

The play of God as known through the senses is a remarkable show. Yet how much more incredible is the Creator of the play, how much more intelligent and beautiful is He than His creation. Realized Masters and Avatars, such as Jesus, have often come to awaken you to this fact. Yet you keep yourself relegated to such a narrow spectrum of life when you know it only through the five senses. Arise, Awake, slumber no more! Know the greater Reality; realize your Divine Heritage now!

Yogacharya David Hickenbottom

Jesus emphasized the superabundance of love. He said, "Love God with all your mind, all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself."

Whoever comes to you that you can help you must do everything you can to help them, then you will know by your smiles that you are doing His work.

Paramhansa Yogananda

If people are turned more towards God, if miserly people become less miserly, if hard-hearted people become less so, there is some benefit from your contact with Ramdas. If people who have vices give them up gradually, if people who have anger gradually become calm, and if selfish people become less selfish, then there is some purpose in Ramdas coming to you.

Swami Ramdas



Burne-Jones

The Adoratio (Adoration of the Magi)

The Cross and The Lotus Journal



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Dedicated to the Realization of God and Service to Him in All Forms



Mother Hamilton



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The cross and lotus symbolizes the unity between East and West. The lotus is the sign of illumined consciousness, the thousand petal lotus of the crown chakra. The cross is the symbol of the body surrendered to the will of God. Following the way of the cross results in the resurrection of illumined consciousness.

*The Cross and the Lotus, symbol of man.
East and West blended, join hand in hand.
Marching toward the infinite light and life divine.
Lift up your eyes and see the star,
descending from heaven where eier you are.*

*Be filled with the peace and ecstasy of Godis almighty love.
Om-Amen.*

The Reverend Yogacharya Mother Hamilton

© 2006 The Cross and The Lotus Publishing is dedicated to the publication of materials that promote God Realization. Our spiritual lineage begins with Jesus Christ and Babaji and flows down to us through Lahiri Mahasaya, Swami Sri Yukteswar, Paramhansa Yogananda and Yogacharya Mother Hamilton.

The Reverend Yogacharya David Hickenbottom continues this lineage with the help and support of many sincere devotees. We are dedicated to realizing God and serving devotees of every race, color, creed and religion.

Mother Hamilton often said she was the product of two fully illumined Masters, her own Guru, Paramhansa Yogananda, and Swami Ramdas. We therefore feature articles about Swami Ramdas and Anandashram. We bow to the feet of Saints and realized Masters of all religions.



Giovanni Bellini

Calendar of Events

| | | |
|-------|----|--|
| Dec. | 21 | Winter Solstice (4:23 p.m. PST) |
| | 25 | Christmas Day, Mother Hamilton's Birthday (1904) |
| | 27 | Swami Ramdas' Sannyas Day (1922) |
| Jan. | 5 | Paramhansa Yogananda's Birthday (1893) |
| | 25 | Mother Krishnabai's Mahasamadhi (1989) |
| | 31 | Mother Hamilton's Mahasamadhi (1991) |
| Feb. | 21 | Ash Wednesday |
| | 26 | David's Birthday (1954) |
| March | 7 | Paramhansa Yogananda's Mahasamadhi (1952) |
| | 9 | Swami Sri Yukteswar's Mahasamadhi (1936) |
| | 20 | Spring Equinox (4:06 p.m. PST) |
| April | 8 | Easter |

Journal Editors: Larry & Cate Koler

Revealing the Universal Path to God

By Yogacharya David Hickenbottom

Once again we enjoyed the tranquil waters of Loon Lake as well as a mighty display of nature in a torrential downpour that flooded the valley below.

Inside we were warm and dry and went deeper in Master's (Yoganda's) teachings on *The Book of Revelations* by St. John the Divine.

Master reveals the deeper truths in *Revelations* based both on his intuitive comprehension and Yoga philosophy. We focused on gaining greater insight into clearly identifying our three bodies (physical, astral, causal), going further into the subtle intuitive astral body.

Chanting and Kriya meditation were also highlights. How wonderful it was for devotees to have a chance to come together in satsang! We thank Karim and the rest of the Loon Lake staff for being excellent hosts for our stay. †



Dear Friends,

As the night swings from the darkest of times and moves toward the awakening day, the light gradually increasing, bringing with it warmth and illumination, so have we reached the turning of the seasons and are moving toward the light. In the greater cycle of Yugas we have passed through the darkest of the "Yugic" night and are inexorably moving toward the Light.

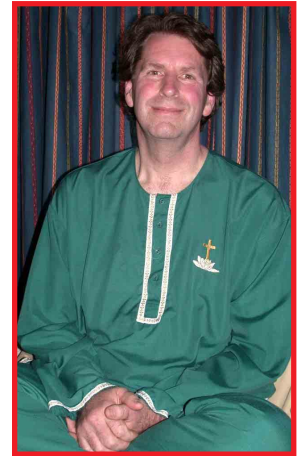
Fittingly, the ancient Christian Fathers chose the right time of year symbolically to celebrate the birth of the Christ, moving from darkest winter toward the long-light of summer. Jesus, one of the greatest Spiritual Masters to ever live, an Avatar for the age, is said to have taken birth at this time; this birth also heralded the advent of the Christ Light (the universal Christ Consciousness) in receptive human consciousness as well. As an incarnation of this Light, Jesus was not only for a narrow cult of believers, but was and is a universal message of hope, faith and realization.

All can take heart at this birth, for it brings Grace from the highest regions of Light to one and all.

My dear friend, you are the microcosm of this same birth. Collectively we have traveled through this Dark Age; individually you have been subject to the influence of dark ignorance. Now comes the turn toward the Light, now comes the time of awakening. The world slumbers yet, dreaming its dream of sensory-driven life and separation. A few, such as our lineage Masters, are fully awake to realized Truth, and some souls are awakening, yet sometimes dreaming delusions.

When you are in a darkened room full of slumberous dreamers, it is tempting to be infected by sleep's allure and lie down to dream as well. When the ones you are with are awake and active it tends to bring you into the realm of the arisen. It is not easy to live in a world of sleepers and to awaken to your Divine Reality. However, something has stirred in you, Grace is awakening you, you cannot just roll over and go back to sleep, you simply cannot!

The Vedas declare, Arise! Awake! Arise from your nightmare of delusion, awake from your terrible dream of separation! There is the won-



derful story of the lion who grew up with a herd of sheep from his birth and thought of himself as a sheep. One day a lion-king observed this now fully grown lion running in fear with all the sheep. He thought to himself, "What is this, a lion behaving like a scared sheep, how can this be?" The lion-king ran after and caught the lion-sheep, pinned him down and tried to reason with him. But the lion-sheep was too convinced of his sheephood to listen! So the lion-king dragged the lion-sheep to a pond and showed him his reflection. Much amazed, the lion-sheep came to understand that he wasn't a sheep at all, but a lion-king!

Jesus came to awaken our realization of who and what we truly are; to show us our true reflection. There are those who do not want to believe it; they are indifferent, without faith or they live in fear. Jesus had to transcend the conventions of his day in order to rise up, and you have to be willing to leave those who are slumbering to their dreams. It would be easier if all the world was awake, arisen, but then leaving what is known and comfortable is what a pioneering soul has always been about, and you are a pioneering soul. Birth denotes possibilities not yet realized but immanent, so too is the birth in you of the Christ-Seed bringing with it the promise of a new life, a new consciousness, a wonderful promise of all things good.

This world never tires of its preoccupation with name and fame, promising much but delivering little. Learn to discern the falsity of this promise. Be like the first rays of light announcing a new day; let your life be lived as a blazing light of realization! Let your realization be an inspiration for others to awaken as well! The vitality and reality of the story of Jesus and the great Masters should not be left on a dusty shelf of your mind. The book of life will glisten with realization and sparkle with revelation as you awake! Arise!

Master and Mother have come as modern day Christs, Avatars. They have come to awaken our Divine Nature. It is no accident that Mother was born on Christmas day. Her feeling of connection and communion with Christ the Master and the universal Christ of Spirit is unmistakable. The sun and its ray are not different in substance. Likewise the universal nature of God and His incarnations are not different, but manifest the same Light, Love and Grace.

As I write these words, the pictures these words embody are given to me in all of their purity and perfection; a holy discourse from the Infinite.

Dr. Raman graciously received us in his beautiful home in Houston and we shared a wonderful day with our new family members. We were charmed by his collection of Indian art as well as his own paintings.

In Hindu philosophy, householders are called upon to spend their later years working for the betterment of their fellow man and their own enlightenment. Dr. Raman is a wonderful example of that ideal. As Board President, he has spear-headed the campaign in the USA and Canada to raise funds for the hospital as well as given a substantial donation himself. The goal is to open the hospital in 2007 and he plans to stay very involved in the project in the future. †

The Satchidananda Institute of Medical Sciences is open to all, regardless of age, sex, caste, religion or the ability to pay. Find out more by visiting the website: www.anandashramfoundation.org.

More financial support is needed. Donations can be sent to Anandashram Charitable Foundation, c/o Dr. Jay K. Raman, 6 White Pillars Lane, Houston, TX 77024. Donations in the USA are tax-deductible.

Aiden Sheppard Victory

Was born September 3, 2006 to Mike and Angela Victory.

Aiden is an extraordinary soul. His paternal grandmother, Phyllis Victory, is a long-time devotee of Mother Hamilton, and his maternal grandparents, George and Christine Baldigara and his mother, Angela, are Kriyabans through Yogacharya David.

In December, David will perform a christening for Aiden and he and Carla have been asked to be God-parents.

Welcome Aiden! We are all so happy to have you with us! †



Meeting two Karma Yogis

By Cate Koler

One of Swami Ramdas' many books, *World is God* tells of the places he went and the people he met on his world tour. Papa saw all people as his own self and that ideal so permeates *Anandashram* that ashram devotees the world over begin to feel like one big family.

In that spirit, when planning to spend Thanksgiving holiday in Austin with our son and family, Larry and I decided to finally meet two ashram devotees we've been corresponding with for some time. The first was Swati Halady, who drove down from Dallas and spent Thanksgiving Day with us. We had met Swati's parents at Anandashram and visited their home in Bombay. Swati grew up visiting the ashram regularly, under the spell of first Mataji and then Swamiji. She is a computer programmer who donates her spare time and money to various worthy causes. Recently she challenged herself to raise funds for cancer research by participating in a triathlon and her future plans



include working with orphan children. This December she will return to Bombay and Anandashram for a visit, but the only other vacation that interests her is one where she can do volunteer work at the same time.

The day after Thanksgiving we drove with Swati to Houston to meet Dr. Jay Raman. A few years ago Dr. Raman wanted to do something for his home state of Kerala, India and approached Anandashram with a proposal to support their future charitable hospital.

Anandashram had donated the land and the hospital has been named the *Satchidananda Institute of Medical Sciences* in honor of Swami Satchidananda. As a result, Dr. Raman founded the Anandashram Charitable Foundation to garner funds in the USA. Swamiji suggested Larry as someone in America who could help Dr. Raman and for the last two years he has served on the board of this charity.



Through attunement to that same Christ awareness you can see what I am seeing, feel what I am feeling. You too can realize your own Divine Nature, experiencing God not second-hand through stories, but directly through your own realization!

This Grace of realization the world cannot offer. This Sacred Reality can be known through deepened intuition; it all begins with the Christ Seed sown deeply within your heart and soul. I pray that you will care for, water and fertilize that seed to its fruition. Care for it with your loving attention, water it by dedicating your life to universal love and service, and fertilize it with deepening meditation-absorption into your Divine Nature. Your true Nature is made in the image and likeness (the form and Spirit) of God, and He is coming to you. Prepare and make straight the way! †

In God, Christ and Gurus, *David*

My blessed Master,

For this cause was I born and came to this hour: in a humble way to help you and your disciples. How I came to be ready for this work, even in a small degree, is a deep mystery to me. I can only rejoice, and thank God that it is so. But it is marvelous that it should be true of me.

I am very glad you told me that you want me to continue with my duties if I am able, for now I know exactly what your wish is, and need not worry as I have been doing. You had spoken to me several times about resting, and I thought I might be acting in a willful manner in continuing on with all my duties. Now I am free to follow the course that is most pleasing to me—that is, to keep on with everything you have given me to do, as I am able, until you give me the word to stop.

All I know is that I must please you. Somewhere in the Hindu scriptures, it says that if the guru is pleased with one, the opinions of the gods matter not at all, and I have exactly that feeling. I do not reason out why it should be so—I simply feel that it is.

Whether I have the opportunity to see you or not, I am ever at your feet, taking the dust from them, and pouring over them the essence of my devotion. If I could never see you, this would continue the same, for it is the settled attitude of my mind, and does not cease, day or night. *Gyanamata* *From God Alone by Sister Sri Gyanamata*



Mother in the 1970s

The Christmas Tree

Excerpt from a talk given in Seattle
by Mother Hamilton on December 21, 1980

Attaining Christhood

As I've said many times, I cannot limit the Christ just to the one body who lived 2,000 years ago, because the Christ that I worship is the Christ that is in every atom of space, in every form that walks the earth. I revere and worship that one Christ also who lived 2,000 years ago, who became a beacon to the whole Christian world, but there were others before him and there have been others since who have attained Christhood. These men, these women, stand out as the shining examples of what each one of us can do. If we have to accept the fact that only one could do it, what is the use of our striving? Each of these people came as the example that each of us could follow. Perhaps their language is a little different. Perhaps they speak in a little different terminology, but each one is speaking of the same Father God, the same Mother, the same Christ Consciousness, the same Trinity, all over the world.

I have traveled this world three times around. I have been to many places, and I have seen as great or greater worship in the so called hea-

Papa's Vision of Jesus

Ram was kind indeed! Ramdas had really a great desire to remain at least for a night in the big cave which is the famous Vasishtha cave...

...Now the memorable night. It was on the fifth day, maybe after midnight; the nights were pitch dark. Ramdas usually sat up the whole night in the cave. The cave was suddenly lit up by a strange light. Ramdas saw seated before him, on the floor about three or four feet from him, the figure of a man. His face was dazzling with a heavenly splendor. The features were fine, regular and beautiful. There was a short, black, glossy beard and moustache on the face. The lips were crimson red, revealing milk-white, lustrous teeth. Soft shining black curls flowed down his shoulders. He wore a long, dark, chocolate-colored robe or gown with wide, loose sleeves. What fascinated Ramdas were his eyes. They were scintillating like twin stars. The rays they were emitting were filled with tenderness, love and compassion.

Ramdas gazed on them, charmed and delighted. It struck him: "This is Jesus Christ." There was another beside him, but Ramdas' eyes were not for him, although he was aware of his presence. He might be a disciple. Now Christ's lips moved. He was speaking. Ramdas listened, but could not make out what he said. The tongue sounded strange and unknown to him. For perhaps a minute he spoke; then the vision vanished, while the glow of light remained in the cave for some minutes more. Ramdas was completely immersed in ecstasy and only came to external consciousness after broad daylight. †

from the book, *In The Vision of God*, by Swami Ramdas

You must always remember when I speak of God the Father, I mean the Spirit beyond creation. When I speak of God the son, I speak of Christ: he is the intelligence of God in creation. Holy Ghost means the holy vibration out of which all creation has emerged. Remember these things and you will know everything that I am teaching you.

The whole cluster of universe is kept by the Holy Ghost, and that Holy Vibration is also impregnated by the Christ Intelligence. Christ Intelligence is the master of the Holy Ghost and God the Father is the master of Christ.

Paramhansa Yogananda

Once I met with her after a Sunday service to ask about something that was really bothering me. I felt such tremendous peace sitting before her that I could not for the life of me remember what had been bothering me all week. She laughed and came back down so I could remember it.

In later years, her health became severely impaired from the tremendous karmic burden she carried for all who followed, and for this entire world. It was hard to watch; some quit coming for whatever reasons. It is a miracle that one little body could continue to function at all under that tremendous load. I have visited her in the hospital and at a care facility; but I never felt any doubts. After several severely trying years of illness, she passed on; her task here was completed. Three times after her passing I smelled her lilac perfume while driving down the freeway. There were no flowers nearby. . . . Other times I have felt her nearby, smiling in love.

This life has been far different than it would have been had I not met her. From the day I met Mother to this day she has guided and protected me. I have stared death in the eye maybe ten times in this lifetime (industrial accidents, traffic situations, things in the military, or sheer stupidity), and each time it has veered aside at the last second by God's grace through her.

Mother's influence has mitigated the effects of karma in other lesser events in my life. Once we were unloading yard waste at the transfer station. A fairly good-sized fir branch that we had bent double to fit into the trailer whipped around sideways past my face, breaking my nose. Another quarter of an inch closer and it would have cost me an eye. Such is God's mercy as it manifested through Mother. . . . She has always carried part of my burden.

Never in this life have I met such love, such wisdom, such strength. I thank Mother from the bottom of my heart for leading me to her feet once more. May God bless her forever and forever; and may He cradle her forever in His arms of everlasting love.

This world is a better place because Mother was here. †

Keep the face toward the Light and the shadows will fall behind.

Author Unknown

then countries (called so by the Christians) than I have among the Christians themselves. I think that this year we should all become CHRISTians, worshipers of the true Christ, that first and only begotten Son of God, that one that emanated from the bosom of God and went forth to create universes, worlds, far beyond our imagination.

The Christmas Tree is the Tree of Life

I want to talk to you this morning about "The Christmas Tree." The Christmas tree is the symbol of the tree of life. Man himself is made in the form of a cross as he stands upright with his arms outstretched and his feet together. And, as I have said a million times, it is upon this cross that the Son of man, the human ego, must be crucified in order that man become the CHRISTed One, the Son of God. And this is the privilege of every single man. But when this body is turned upside down, then the hair becomes the roots and the limbs become the branches of the tree.

India: the cradle of all religions

You know, it's an amazing thing how we take for granted that the beginning of the Christian era was the beginning of all life, that there had really been no true worship before that, and that is not true. It is said that India is the cradle of all religions, and they had Krishna. That word means the Christ, only it is in Hindu terminology. They had the word Aum, which means Amen in English. . . . Amen, as we call it was derived from this original Sanskrit word of Aum. And if you can close your eyes at any time and be very, very still with your eyes focused at the seat between the eyebrows, the spiritual eye, listen very quietly, you will hear (not with your outer ear, but with your inner ear) this sound of Aum. It is the word of God which first came forth and brought all of this world into manifestation.

History of the Christmas Tree

It's really interesting to think about the fir tree which has come to be symbolized as the Christmas tree. And yet, in the beginning, it wasn't a Christmas tree, and the pagans used the tree as a form of worship long before Christ was born. Actually, the yule log started this whole symbolism. In the early days—very, very early in this particular lifetime of ours—they burned yule logs on the fireplace. They used to bring these logs in every year, and particularly was this true then

after the Christ was born and Christmas came into being. Christmas means a “Mass of Christ”, or a service which is dedicated to the worship of the Christ season. They would bring these logs in and they would burn them on the fire because the Christ represents light. He is the light of the world. In the beginning they had what they call a “paradise tree”. And that was around the 11th century. They didn’t worship Adam and Eve, but they had a special day set aside to acknowledge the fact that they were symbolic of the first man and woman on the earth. These trees were not decorated at all but, finally after the Christian era, they had these trees and they put apples on them to signify the fruit of the tree of life which we are told about in Genesis.

Gradually, various customs came into being and people would light candles and, again, the candle was significant of the light of the Christ in the world. Then they started having two trees. They would have a paradise tree and they would have just a plain fir tree. That tree was symbolic of life and they brought it into the house; they dug it up out of the ground and brought it into the house to represent the fact that even though winter had come over the land and it seemed as though everything was dead, still the brave little fir tree stood straight and tall. And that is true of the fir. It stands straight and tall even in the midst of winter when the snow is on the ground, and sometimes the pine tree is covered with snow. And yet, you shake the tree, the snow falls off, and there stands that beautiful little fir tree. The candles were put in the window to light the way for any wayfarers that might be lost.

Gradually, the tree came to be symbolic of Christmas in the Christian mind. And it was about the year 1700 when it was first brought to America by the German people, and they used to light candles. I can remember many years ago when I was a little child, that we had real candles on our tree—it was rather dangerous I think today when I look back at it. They had little tiny clamps and a little place where you put the candle in. Then, gradually, they had various colored ornaments. And these ornaments are symbolic of all of the fruits of the tree of life.

Decorate your own Tree of Life

Now, let us think of our own tree of life and the ornaments that we decorate it with. God decorated it in the first place, because there are seven golden candlesticks; there are seven lights in each of those candle-

NE, just north of the Roosevelt district. Mother was on a trip for a couple of weeks, and Herlwyn Lutz was conducting Sunday services. We talked, and he showed me how to meditate.

I met Mother in late January of 1956, before she had gone to India. It wasn’t like the more spectacular experience she had had when meeting Master—no inner lights or spiritual ecstasy; just a calm, peaceful sense of coming home. She told me I didn’t have to accept anything, but just take things one at a time and prove them out in my life. She made sense . . . the first spiritual leader I had ever met who showed depth and balance. I followed what she taught to the best of my ability, and gradually found a peace that had eluded me all my life.

In June 1956 Mother and Father attended SRF’s Kriya initiation at Mount Washington, in Los Angeles. Herlwyn, Harriette Rowe (nee Rivera) and I drove down, camping along the way. I wasn’t yet ready for Kriya, so during the ceremony I meditated outside on the grounds. I felt Master’s presence very strongly; it is still there in that spot, over fifty years after his passing.

In the summer I felt a reaction to the intense striving I had practiced, and talked with Mother. She understood, and gave me permission to leave. By the spring of 1957 I couldn’t stay away any longer, and came back in time for my first Kriya initiation (June 8, 1957, if memory serves). I’ve been with Mother ever since. Mother was at Kathy’s and my wedding that August, and I felt a heat in the spiritual eye from her blessing during the ceremony.

During the years that followed she has guided me insightfully through the ups and downs of life. She had herself lived life to the fullest, and spoke with sure knowledge. She once said that she had experienced everything that could happen to a woman. Never had I known anyone with such depth of spiritual insight, such wisdom, such integrity, such strength, and such love. In all things, what she taught, works.

Mother taught balance. She taught us to live in the world, and to seek God and His kingdom first. She taught us all to stand on our own feet and not to be dependent upon her; and to worship God, not her. She taught us to avoid alcohol, tobacco, non-prescription drugs, and illegitimate sex. She kept Paramhansa Yogananda’s teachings intact after his passing, despite the SRF organization’s opposition. I have nothing but the deepest respect for her in all things.

I gave the religious establishment a few more chances in my late teens and early twenties. Some of my early college friends were neat people, and I visited their churches with them; but it didn't take. . . . It was the early 1950s and the Korean War was in progress. I enlisted in the Marine Corps. One Saturday while I was stationed in San Francisco I was walking up Market Street, pondering the serious questions of life. On impulse I knocked on the minister's door of a large church. He asked what I wanted, and I told him I had some questions. He asked, "Do you believe such and such?" I replied I wasn't sure; that was my question. He responded bombastically that if I didn't, then he couldn't help me . . . lots of empathy. I told him I was sorry I'd wasted his time and left.

One Sunday night a couple of years or so later I was hitch-hiking from Los Angeles back to the Marine Corps base at Twenty-nine Palms, California. I chatted with the driver, and by and by he asked me if I'd heard of yoga. He told me he practiced it, and related some of his experiences. Although my guard was up, I was interested. He mailed me his copy of Yesudian and Haich's classic, "Yoga and Health." I started practicing some of the asanas (postural exercises which loosen pinched nerves, and purify and strengthen the life force) in the barracks after lights out, and began to gain some flexibility.

My release from active duty was coming up, so I returned his book and bought a copy after moving to Seattle. The asanas gave me a tremendous amount of energy. It was a good thing; times were a little tough for the first month or two of civilian life. I was staying at the downtown Seattle YMCA, and eating out on \$5 a week. I'd had to buy some civilian clothes and a set of work tools out of the first couple of paychecks. I walked everywhere—I couldn't afford the 15-cent bus fare. That winter was one of the coldest on record.

If the asanas and pranayama (life force control via breath) exercises gave such powerful results, it seemed that a person could make some powerful mistakes practicing from a written description. It would be good to have a teacher. This was the late fall of 1955, and the only yoga listing in the Seattle phone book was the Vedanta center near the park just north of Capitol Hill. The swami there said that they didn't use the hatha yoga exercises, but the Self-Realization Fellowship people did.

A friend who had mentioned Self-Realization Fellowship gave me Mother's address—the brick house on the corner at 7057 19th Avenue

sticks in every human body, and these lights, these candlesticks, are of course referred to as the seven churches in Revelations. And the spinal centers are these that they refer to. When your whole tree is lit up with the light and the love of God, then the whole body becomes filled with light, even as Christ said. "The light of the body is the eye; therefore, let thine eye be single"—one pointed upon Him. Look for that light in the center of the forehead, and your whole body shall be filled with the light of the Christ. You have to go through the crucifixion; you have to pick up your cross and follow the Christ in order that you might emulate him in every detail, even unto death. But it is the "son of man," the ego consciousness that dies, that one that is constantly doing things that are against the laws of God. They are not following what the Christ came to bring, and that is the commandment of love.

You Are Taxed: Tested

This commandment of love is the greatest commandment that was ever made, and it extends to all religions, to all men over the face of the earth. We should not think we have the only truth, the only religion. Truth is, and people explain it in different ways. And many go to orthodox churches and are taught about it in the historical sense, about the birth of the Christ, how Mary and Joseph traveled to Jerusalem in order to be taxed. Jerusalem is the holy city, and that represents the holy consciousness within yourself, when your whole being is lifted up into the worship of God. Then, and then alone, are you ready to be taxed. And that doesn't involve money at all. It means that you are going to be tested; you are going to be between these two forces of good and evil within yourself, so called, or the positive and negative forces, and you are going to have to travel that journey toward Bethlehem. You first have to meet with the wicked king, Herod, which represents the passions, and he tries to get rid of the Christ Child after the child is born by cutting off all of the heads of the male children. But the Christ succeeds in escaping him and returns to Galilee, and there becomes a light unto the world.

About My Father's Business

Not much of his life is told to us between the time he was born or at the time He was twelve years old when He confronted the priests in the temple and asked them questions which you wouldn't think a child of that age would know at all. But know it He did. He came with that knowl-

edge, because it was His destiny to become a light unto the world. And he confounded the priests with these serious questions. His parents didn't know when they left the temple that he was not with them, and they searched everywhere for Him. Finally, they went back to the temple, and they found Him there, still asking the priests questions. And they berated Him for not coming with them, and He said, "Do you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Wouldn't it be wonderful if each and every one of us each day of our lives would dedicate that life to be about our Father's business, not our business, not the other fellow's business, but the business of God, through Christ; to really pick up our crosses which are our bodies and follow Him and emulate Him in every way.

Be the Tree of Life

To be the tree of life is the most wonderful thing in the world. And you will know that the tree...notice that the tree always points upward. The light of the candle is always one pointed. Everything goes into the One; everything goes into the One. Isn't it wonderful to think of the simile of this little child that was born this morning out of the mother's womb. She, in turn, was born out of her mother's womb. And, again, the seed came into full fruition and grew into a tree of life, and then it spread its seed and, again, the seed grew and became a tree of life. And this is the way the trees in the forests grow. The fruits of the tree falls to the ground, and the seeds take root again, and it is constant and continuous. And this is the way that God continues the life of each and every one of us, of all of mankind all the time. How wonderful this is.

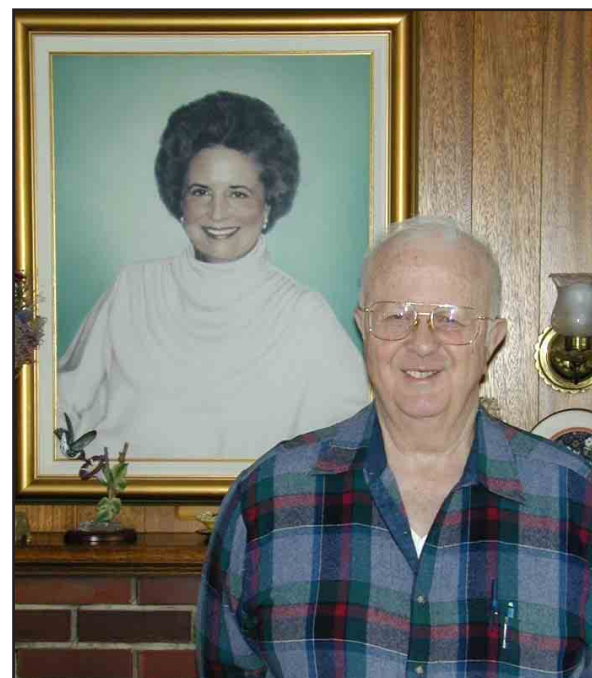
When you stop to think about this tree of life, it has everything in it. It has the seed; it has the power to grow into a tall, strong tree; it has the power to bear leaves and fruit; it has the power to have the harvest, and the harvest comes from the seeds of truth, the seeds of life that you plant in your own garden of life. And unless you plant good seed, you will not get anything but weeds. Isn't it better to walk in the way of the Lord, to follow His commandments, to pick up your cross and follow the Christ and be a light unto men, and to have your own life a thing of radiance, a thing of service, of joy, of happiness... Let us really read what the Bible says and know that we have this power within us to rise above all of the things that bother us, all of the things human, and ascend into our

Memories of Mother

Thank You, Mother

by Win Smith

It has been said that the master seeks the disciple, not the other way around. That thread runs through my own meeting with Mother in this lifetime. I've always been an open-minded skeptic, often reading with interest about things not covered in the educational curriculum. Some of this stuff was clearly out in left field, some seemed plausible, and some, such as yoga, I viewed with wariness.



I've always felt close to God. Walking out in the woods at dusk just before a spring rain is a spiritual experience. But from an early age I was put off by the strident literalistic messages of the religious establishment. Their literal interpretations of the surface stories of the allegories just didn't seem real. And if it says in the Good Book that God is love, why were we being conditioned to superstitiously fear a vindictive tribal deity? My mother, a minister's daughter, dutifully carted me off to Sunday school every week. By age ten, I put up such a fuss she quit fighting it.

A Devoted Heart

by Yogacharya David Hickenbottom

Win Smith has been a devoted disciple of Mother's for over fifty years. Through those years he married Kathy, achieved recognition as an innovative aeronautical engineer, raised four loving children, and all the while has been a sincere Kriya yogi.

Being a sincere, dedicated and loyal disciple to one's own Guru and Path is a rarity in this age. Jesus described how many seeds of truth fall upon unproductive soil (minds) and wither; other truth-seeds spring up quickly but due to insufficient root depth die out; then there is soil that supports deep and sustained growth where seeds develop into great trees of Realization—how rare and lovely.

Man is born imperfect, but is called upon to achieve perfection: *Be ye perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect* is a tall order of business. Every disciple can look back with regret for what was done or not done in his spiritual journey; Win is the first to voice his own regrets. Yet he has endured where others faded, he has overcome when others gave up, he has followed when others have wandered away. His heart has been unfailingly true.

Erect in posture, precise in thoughts and words, a scientific bent of mind may make his devoted heart seem not evident, but this would be a serious misreading of the man.

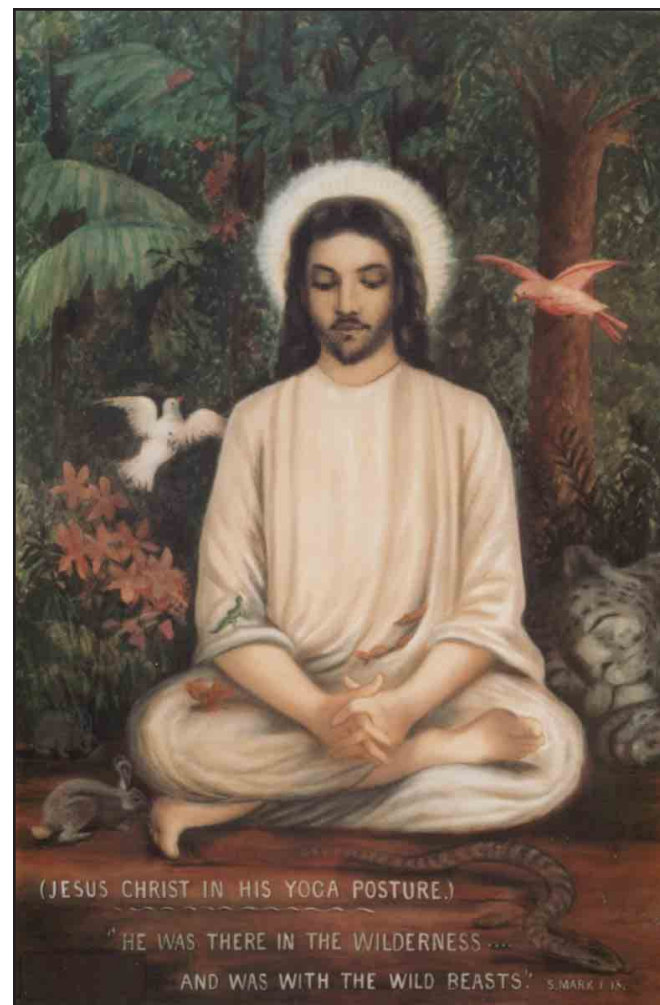
At the end of life, when all struggles and triumphs have been reckoned, there will be no greater measure of a lifetime than one's own spiritual progress. Loyalty, dedication and sincerity to your path to Realization will certainly come as highly prized virtues on that day. God, Mother and the Masters certainly smile in recognition of these virtues in Win Smith. †

*So bless yourself if you are true to God,
true to Guru and the great ones.
You are much more blessed
than all the wealthy people in the world.*

Paramhansa Yogananda

Christhood to become a living tree of life for God alone. How beautiful it is.

I want to wish you all a Merry Christmas, and a wonderful and happy and prosperous New Year. Keep the Christ in your hearts, in your consciousness, in every act, in every deed, in every thought that you have. Think only of Him and serve Him and He will come to you in all of His graciousness, His radiance, and His light and bless you forevermore. †



Going Home



by Adam Shinn

Adam Shinn is a Kriyaban living in an area north of Seattle. He describes a day when a snowstorm enveloped the city. There were many people stranded that night—many who left their cars on the side of the freeway, etc. Not only did Adam's spiritual practice make him "calm and happy", but God's inner promptings guided him perfectly. [David]

I want to share with you my journey home from work Monday night. After waiting in the snow and ice for quite some time for my bus home from work at the University of Washington, I gave up and started to walk, keeping Om Sri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram as my main focus. From the freeway at 45th I waited some more and felt guidance to board a bus which took me to 65th. From there, I walked around Greenlake until another bus took me to Aurora. By then it was almost 7 pm but I felt very calm and happy inside the whole time. I caught a very slow bus on Aurora which I had hoped would take me all the way to Shoreline, but suddenly I felt I should get off. I went to a mini mart and bought a snack, and while I was at the cash register, I heard someone behind me saying he was going to Lynnwood. Without hesitation, I asked him for a ride and that got me home. Amazingly I got home faster than many of my colleagues who live nearby. The whole way I felt protected, joyful and grateful. Experiences like that make me eager for more adventures with Ram, and I can understand a little more of why Papa would gleefully hope for darshan from wild tigers. When we are in His presence, what would normally be a fearful and anxious experience, transforms into a Divine ride full of laughter and excitement. †

as if from a deep sleep. Nor was this an unfitting vision, for in the hearts of many the child Jesus really had been forgotten, but now, by his grace and through his servant Francis, he had been brought back to life and impressed here by loving recollection. Finally the celebration ended and each returned joyfully home.

The hay placed in the manger was kept so that the Lord, multiplying his holy mercy, might bring health to the beasts of burden and other animals. And indeed it happened that many animals throughout the surrounding area were cured of their illnesses by eating this hay. Moreover, women undergoing a long and difficult labor gave birth safely when some of this hay was placed upon them. And a large number of people, male and female alike, with various illnesses, all received the health they desired there. At last a temple of the Lord was consecrated where the manger stood, and over the manger an altar was constructed and a church dedicated in honor of the blessed father Francis, so that, where animals once had eaten hay, henceforth men could gain health in soul and body by eating the flesh of the Lamb without spot or blemish, Jesus Christ our Lord, who through great and indescribable love gave himself to us, living and reigning with the Father and Holy Spirit, God eternally glorious forever and ever, Amen. Alleluia! Alleluia! †

Excerpts from *First and Second Lives of Saint Francis* by Thomas of Celano

From Canticle of Brother Sun

*Most high, all-powerful, all good, Lord!
All praise is yours, all glory, all honor
And all blessing.*

To you alone, Most High, do they belong.

No mortal lips are worthy

To pronounce your name.

1st Stanza of St. Francis' famous prayer

pursued that of the mind. Around fifteen days before the birthday of Christ Francis sent for this man, as he often did, and said to him, "If you wish to celebrate the approaching feast of the Lord at Greccio, hurry and do what I tell you. I want to do something that will recall the memory of that child who was born in Bethlehem, to see with bodily eyes the inconveniences of his infancy, how he lay in the manger, and how the ox and ass stood by." Upon hearing this, the good and faithful man hurried to prepare all that the holy man had requested.

The day of joy drew near, the time of exultation approached. The brothers were called from their various places. With glad hearts, the men and women of that place prepared, according to their means, candles and torches to light up that night which has illuminated all the days and years with its glittering star. Finally the holy man of God arrived and, finding everything prepared, saw it and rejoiced.

The manger is ready, hay is brought, the ox and ass are led in. Simplicity is honored there, poverty is exalted, humility is commended and a new Bethlehem, as it were, is made from Greccio. Night is illuminated like the day, delighting men and beasts. The people come and joyfully celebrate the new mystery. The forest resounds with voices and the rocks respond to their rejoicing. The brothers sing, discharging their debt of praise to the Lord, and the whole night echoes with jubilation. The holy man of God stands before the manger full of sighs, consumed by devotion and filled with a marvelous joy. The solemnities of the mass are performed over the manger and the priest experiences a new consolation.

The holy man of God wears a deacon's vestments, for he was indeed a deacon, and he sings the holy gospel with a sonorous voice. And his voice, a sweet voice, a vehement voice, a clear voice, a sonorous voice, invites all to the highest rewards. Then he preaches melliflously to the people standing about, telling them about the birth of the poor king and the little city of Bethlehem. Often, too, when he wished to mention Jesus Christ, burning with love he called him "the child of Bethlehem," and speaking the word "Bethlehem" or "Jesus," he licked his lips with his tongue, seeming to taste the sweetness of these words.

The gifts of the Almighty are multiplied here and a marvelous vision is seen by a certain virtuous man. For he saw a little child lying lifeless in the manger, and he saw the holy man of God approach and arouse the child

A Visitation

by Cate Koler

Unexpectedly. . . .

You come again today

You seem to prefer to arrive unbidden

Many times my invitations appear to go unanswered

Then You surprise me at the oddest times:

at work

when driving

walking into a store. . . .

Your sweet arrival makes me sigh with love

I see Your glow everywhere, in all I meet

My eyelids become heavy

My mind struggles to focus on what I am doing

It would rather fix on You.

I have become the reciter of Psalms

Praise bubbles forth

Prayers are remembered, uttered softly

I become soft inside

My iceberg heart melts into a river of longing

Racing to You

Next time. . . .

Please come

And never leave.

The Child of Bethlehem:

St. Francis and the First Nativity Scene

Francesco Bernardone was born in Assisi in 1181. His father Pietro was a successful merchant and hoped his son would succeed him in that role. Things turned out differently.

Francis seems to have been a winsome and somewhat feckless young man who threw himself into the social life of his city as enthusiastically as he engaged in its military projects. While taking part in the latter he was captured by the Perugians in 1202 and spent a year in prison. Then, around the age of twenty-three, he underwent a gradual conversion which finally led him to reject his former life and his father's wealth.

Of the various sources dealing with Francis' life, the earliest biography is the First Life of Saint Francis written by Thomas of Celano. It was commissioned by Pope Gregory IX and was completed by 1230, just four years after Francis' death and two years after his canonization. Later, in 1244, the minister general of the Franciscan order asked all the brothers to submit any additional information about Francis they might have. Using this material, Celano produced another work which, although usually called his Second Life of Saint Francis is really more of a supplement to the first. It was completed by the middle of 1247.

Celano's work has the advantage of having been written by an early member of the Franciscan order who could rely on personal experience and the testimony of Francis' close companions. Its major disadvantage is that it is the official biography of a saint. Thus much of what it says, although not necessarily false, is probably something less than the whole truth.

We join Celano at a critical point in Francis' life. The year is 1205. Since returning the previous year from an abortive attempt to win military glory in southern Italy, Francis has been aware that something important is going on within him. [Medieval Sourcebook]

Now perfectly changed in heart and soon to be changed in body, Francis was strolling one day near the old church of St. Damian, which was nearly

destroyed and abandoned by all. The spirit led him to enter the church and pray. Devoutly lying prostrate before the crucifix, stirred by unusual visitations, he found he was different than when he had entered.

While he was in this affected state, something absolutely unheard-of occurred. The crucifix moved its lips and began to speak. "Francis," it said, calling him by name, "go and repair my house, which, as you see, is completely destroyed." Francis was stupefied and nearly deranged by this speech. He prepared to obey, surrendering himself completely to the project. But since he considered the change in him to be beyond description, it is best for us to be silent about what he himself could not describe. From then on compassion for the crucified one was imprinted in his holy soul and, one may devoutly suspect, the stigmata of the holy passion were deeply imprinted in his heart, though not yet in his flesh.

His highest intention, greatest desire, and supreme purpose was to observe the holy gospel in and through all things. He wanted to follow the doctrine and walk in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to do so perfectly, with all vigilance, all zeal, complete desire of the mind, complete fervor of the heart. He remembered Christ's words through constant meditation and recalled his actions through wise consideration. The humility of the incarnation and the love of the passion so occupied his memory that he scarcely wished to think of anything else. Hence what he did in the third year before the day of his glorious death, in the town called Greccio, on the birthday of our Lord Jesus Christ, should be reverently remembered.

There was in that place a certain man named John, of good reputation and even better life, whom the blessed Francis particularly loved. Noble and honorable in his own land, he had trodden on nobility of the flesh and

