

Conversation on Light

Observations and reflections with Cynthia Bourgeault and Christopher Page
Thoughts on Wisdom and Devotion on Trinity Sunday, 2011

FIRST VOICE:

The church is in the midst of a massive cultural sea change.

RESPONSE VOICE:

It really is a fascinating time to be living in. . . From global warming to the worldwide web, it's all about dynamic equilibrium in a fragile and interconnected world.

FIRST VOICE:

People . . . are **looking for a deep experience of God and profound inner wisdom to support them in living authentic and integrated lives.**

RESPONSE VOICE:

(The church needs to) pare down and focus on those folks thirsting for authentic spiritual formation and actually deliver the goods . . . **profound transformational wisdom still flowing from the living heart of Jesus.**

- To one is given through the Spirit the **utterance of wisdom**, and to another the **utterance of knowledge** according to the same Spirit

FIRST VOICE:

Although the institutional expression of faith is in precipitous decline throughout North America and Europe, faith is not in decline. The majority of people still believe in God and have deep spiritual longings. **They simply would not think of looking to the church to satisfy their spiritual hunger.**

- recent experience here at COTA

RESPONSE VOICE:

So . . . **where are they looking?** . . . To retreats, meditation workshops, wisdom schools, vision quests, spiritual direction programs, internet courses, (and) virtual monasteries such as Sr. Joan Chittister's newly launched "Monastery of the heart"

- link on our **web page**
- Greeting: **May you find here, all of you and each of you, in the monastery within you, a path to wholeness, a community to support you on the way, the kind of reflection that deepens the soul and a way to be alive in these times that gives life to others, as well.**
- Locally the **Contemplative Society** and the work of **Sarah Donnelly**

The bottom lines seem to be that most people hunger for genuine spiritual formation (not doctrinal imprinting) in an **atmosphere of embodied practice**

- my experience with a colleague at UVIC

FIRST VOICE:

The way forward is through the development of meaningful spiritual practices, a renewal of corporate spirituality, and a profound shift of consciousness in the way we do church . . . by creating space for an awareness of the presence and action of God to emerge in our midst.

RESPONSE VOICE:

More than seventy years ago the Quaker mystic Thomas Kelly penned these prophetic words:

“Let us explore together the secret of a deeper devotion, a more subterranean sanctuary of the soul, where the Light Within never fades, but burns, a perpetual Flame, where the wells of living water

of divine revelation rise up continuously, day by day and hour by hour, steady and transfiguring.

The ‘bright shoots of everlastingness’ can become a steady light within, if we are deadly in earnest in our dedication to the light and are willing to pass out of first stages into (more mature) religious living.

Only if this is possible can **the light from the inner sanctuary of the soul be a workaday light for the marketplace, a guide for perplexed feet, a re-creator of culture-patterns for the human race.**” (The Light Within, p. 31).

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Prayer of those who dwell in a Monastery of the Heart

Loving God,
You who dwell in our hearts,
make for us a cave there
in which to

hear your voice more distinctly,
feel your care more tenderly,
understand your will more clearly,
and come to know your presence
at every moment of our lives

with new clarity
and new courage,
with new faith
and new urgency.

Amen.