The Perennial Tradition

Summary: Sunday, August 11—Friday, August 16, 2019

*If it is true, it is always from the one Holy Spirit.*—Thomas Aquinas (Sunday)

We are rediscovering the *philosophia perennis*, shared universal truth, and at a rather quick pace—God seems urgent at this point in our tragic history. (Monday)

*In every historical epoch and in every cultural tradition, there are those who practice a form of contemplation that puts them in a position to receive the gift of an unfiltered divine encounter.*—James Danaher (Tuesday)

*If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.*—Huston Smith (Wednesday)

*We are made, the scriptures of all religions assure us, in the image of God. Nothing can change that original goodness.*—Eknath Easwaran (Thursday)

*Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept. Ultimate Reality is the ground of infinite potentiality and actualization.*—Snowmass Conference (Friday)

Practice: The Welcoming Prayer

Earlier this week we saw how unfiltered encounters with the divine are hallmarks of the Perennial Tradition, experienced by people across religions. Contemplative practice is anything we do that intentionally opens our hearts, minds, and bodies to this unitive consciousness or presence to Love.

One of my favorite practices is the Welcoming Prayer created by Mary Mrozowski (1925–1993), a spiritual teacher, mystic, and founding member of Contemplative Outreach. It is based on her personal experience of surrender as essential to transformation and the teachings of Jean Pierre de Caussade (1675–1751) and Fr. Thomas Keating (1923–2018). Welcoming Prayer is a simple way of surrendering to God’s presence in our daily life. This method can help us dismantle unhelpful mental and emotional habits so that we respond rather than react to circumstances. To be clear, I’m not suggesting that we welcome or accept abuse, trauma, or oppression, but rather our feelings around those incidents. We then become empowered to take necessary action more freely, creatively, and lovingly.

Set aside some quiet time alone to try this practice. Begin by becoming aware of how your body feels. Notice any tension or...
The Perennial Tradition

An Uncreated Spark
Thursday, August 15, 2019

Eknath Easwaran (1910–1999) was an Indian born spiritual teacher and author, as well as a translator and interpreter of early Hindu texts such as the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. I was personally introduced to him during a visit from Henri Nouwen in the late 1980s. He encouraged me to spread his teaching, which I have not done enough until now. Easwaran writes:

We are made, the scriptures of all religions assure us, in the image of God. Nothing can change that original goodness. Whatever mistakes we have made in the past, whatever problems we may have in the present, in every one of us this “uncreated spark in the soul” remains untouched, ever pure, ever perfect. Even if we try with all our might to douse or hide it, it is always ready to set our personality ablaze with light.

What did [Meister Eckhart (1260–1328)] teach? Essentially, four principles that [Gottfried] Leibnitz would later Philosophy, because they have been taught from age to age in culture after culture:

1. The world is not governed by a cruel and capricious God, but by one who is compassionate, fearful, and the unshakable knowledge, based on direct, personal experience, that all the treasures
2. Between two interconnected planes of reality and knowing, scientific empiricism and a transcendent/immanent reality, metaphor and “pointers” to the divine, not as ends in themselves.
3. The potential for human wholeness—or, in other frames of reference, enlightenment, salvation, transcendence, bliss—is present in every human being.
4. Ultimate Reality cannot be limited by any name or concept.

The Perennial Tradition

Distilled Wisdom
Wednesday, August 14, 2019

Today, as we continue to reflect on the Perennial Tradition, we hear from John Esposito, Founding Director of the Alwaleed Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding in the Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University.

[The understandings of the] movement, often referred to as the Perennial Philosophy or Perennialism . . . were well described by Huston Smith, Aldous Huxley, and Gottfried Leibnitz. Smith captured the essence of their belief: “If we take the world’s enduring religions at their best, we discover the distilled wisdom of the human race.” [1]

However different, all advocate the rediscovery of the wisdom traditions of the past, believing that the various visions of the great world religious traditions share the same deep truths from which all belief systems have developed. They distinguish between two interconnected planes of reality and knowing, scientific empiricism and a transcendent/immanent reality, experienced in wisdom traditions through meditation and contemplation. Religious language or discourse, the symbols, and rituals of institutional religion, conditioned by historical, social, and cultural contexts, are seen as metaphors and “pointers,” to the divine, not as ends in themselves.

The Perennial Tradition

A Shared Universal Truth
Monday, August 12, 2019

Consider an important question: Why are so many people from different cultures, countries, ethnicities, educations, and religions saying very similar things today? This really is quite amazing, and, to my knowledge, has no precedent in human history. Call it the collective unconscious, globalization, or the One Spirit of God. We seem to be evolving and experiencing more widespread transformation. The things we used to argue about or use as reasons to dismiss one another now so often seem boring, limited, historically bound, and prejudicial.

We are rediscovering the philosophia perennis, a shared universal truth, and at a rather quick pace—God seems urgent at this point in our tragic history. This “wisdom tradition” shows itself in all of the world religions throughout history. Too many of God’s holy people keep saying the same thing—although admittedly from the more mature levels of consciousness—that we cannot continue to dismiss all holy people as “fuzzy thinkers.”

We might call these folks mystics, prophets, and saints. While all of us have the capacity to tap into this consciousness, it is not how most of us have been trained to think! But these ideas do not threaten my Christian faith in any way. Rather, they help me live it.
The Perennial Tradition

 Participation
 Sunday, August 11, 2019

The Perennial Tradition includes the constant themes and truths that recur in all the world religions at their most mature and deep levels. As I mentioned last week, the Second Vatican Council teaches Catholics that indigenous religions, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Judaism each reflect “a ray of that Truth which enlightens all [people].” [1] If it’s true, then it has to be true everywhere. Or, as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) was fond of saying, quoting Ambrose (another Doctor of the Church, 340–397), “If it is true, it is always from the one Holy Spirit.” [2]

Here’s philosopher Aldous Huxley’s (1884–1963) definition of “the perennial philosophy”:

The metaphysic that recognizes a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality, and the ethic that places [humanity’s] final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being. This is immemorial and universal. [3]

The Perennial Tradition constantly recognizes that we are part of something more than we are observing something. Again: we are part of something more than we are observing something. How does that feel to you? From the perspective of...
The Perennial Tradition book. Read reviews from world’s largest community for readers. Like America, Awake, this book is another wake-up call. It was wr... Start by marking “The Perennial Tradition: Overview of the Secret Heritage, the Single Stream of Initiatory Teaching Flowing Through All the Great Schools of Mysticism” as Want to Read: Want to Read saving… Want to Read. The perennial philosophy states that at the heart of each authentic tradition lies One Universal, Timeless Truth that transcends all time and space. This Truth is beyond being. This Truth is the source of Sacred Revelation. This Truth is God. The Perennial Philo...