

NOTES FROM WISDOM OF EASTERN CHRISTIANITY CD BY RICHARD GROVES

HEBRAIC ROOTS

"I call heaven and earth today to witness... I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse... chose life, then." Deuteronomy 30:19

"Each year the spirit and actions of each candidate shall be examined in order to provide the most appropriate spiritual formation." *Manual of Discipline*, Qumran Community, 1st Century AD.

THREE EVANGELICAL PRINCIPLES OF SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT:

- DEFER TO COMMUNITY
- TEST THE SPIRITS
- TRUST THE FRUIT

DEFER TO COMMUNITY

"If your brother should commit some wrong against you, go and point out his fault but keep it between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won him over. If he does not, summon another so that every case may stand on the word of two or three witnesses. If he ignores even them, refer him to the **EKKLESIA**. If he ignores even the **EKKLESIA**, treat him as you would a Gentile... I assure you, whatever you declare bound on earth, will be bound in heaven and whatever you declare loosed on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."
Matthew 18:15-18

"Again I tell you, if two of you join your voices on earth to pray for anything whatsoever, it shall be granted you by my Father in heaven. Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in their midst." *Matthew 18: 19-20*

TEST THE SPIRITS

"Beloved, do not trust every spirit but put the spirits to the test, to see if they belong to God because many false prophets have appeared in the world." *John 4:1*

TRUST THE FRUIT

"By their fruit you shall know them." *Mark 7:16*

PAULINE TEACHING

"Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all *didaskoloi/spiritual teachers*?" I Cor. 12:29

"Through the Spirit one receives faith. By the same spirit another is given the gift of healing... to another the gift of prophecy is given and to another, the power to distinguish one kind of spirit from another." *I Corinthians 12:10*

ORTHODOX SPIRITUAL THEOLOGY

HAGIA SOPHIA

[Wisdom... Be attentive!]

GREAT SCHISM OF 1054

The Controversy over a word: "Filioque"

THEOSIS

=

DOCTRINE OF DEIFICATION
'Sharing in Divine Life'

CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

VS.

EASTERN

Self Governing Churches
Scriptural Continuity of Doctrine
Mysticism of Laity
Conscience of the People
Laity: Royal Priesthood

WESTERN

Centralized Authority
Development of Doctrine
Mystical Exceptions
Conscience of the Church
Laity: Clerical Mediation

"One can be damned alone, but only saved with others." Russian Orthodox Proverb

EARLY MONASTICISM

Confessor

=

Charismatic Religious or Lay Advisor

Anchorites

=

Desert Fathers and Mothers

Cenobites

=

Early Monastic Communities

Anam Chara

=

Soul Friend [Celtic]

Starets [Tzaddik]

=

Spiritual Elder/Director
[Eastern Orthodoxy]

FOURTH CENTURY MONASTIC ROOTS [EGYPT – COPTIC SOURCES]

ST. EVAGRIUS PONTICUS: "Ad Monachos"

"A monk comes to the cell of Evagrius, shares a problem, and asks for a word. Evagrius, steeped in the scriptures, offers a word; and the monk departs to practice it. Evagrius returns to what he was doing before the monk arrived, perhaps chanting a psalm, perhaps continuing to work on his book of proverbs which he is writing. The disciple's problem stays in his mind as well as the word he gave him. A psalm verse gives him further insight. He sits down and redefines the word he gave to the disciple. He polishes it and includes it in a larger work... Over time, other disciples come to the teacher's cell. Evagrius discerns that the larger proverb exactly suits the situation. He offers it. The disciple departs to practice the two or four lines he has received. He adds his own metaphors from life... there is much to practice." Fr. Jeremy Driscoll, OSB

THE PRACTICE OF ONOMATOS [NAMING]

Abbot Pacomius

- Recognize, pay attention to and respond to God's specific self-communication in life, prayer and relationship.
- Be attentive to movements toward and away from God [testing the spirits].
- Explore God's seeming absence.
- Recognize and name areas of darkness and unfreedom that prevent a person from God's presence.
- Use the time-tested tools for spiritual discernment as a way of making important life decisions.

ADVICE FOR STARETS: "SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR"

- Be of few words.
Give only 'one word' when possible.
- Be steady in your own practice.
*Daily **ascesis**, without exception.*
- Be kind and gentle with others' failings.
Be patient, above all exhort much and rebuke sparingly.

ANTHONY OF EGYPT 4TH c.

Do not be afraid to hear about virtue and do not be a stranger to the term. For it is not distant from us nor does it stand external to us, but its realization lies within us and the task is easy if we will only will it.

Now the Greeks leave home and traverse the sea in order to gain an education. But there is no need for us to go abroad on account of the Reign of Heaven nor to cross the sea for virtue. For the Scripture has told us, 'The Kingdom of God is within you.' The only thing goodness needs, then, is that which is within the human mind."

So wake up, then. God is already at home... we are in the far away country!

ST. BENEDICT [Italy 7TH c.]

ASCOLTA!

[First word in the Rule of St. Benedict]

OBEDIENCE

[*Obedire*=listening from within]

...Is not just about asking God for guidance through prayer but also listening to the inner voice of conscience, emotion and heart... it is a Holy Listening with Freedom.

WITH HEARTS EXPANDED

"... As we progress on our way of life and faith, let us choose the path of God's Direction, our hearts overflowing with the inexpressible delight of love." Prologue, v. 49

COVERSIO MOREM

[The Fourth Vow]

Balance between accepting our weaknesses

&

Becoming what we're meant to become

BENEDICTINE DISCERNMENT: A LIVING PROCESS

- Especially when making a major life change
- To continually respond to the voice of the Spirit where... “there seems no reason why it should not also be ours.”

MONASTIC HOSPITALITY OF SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

***“Let all guests be received as Christ.”
Rule of St. Benedict***

Getting Ready

- Environment
- Personal Cleansing

Sharing Space

- Place of Silence
- Inviting Trust

Sharing Stories

- Mutual Honesty
- Keeping Focus

Asking Questions

- Challenging Growth
- Finding God in Silence/Absence

WISDOM... BE ATTENTIVE!

HAGIA SOPHIA

[St. Wisdom = Holy Spirit]
The feminine face of God

METANOIA

[Conversion/Change of Consciousness]

=

ABBA/IMMA

+

COMMUNITY

Conversion and humility have set the soul up.

Compassion and gentleness have made it firm. St. Evagrius Ponticus, 4th c.

When is a person competent to answer for the souls of others?

When s/he is competent for her/his own soul first. St. Columbanus, 6th c.

Don't be afraid to trade with the gifts God has given you. Abbess Hilda of Whitby, 7th

A person without an *anam chara* [soul-friend] is like a body without a head. St. Brigid

To what is the teacher [anam chara] like when she converts a soul? She is like a sentry on the tower looking out at the stratagems of the enemy. Then not only does she have to save her own soul but also those of her citizens. Irish Imma, 7th c.

BENEDICTINE DISCERNMENT: A LIVING PROCESS

- Especially when making a major life change
- To continually respond to the voice of the Spirit where... “there seems no reason why it should not also be ours.”

Pearls of Wisdom

Conversion and humility have set the soul up.
Compassion and gentleness have made it firm.
Evagrius Ponticus, 4th c.

When is a person competent to answer for the souls of others?
When s/he is competent for her/his own soul first. St. Columbanus, 6th c.

Don't be afraid to trade with the gifts God has given you. Abbess Hilda of Whitby, 7th c.

A person without an *anam chara* [soul-friend] is like a body without a head. St. Brigid

To what is the teacher [anam chara] like when she converts a soul? She is like a sentry on the tower looking out at the stratagems of the enemy. Then not only does she have to save her own soul but also those of her citizens.
Irish Imma, 7th c.