', is actually and truly in the inner world, not the one we see through our senses. We learn to allow our deep interior life, Christ, to touch and engage our surface life, our story. We gradually conceive of ourselves as belonging to God and His Life, while we appear and act in the world, just

like Jesus. Instead of leaving this world by retreating within, we realize that our true self is hidden within us and we bring it toward the world, bearing God's love into our personal story. In short, we incarnate, just as Jesus did.

One of the most powerful images I've ever encountered came from an account of a Christmas sharing that Mr. Gurdjieff offered his friends on Christmas Eve 1948. Speaking in his heavily accented English he spoke slowly, "I wish give real Christmas present. Imagine Christ. Somewhere in space is." Mr. Gurdjieff forms an oval with both hands. "Make contact not to center, but to outside, periphery. From there, draw in, I. Settle in you, Am. Do every day. Wish to become Christ. Become. Be."*

It's the same Divine Center in each and every human being that ever lived. Christmas is our invitation to participate in the Oneness of God by letting that Center come fully into our story. Through Christ, our story becomes God's story.

I remember this quote from Angelus Silesius every Christmas, and I hope you will too. "Though Christ a thousand times in Bethlehem be born; until He's born in thee thy heart remains forlorn."

* *Harmonic Development, Complete Harmonium Recordings 1948 to 1949*
page 32 

CCH Bookstore

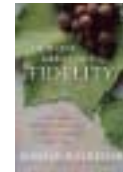
2011 Community Aim
One Life . . . In Christ . . .
Through Christ . . . As Christ

Community Reading (Nov 27 – Jan 5)
Advent and Christmas: Wisdom from St. Benedict
By Judith Sutera, OSB



Sutera interweaves selections from cherished writings of St. Benedict with Scripture readings for daily periods of *lectio divina* to foster contemplation. She closes each day with a prayer and suggestion for personal action as the essential outgrowth of a relationship with the Word of God.

New Title in the Bookstore
Our One Great Act of Fidelity
By Ronald Rolheiser



In this deeply personal book, Fr Ronald Rolheiser delves into the history and meaning of this sacred tradition, drawing upon the insights of various scripture scholars, theologians, and church teachings. Ultimately, it is a spiritual and a personal statement of how Rolheiser understands the Eucharist and why he celebrates it every day.

Bookstore and Library Hours
Monday-Friday 8:30 am-3:30 pm
Sunday 9:00 am-9:50 am &
11:30 am-12:30 pm

The Gift of Centering Prayer at Christmas

by Barbara Cook

When I was a young girl Christmas meant gathering at my grandparent's farm with many other children and grandchildren. My grandparents were not well off but had generous, warm hearts. I can remember the family going out and selecting the best tree on the farm, cutting it down, dragging it to the house and decorating it. I remember warm laughter and family times. But I don't have any memory of presents at all. They might've been there but they were inconsequential compared to the loving time we shared. There was no church or even Christ in the Christmas gathering. It was all about family.

When I was about eight years old my Mom and Dad decided that we needed to begin our own Christmas traditions. There was decorating, cooking, baking, the big traditional Christmas dinner and PRESENTS. On Christmas Eve, we went to midnight mass and then when we got home we got to open one present. Christmas Day was PRESENTS and Christmas dinner. There were just four of us, and sometimes friends, but Christmas was basically a sprinkle of religion

and PRESENTS.

My Christmas attitude carried on in that tradition well into my 20s. I'm kind of shocked now as I look back at Christmases past to see just HOW secular they were. I can even remember shopping for Christmas cards, which I dutifully sent each year, seeking a specifically non-religious theme. Christmas seemed to mean a lot to me; but what was it? Was it the tree? Was it the homemade treats? Was it the decorations? Was it the family gatherings? In some years those gatherings, fueled by holiday libations, got a little uncomfortable. Was it the gift giving and receiving? What was Christmas to me back then, anyway?

When I was in my mid-30s I met Tim Cook and God, and Christmas began to take on some relevant meaning. At least I really got that Christmas was to celebrate Christ coming into the world. I remember our first Christmas as married students. We didn't have a lot of spare money. But I would come home every day after work and make cookies and freeze them until I had a dozen or so varieties, and that year

I made Christmas baskets from my heart. It was simple and truly an act of love.

For the first 10 years we were in ministry we participated in caroling at nursing homes on Christmas Day, under the leadership of Bob Rader. That was truly a wondrous way to celebrate Christmas. Even my children loved that gift.

In 1999 I went to Snowmass, Colorado to staff the Advent retreat. I had really wanted to staff retreats there and work with our beloved Pat Johnson, the mother of Contemplative Outreach retreats. And that was when they had a need for staff. It created a bit of inner turmoil since we had our community here and a lot of Christmas preparations, but I felt it was my opportunity to serve. So off to Colorado I went, right in the full swing of the Christmas season. And that's when I really got in touch with Christmas. In the silence, stillness and simplicity of Centering Prayer and in sharing that experience with others who were also making space for Christ; my own relationship with Christ expanded and deepened. And



Incarnation

there was so much space in my heart for family, church community and Christ that year. I continued serving on that retreat for the next four years, until we began to have our own Advent retreats, here, at Cedarbrake.

As I have learned to prepare for Christmas through participation in Advent, Christmas has taken on an extraordinarily full and rich meaning for me. I've come to understand and to celebrate that Christmas is about Christ in you and Christ in me that wants to be born and live in us.

Centering prayer has helped me slow down, to wait and to listen. And it has liberated me from the interior obstacles of the season that keep me on the surface of life. The Christmas season is like a package that is meant to be carefully unwrapped. This year I'll start off, with 20 some of you, at the Advent retreat at Cedar Break, preparing for the gift Christ is and continues to reveal. For those who aren't attending the seven day Advent retreat, you can still share the retreat experience through the one day retreat that will be held at the church. Whatever we do to move deeper into the reason for the season will be a gift beyond words. ☉

*The true light, which enlightens everyone,
was coming into the world.
And to those who would accept Him He gave power
to become children of God,
to those who believe in Him,
who are born not by natural generation
nor by human choice nor by a man's decision but of God.*
John 1: 9, 12

In the parable of the Birth of Christ,
there was no room in the inn – which means
that esoteric teaching, given as it has been
through the ages, has always found 'no room in the inn'
– the inn being something in a man very close
to the highroad, yet a little apart,
that might receive strangers.
The ideas of the Work are exactly strangers
– strange to one's ordinary thoughts and ideas.
Now it is only through Work self-observation,
over a long time, that room can be made
in a man, a woman, for the knowledge of the Work
to enter and begin its gradual, successive,
not noticed transformations of Being.

Maurice Nicoll, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff & Ouspensky*

Who I really am is becoming more and more
the movement of the Spirit within me
– not the *I am* of myself,
but the great *I Am* of God.

Thomas Keating, *Heartfulness: Transformation in Christ*





Annual Aim:

One Life in Christ, Through Christ, As Christ

by Amy Bradfield

*There is neither
Jew nor Greek,
there is neither slave
nor free person,
there is not
male and female;
for you are all one
in Christ Jesus.*

~Galatians 3: 28

How ironic that I should be the one writing this article on *One Life in Christ* at this time. I have been in a 'dark night,' feeling anything but oneness with Christ. Old feelings of separateness, not-ok-ness, not-good-enough — feelings that have been with me as long as I can remember — have been up again. These feelings have been exacerbated by identification with dystonia, a neurological malfunction that causes muscle contraction, involuntary movement or lack-of-movement, and the last few years manifesting as a jaw that often locks shut, making talking and chewing difficult.

Much of me knows that I am more than my body, that my appearance is not who I am ...and sometimes I forget that! As the monastics say, "I fall down and get up; fall down and get up." I remember the Truth and then I forget, remember and forget – the human condition – and I'm one of these humans! However, there's an old program running in me that says

I should be better than that, I should be able to rise above it; I shouldn't just be Amy, just as I am. So I get to remind myself of what is true as I write this.

To the personality (that part of me that I acquired by education, imitation and enculturation), there seems to be so much wrong with our world, the people in positions of power, and with people in general, especially myself! There is too much hatred and war and violence and intolerance. However, that is just taking what the senses perceive as the truth, which certainly isn't the whole story. The truth is that I don't know how anything should be. I don't know what should be happening in the world. I don't know! The Truth is that God created this world and everything in it, including making all people perfect (me, too). AND we all have free will...we can accept God's version or ours. We can choose to see each person in our path as God's child. I can choose to see myself as a beloved child of God, just as I am.

When we see with the eyes of Christ, every person, every animal, every tree, rock, flower, fish, bird, star – from the tiniest quark to the furthest galaxy – everything is an ocean of Oneness. We ‘swim’ in God! We’re like a fish in the sea, saying ‘Where’s the water?’ And that fish is surrounded by it, just as we are immersed in the Divine Energy and Love of God. God’s love has surrounded, held and breathed me and each of us since we began this human journey in the womb, and He continues to love us every micro-second, every moment of our being. No matter what the conditions or appearances, His love is pouring down on every particle of matter in us/in me and in the entire universe.

No matter that the conditions on the Earth don’t seem right to us – no matter that we humans do stupid things – no matter that I forget the Truth – He loves us unreasonably! I don’t have to change, to get better, in order to receive His Love. It doesn’t make sense to the rational mind, yet the heart knows it’s true. Mary Dwyer says, “The mind has no answers, and the heart has no questions!”

My 96-year-old mom has recently been put in a nursing home and she’s very unhappy about it. She still sees herself as the capable woman she used to be, not as the frail, elderly woman whose body doesn’t work well anymore and who is unable to care for herself as she used to. One of her biggest concerns is for her ‘stuff,’ all the antiques, books, articles, photos, clippings, knick-knacks and

*Finally, brothers and sisters,
whatever is true,
whatever is honorable,
whatever is just,
whatever is pure,
whatever is lovely,
whatever is gracious
if there is any excellence
and if there is anything worthy of praise,
think about these things.
Keep on doing what you have learned
and received and heard and seen in me.
Then, the God of peace will be with you.*

Philippians 4: 8-9

treasures she’s saved over her lifetime. These things and her home tell her who she is. Without them, she feels lost, out-of-place. The Work of Inner Christianity would say she has put her ‘feeling of I’ in her belongings and her attachment to these treasures.

I can see myself in her, in my nostalgia for the body I used to have, that mostly did what I asked it to do, that looked ‘normal.’ So I’m attached to the past just as my mom is. As I see and come to accept the multiplicity of ‘I’s (personality fragments) in myself, I can accept that she and others are multiplicities inside. I can see and know that we are all the same beneath our differing appearances. “Seeing oneself in others and others in oneself is the basis of real mercy,” says Maurice Nicoll in the *Psychological Commentaries on the Teachings of*

Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Ghandi said, “He who does not see God in the next person he meets need look no further.” I pray to see my mom’s essence behind the distress and sadness and to be present to her in a new way...in a way that knows our Oneness.

When I look deeper and remember what I’ve been taught here in our amazing church community, I can see that the old picture of “who I am” is not who I really am. I remember that God is a God of love and mercy and forgiveness, and these gifts are extended to me just as I am. These gifts are also mediated to me through the people in this community who love and accept me and see beyond my appearance. That’s an example of *One Life in Christ*. Sometimes a chant that we’ve sung will come to me,

continued on page 8

such as “Peace begins inside. Lord, open my heart wide. Help me see like You. Peace begins inside me.” That’s Grace, when something like that helps me to remember. And in community there are so many opportunities to remind us.

As I can give up my focus on myself, I look around and see great beauty shining from the faces of the myriad individuals in our community. I see, really see, the clerk in the store, the neighbor on our street, the man or woman with the sign standing at a corner asking for help, the faces of ‘neighbors’ from other countries in the evening news. As Mother Teresa said, “Each one of them is Jesus in disguise.” There’s embarrassment in admitting that I don’t see that Oneness nearly as often as I’d like to – sometimes I see others with judgment, or with prejudice — and yet I know that God sees us all as His children and I know more and more that He loves me just as I am, ‘warts and all’; that I am no different from any other human. I can pray to see through the eyes of Christ. I can pray for help to not be so self-centered and self-critical and therefore critical of others. *Love your neighbor as yourself.* I can Wish deeply to know the Truth of our Oneness without doubt or reservation. Even though my personality/False Self reserves the right to not know the Truth, it is still the Truth!

“... *You are Christ for others. They have no other Christ but you, because it is uniquely through you that they see Christ. They will seek Christ through you and they will be able to love Him only in*

as much as He will be loveable in you. And that is what constitutes the good news of the Gospel, because in it there is a call addressed to us by an Infinite Generosity which entrusts Itself into our hands. Working out our salvation is nothing. Maintaining our equilibrium in pursuing our perfection is nothing. But how can we resist the fact that God has no other possible revelation but ourselves, that we are the only expression of His face in the area where we live, and that others have the right to ask me to be Christ. In spite of all my shortcomings, I am entrusted with the mission of being Christ.”

From *With God in Our Daily Life* by Maurice Zundel, p.125

As a friend said, “That little reading puts the ‘self-improvement program’ in its place, doesn’t it? The Work teaches us that behind personality is essence, and behind essence is Real I. The joke in all of this is that *there is no ‘me’ in Real I.*” I can’t make myself worthy enough, I can’t change myself enough to be Christ to others. In Christ, there is nothing to do but to be who I am and to know that God loves me, and if I can get out of the way, He can use me.

I have had moments which I recognized later as being Christ for another – when I can listen deeply and really hear, when I am feeling them in my heart and knowing a deep connection. And I know that it is not ‘I’ that is doing that – sometimes I can allow the Holy Spirit to move through me. Christ calls us to *love one another as I have loved you...* I think that He means the people that He sends into my

life, just as they are. I don’t need to ‘fix’ them, just as I don’t need to ‘fix’ myself. They are the ones who ‘rub up against us’ and even ‘rub us the wrong way.’ This is exactly the person, the circumstance, that God is giving me for my transformation! This is where the Welcoming Prayer can be so useful – welcoming the feeling, the sensation, the thought that is up for me right now. The Persian poet Rumi wrote:

“If God said, ‘Rumi, pay homage to everything that has helped you enter my arms,’ there would not be one experience of my life, not one thought, not one feeling, not any act, I would not bow to.”

At the end of the movie *ONE*, Fr. Thomas Keating says something very powerful, (as he is prone to do!): “The beginning of the spiritual journey is the realization, not just the information, but the interior conviction that there is a Higher Power or God...that there is an Other (capital O). The second step is to try to become the Other (still a capital O). And finally the realization that there is no Other – you and the Other are One – always have been; always will be! You just *think* that you aren’t!” This is not just an intellectual realization; it’s an inner knowing. I pray to know this deep within my being and I pray it for all of us.

May God break my heart so completely that the whole world falls in. Mother Teresa. Amen...May it be so! ☸



The Work

Note at Christmas
Time 1948

Throughout known history various attempts have been made to awaken Man to the mystery of his existence. So strong, however, is the external life *via* the senses – in short, the acquired Personality – that these attempts eventually become useless and must give way to other attempts always with the same aim. Man asleep takes for granted both his own existence and the existence of the Universe. This keeps him in bondage to the external world, to Nature and its laws. Such a man, if he thinks at all, believes that Nature created itself somehow or other, in remote ages – a strange idea if you come to reflect on it. Now as a result of this great power of hypnotism that external life exerts, Man's real essential part cannot develop. Essence, although not developed, and in so many ways childish, is the real man or woman and cannot grow as long as the part of Man turned outwards to life dominates them. As said, people take this mystery of their own existence and the Universe for granted. It is only when one begins to feel and ponder this mystery that it may become possible to awaken from sleep. This capacity is called Magnetic Centre. If a man feels mystery in all things, if

he feels that nothing has been explained, if he can see that there are life-influences in the world, such as the Financial Times, and distinct from them other influences, such as the Gospels, then he begins to feed, nourish, cause to grow, his inner essential side – that is, his Essence. Small children, as Essence, wonder. They are soon given answers that stop them. Then the hard coating of Personality forms itself. When a man dies his Personality breaks up and, if hard places are in it, with pain. Essence returns and is re-born. If there has been no growth of Essence, of the inner man, the life will be the same because, as you know, your being attracts your life. Change Essence, and your life cannot be the same. Remember this: your Personality is not you. What is really you lies behind it. For, behind all the manifestations of the Personality and especially the False

Personality, which is what is *least* you, and is the cause of most useless suffering in the pain-factory of this world, there lies something that is really you. This is called Real I. Being born on this planet, we have to win this goal by self-observation, by not identifying. It is not given. By shedding, by taking off, by stripping off the outer coats of yourself that you have taken as yourself, and starting with the False Personality that seeks to keep up nothing but a fiction of yourself, a distortion, often very expensive literally to keep going, and always a great expense psychologically, then you begin to move towards Real I. This inner journey is called the *Work* or the *Way* or simply Esotericism.

Pages 1255-1256, *Psychological Commentaries on the Teaching of Gurdjieff and Ouspensky*, by Maurice Nicoll. For more information and experience with these teachings, you are invited to attend the *Introduction to the Work* classes held every Thursday at 7:30 pm at The Church of Conscious Harmony.

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.



5th Guideline

Original sin is not the result of personal wrongdoing on our part.
Still, it causes a pervasive feeling of alienation from God,
from other people and from the true Self.

The cultural consequences of these alienations are instilled in us from earliest childhood and passed on from one generation to the next.

The urgent need to escape from the profound insecurity of this situation gives rise, when unchecked, to insatiable desires for pleasure, possession, and power.
On the social level, it gives rise to violence, war, and institutional injustice.

SEEDS

A disguise for God

(The) self is not by nature evil, and the fact that it is unsubstantial is not to be imputed to it as some kind of crime. It is afflicted with metaphysical poverty: but all that is poor deserves mercy. So too our outward self: as long as it does not isolate itself in a lie, it is blessed by the mercy and the love of Christ. Appearances are to be accepted for what they are. The accidents of a poor and transient existence have, nevertheless, an ineffable value. They can be transparent media in which we apprehend the presence of God in the world. It is possible to speak of the exterior self as a mask: to do so is not necessarily to reprove it. The mask that each man wears may well be a disguise not only for that man's inner self but for God, wandering as a pilgrim and exile in His own creation

by Thomas Merton
Originally published in *New Seeds of Contemplation* Pages 295-296

December Calendar

Visit consciousharmony.org
for a complete listing of events

Special Events

One-Day Centering Prayer Retreat
Dec 10 12:30pm-5pm
Cost: \$15 No need to pre-register.
Bring a potluck dish to share.

Glorious Impossible Christmas Play
Dec 15 7pm

Christmas Eve Service
Dec 24, 6-7pm

Christmas Day - Sunday Service
Eucharist Service 10-11am

Church Closed
Dec 26-30

New Year's Eve Service
Dec 31 8:30pm-12:30am Jan 1
Taize Service - 8:30-9:30pm
Centering Prayer 9:30-11pm
Burning Bowl Ceremony 11-11:45pm
Centering Prayer 11:45pm-12:15am

New Year's Day - Sunday Service
Eucharist Service 10-11am

Monthly

Tuesday Enrichment 7:30 pm
Dec 6 Sacred Chanting
Dec 20 Gurdjieff Music

Community Workday
Dec 17 9 am - 12 noon

Weekly

Yoga
Tuesdays 1:30-3pm \$14
Thursdays 6-7:15pm \$14
Prayer Circle
Wednesdays 9:15 am
Contemplative Lunch
Wednesdays 12 noon
Mid-Week Communion Service
Wednesdays 6-7 pm
Introduction to Centering Prayer
Thursdays 7:30pm

Daily

Weekday Centering Prayer Service
M-F 7-7:35 am in Theosis Chapel

The Awareness of Being There

by Jeanne de Salzman

There is in me something very real, the self, but I am always closed to it, demanding that everything outside prove it to me. I am always on the surface, turned toward the outside in order to take something or to defend myself. Yet there is perhaps another attitude, another disposition, in which I have nothing to take, I have only to receive. I need to receive an impression that nothing outside can give me – an impression of being, of my self having a sense, a meaning. The movement of knowing is a movement of abandon. It is necessary to open one's hands.

In moments of greater attention, I have an awareness of "being here" – a look, a light, a consciousness that knows. Consciousness is here. I cannot doubt it. And yet I do not trust it, I do not feel it as "I," as my essential nature. I believe I can look for consciousness, see consciousness, know it. We take consciousness as an object of observation. But we cannot see consciousness. It is consciousness that sees and that knows. I realize this if I experience it as coming from behind my body or from above. There is no observer, there is a knowing. Yet if I experience consciousness as in my body, it seems that the "I" is the body and consciousness an attribute of the body.

I begin to feel what it means to be true, that is, the moment when my thought knows itself *as it is* and my feeling knows itself *as it is*. Another kind of thinking appears – immobile, without words, capable of containing my usual thought – and there is a feeling of my essence, a feeling that is not of my form but that can contain the form. I have then a new thinking and a new feeling that see the fact, that see *what is*.

So, the only reality for me today is in my effort to be present to myself. Nothing else is real. Everything is distorted by the veil of my mind, which prevents me from being in contact with the nature of things. I must first go toward my own nature, awake to the consciousness of "I," and be attentive only to this. Consciousness is always consciousness of self. We can call the Self whatever we wish – the seat of consciousness, even God. The point is that it is the center, the very core of our being, without which there is nothing.

I have to learn to concentrate my attention toward this center and stay here. I need to understand this act of Presence, this active movement of Presence, which is always threatened by a passive movement in the opposite direction. I am aware of a reality

that I cannot possess. It is myself, what I am in the depth of my being. Yet I feel that to recognize it requires something of me . . . I know not what. This reality belongs to a level of perception I have never explored. My avidity separates me from it and prevents me from understanding my true place. I always want to get or take what is due to me, without feeling the respect that alone will allow an unconditional opening.

I begin to realize that what I am trying to approach is not only mine, not only in me, but immense and much more essential. In front of this, my tensions let go one after the other until the moment I feel, as a gift of unity, a collected Presence. This brings with it a question – a question of existence. It is in doubt at each moment, never certain, never assured, always so unknowable that it requires everything of me. Now I exist with a sense of a mysterious force that cannot be named, which has led me to this unity. To what influence am I openings? . . . I wish to know. I am here. I am not closed, imprisoned in one part of my being. I am conscious of being a whole.

Reprinted from *The Reality of Being - The Fourth Way of Gurdjieff*, by Jeanne de Salzman, a long time student of G. I. Gurdjieff. This book is sold in the CCH Bookstore. ☺

Gift Ideas for the Holiday Season

from the CCH Bookstore



The Church of Conscious Harmony
A Contemplative Christian Community

For your prayer practice...

Meditation cushions

Snowmass theme candles

Gold, frankincense, and myrrh-scented candles

Assorted incense gift sets with decorative holders

Hand-blown glass oil lamps (oil included)

For inspiration...

Hand-crafted bronze crosses from Ireland

Bronze plaques engraved with blessings

Prayer journals

Christmas music CDs

Tibetan bells and ornate hangers

Prayer flags

For her...

Cross and angel necklaces

Prayer box necklaces

Stackable rings engraved with Hope, Peace,

Love, Harmony, and Faith

(all jewelry sterling silver)

For children and teens...

Bibles

St. Francis and Our Father prayer crosses

Bedtime and mealtime prayer cubes

Colorful glass prayer bead bracelets

Italian glass crosses

Protection pendants

Bookstore Hours

Monday-Friday 8:30 am-3:30 pm

Sunday 9:00 am-9:50 am &

11:30 am-12:30 pm

Gift Certificates Available

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