DWIGHT ZSCHEILE - A RAPID RESPONSE TO ‘MONASTIC PRACTICES AND THE MISSIO DEI’

Spiritual formation is a critical dimension of the missional conversation overdue for further development within a missional framework. This essay helpfully reframes spiritual disciplines from a primarily private, individualistic view toward a socially-engaged, kingdom perspective. It grounds this reframing in the particular practice of the Northumbria Community and makes a valuable contribution to the discussion.

The critical move from individualistic to social views of spiritual disciplines makes me wonder about a

deeper shift in underlying theological anthropologies. There is a difference between a substantialist anthropology (the predominant historical western imagination that fosters an individualistic approach) and a relational anthropology (which the Trinitarian commitments of the article would invite). A relational anthropology offers grounds for understanding discipleship as involving deep participation in (and mutual transformation by) relationships with neighbors.

The Northumbria community's commitments to "availability" and "vulnerability" and construal of compassion as lying at the heart of mission offer powerful ways of connecting personal spirituality with missional living. James Hunter's work on "faithful presence" might offer a helpful dialogue partner here.[1] How does "availability" relate to presence in a culture of perpetual distraction? Availability to whom? The Spirit? The neighbor?

The Sermon on the Mount is offered as a key locus for understanding what a mission of compassion looks like. How might a Pauline emphasis on participating in the inception of a new eschatological age, which involves God's radical, compassionate justification of estranged humanity in Christ through the Spirit, complement this? One of the dangers of the approach here is the risk that people could misconstrue spiritual formation and mission as performative tasks—getting it all right for God—thus fostering a kind of spiritual elitism or works righteousness. The article by no means suggests that, but it is worth emphasizing here that our context is of course God's gracious compassion for human sinners.

How might a reversal—relying upon others' hospitality (Luke 10:1-12)—complement the rich discussion of hospitality here?

This fruitful essay opens up many key areas for ongoing exploration within the missional conversation.

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[1]James Davison Hunter. *To Change the World*: *The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: OUP, 2010).

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