

# The Awakening Project

MEETING 4



# Sarah Bachelard - Comments

Valuscha: **Meditation is part of many religious traditions**, including Christianity. It **deepens our spirituality** and our understanding of the faith. It also fuels our **ancient faith for life in today's world**.

- ▶ Vincent added: Prayer is how we converse with God and how we put God the centre of our lives so, **spiritually, it is as essential as air**. 'Fixed' prayers can be powerful, though **they mustn't become a mere routine**.
- ▶ Iain added: Do we need to use words to pray? What benefits does **wordless prayer** contribute?

Vincent: Contemplation is about **stripping ourselves of ego-centrism**, which can be seen in so many current events. A true follower of Jesus puts him at the centre of their lives.

- ▶ Dania added: surrendering egocentrism is key for **social justice activism** (e.g. Black Lives Matter) to **achieve its intended goals**.

Dania: **Unwavering trust and loyalty in God**, should be our response to secularisation, **not defensiveness or rivalry**. This faith involves the death of our own ways of mapping reality. Faith may be an abstract, concept but it is a solid way to live.

Iain: Bachelard is one of many contemporary thinkers arguing that **Western secularism** is actually **a fruit of Christianity**. This creates **paradox and tension** for people of faith. Contemplative practice is an aid to **embracing the complexities** of life, faith and justice.

# Sarah Bachelard – Discussion

- ▶ Do you agree with Bachelard's stance that spirituality has an extreme effect on and enhances religiosity? What about people who classify themselves as spiritual but not religious? ("Why can't we just meditate?")
- ▶ Sarah touches on the rapid secularization of our culture and provides a few prompts with which Christians can strengthen their bond with God in face of these new cultural norms, do you think this 'secularization' poses a significant obstacle to people of faith these days?
- ▶ The theme of unwavering faith is prominent in this seminar, what does the concept of faith mean to you? Is it more fluid and abstract or does it have a definitive meaning or guidelines?
- ▶ Why is stripping ourselves of vices such as egoism such a big part of adhering to our faiths?
- ▶ What, if any, is the connection between contemplation and social action?

# Henri Nouwen – Comparisons

- ▶ Similarities: spirituality as a basis for effective social action.
- ▶ Some differences
  - ▶ Sarah Bachelard has an affinity with those who are on the fringe of organized religion whereas Henri Nouwen lived comfortably within the institutional boundaries of Roman Catholicism.
  - ▶ Sarah Bachelard understands contemplation as seeking to move from dualistic thinking (e.g. Them and Us) towards unitary modes of thought. Nouwen, understood spirituality as a movement between poles (e.g. from fear to love).
  - ▶ Sarah Bachelard sees silent contemplation as key tool to help us move beyond the limits of language. Henry Nouwen used *Visio Divina* (i.e. spiritual visual art) to achieve the same goal.
- ▶ Do you see these as complementary perspectives, or in tension? Which resonate with you more?

# Henri Nouwen - Discussion

- ▶ In the first interview with Rick Tobias he states, “Henri becomes a prophetic voice that models the love of the Kingdom to people that have often been excluded from earthly Kingdoms” what does this statement mean to you and how can we embody it’s message in our own lives?
- ▶ The theme of meaningful listening as an effective starting point to solving injustices is prominent across all three interviews. Do you agree with the speakers and essentially Henri’s fundamental belief about what causes inequality and allows for it to reproduce is ignorance and not listening spiritually?
- ▶ The media is listed as a major contributor to inciting mistrust and division these days, how can we counter this?
- ▶ Shane Claiborne introduces us to the concept of a wounded healer - “those among us who have bumps and bruises have been conditioned to think of them as liabilities whereas they are actually our credentials. The things that we have survived become a part of the testimony of the power of love” and how our society’s greatest leaders are wounded heroes. Who comes to your mind when thinking of someone who is a wounded healer? Can be a personal or public figure.