

Union Congregational Church
Adult Sunday School/Abram K-J
September 29, 2013
François Fénelon

Pray.

What we're doing in the class for six weeks.

SLIDE:

Devotional Classic is "a kind of writing that has stood the test of time and that seeks to form the soul before God."

SLIDE:

9/22: St. Augustine (pp. 55-61)

9/29: François Fénelon (pp. 48-54)

10/6: Evelyn Underhill (pp. 94-100)

10/13: Apocryphal Literature

10/20: Catherine of Siena (pp.264-270)

10/27: Kathleen Norris (pp. 363-368)

[OFFER HANDOUT]

SLIDE:

François Fénelon
(1651-1715)

SLIDES:

The Quotable Fénelon

"It is when God appears to have abandoned us that we must abandon ourselves most wholly to God."

"How rare it is to find a soul quiet enough to hear God speak!"

"Death is a blessing inasmuch as it puts an end to all temptation."

"As we get to know ourselves better we always find ourselves to be more depraved than we thought."

"If the crowns of all the kingdoms were laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my love of reading, I would spurn them all."

"The peace of the soul consists in an absolute resignation to the will of God."

"Your mind is a beautiful thing. Learn to trust it less and you'll make better use of it."

AKJ: This was my introduction to Fenelon, when a mentor quoted this line to me.

SLIDE:

Brief bio

- court of Louis XIV
- tutored the Duke of Burgundy
- Roman Catholic archbishop in Cambrai, (northern) France

SLIDE:

Brief bio

- adherent of Quietism (detach from things of this world; center instead on inner spiritual life and abiding love of Christ)
- this was controversial/heretical

Let's look at the reading together.

SLIDE (Section 1; read 1-2, maybe 3):

Christian perfection is not so severe, tiresome, and constraining as we think. It asks us to be God's from the bottom of our hearts. And since we thus are God's, everything that we do for him is easy.

AKJ: Clarify "Christian perfection"—a concept Wesley would adopt. Though there are various definitions and various opinions on just what level of "perfection" we can attain while on earth, "Christian perfection" in this sense refers more to the process than the end goal.

Is it "easy"?

He elaborates in section 6—paragraphs 2 and 3 explain further.

Justification, then sanctification (i.e., "Christian perfection").

SLIDE (Section 8; read section):

We must love only him not only with all the stretch and strength of our hearts, but also with all the concentration of our thought. How then could we believe that we love him if we cannot resolve to think on his law and to bend all our energy to doing his will?

(Read I Peter 4:1-6)

Did anything else in the reading stand out to you as compelling, convicting, confusing?

SLIDE:

Questions from Devotional Classics

“The divided souls are those who are weak and timid, who desire to ‘stay where we are.’ Describe a time in your life when you wanted to stay where you were but God was calling you to move ahead.”

SLIDE:

A Suggested Exercise

“Fénelon also notes that we are often afraid of being too committed to God, afraid of being too happy. Though it sounds strange, this fear is a reality for many. Use your journal to answer the question, Why am I afraid to be happy?”

If time permits...

SLIDE:

From “On the Good Use of Time”

A general rule for the good use of time is to accustom oneself to live in a continual dependence on the Spirit of God, receiving from moment to moment whatever it pleases him to give us, referring to him at once in the doubts which we necessarily run into, turning to him in the weakness into which goodness slips from exhaustion, calling on him and lifting oneself to him, when the heart, swept away by material things, sees itself led imperceptibly off the path and finds itself forgetting and drifting away from God [or, slackening on its Godward journey].

SLIDE:

For Next Week...

Sunday, October 6, 2013

Evelyn Underhill

What Do We Mean by Prayer?

(pp. 94-100)

(More Fenelon at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/fenelon>)

Close in prayer—sharing how to pray, as time.