

CAN YOU KNOW THE WORLD AND STILL LOVE THE WORLD?

Vocation Is Mission
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“The secret of man is the secret of his responsibility.”
Vaclav Havel

Introduction

Most people most of the time find that the more we know of the world, the less we love the world. The more we know, the more disillusioned we are. The more we know, the more disappointed we are. The more we know, the less we care.

1. The Story of the Blood:Water Mission

Clydette Powell and Africa, “It was outrageous”

Veritas Forum, and “Magnolia”

Eight years later more than 1000 communities across the Africa have access to clean water, and many communities whose well-being has been devastated by HIV/AIDS have working clinics and educational programs that address the complex character of blood-born sexually transmitted diseases.

But.... my travels to Nashville over the last year, addressing this question: what happens though when Africa doesn't love you back?

2. Where It All Begins

Genesis 1-3—like everything else that matters

- Tree of the knowledge of good and evil, viz. what will you do with what you know?
- An epistemological temptation with a moral heart, from the very beginning, the primordial question, the perennial temptation
- A question that keeps being asked, an answer we keep giving—every son of Adam, every daughter of Eve

And most of the time we decide that we do not want to know, if it will cost us more than we can bear.

- Romans 1 as a prism
- John 7 as a window
- And so we suppress and repress, resisting the connection between what we know and how we live, resisting the idea that we are implicated in what we know.

Take Heschel on the Prophets

- The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob is the God who feels what he knows, who when we sees, responds, when he hears, does.
- Against the Stoics, and *apatheia*.

Take Warfield on the Gospels

- The God incarnate in Christ sees and hears, and weeps.
- Against the Stoics, once again.

Take the info-glutness of your life and mine, and the reality of sociological stoicism

- From *Amusing Ourselves to Death* to “Numb” to *The Shallows*

3. To Know Is to Love

The Hebrew vision

- *Yada* in Genesis, in Exodus, in the Proverbs, in the Prophets
- To have knowledge of, means to have responsibility to, means to have care for.

And the Word became Flesh

- The gospel of John

4. To See Ourselves as Implicated, for Love’s Sake

Havel’s great question, and his answer

- Clydette again—a physician
- The band again—some artists

- Jena again—a young visionary leader of an NGO
- And now her team—gifted, able, passionate people each one as organizers, fund-raisers, graphic artists, water specialists, and on and on
- Our retreat last week in Kansas City for business owners, *viz.* what is the responsibility of business?

Our credo: vocation is integral, not incidental, to the *missio Dei*, to the work of God in the world.

Conclusion

The story of Wendell Berry's Uncle Peach, and "Love is Thicker Than Liquor"

Getting in bed, putting our hands on the shoulders of the world, holding on through the hours of the night.

"Love is never abstract... love is not, by its own desire, heroic. It is heroic only when compelled to be. It exists by its willingness to be anonymous, humble, unrewarded. The older love becomes, the more clearly it understands its involvement in partiality, imperfection, suffering, and mortality. Even so, it longs for incarnation."

Wendell Berry, "Word and Flesh" in *What Are People For?*

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