

A NAZARETH MANIFESTO: BEING WITH GOD

Samuel Wells. Wiley Blackwell. 2015

“God is with us” – each of these four words express the character of GOD.

Being present in such a way that contrasts and tensions made visible and embraced.

Nazareth years (the ordinary mundane life of Jesus) show incarnation is not just Jesus being ‘for’ us but ‘with’ us. He thus fulfils the Covenant of Sinai that GOD is committed to being ‘with us’. He practises this in Nazareth and then proclaims nationally. He saves us but here we see the sort of embodiment that makes that action possible.

We do not configure situations as problems to be solved but people to meet.

There is no goal beyond restored relationships.

Centre of mission is being with disadvantaged and receiving their abundance.

III. Mortality: once seen as ‘the’ problem, now it’s ‘freedom’ and choice the answer.

Poverty:

1. is a deficit to be made up, or defeat cos they’ve failed, or the trap for all.
2. Is a disease, not caused by humanity but symptoms of societal malaise.
3. Better to see it as a breakdown of relationship. Isolation.

Mission: not making ‘them’ more like us (not using skill in conflict resolution) but sees ourselves as one of the warring parties and finds relationship.

IV: The Divine Purpose is reconciliation which how GOD is and always was.

Jesus did not come in response to Fall but to be with us.

V. *Raison d’être* of OT is Covenant. God always incarnate. Israel sees covenant as

God stepping in at moments of crisis to help. (working for them). GOD has a

Covenant of being with: “Pass through the waters I will be with you.” In the fire!

Solidarity of the Cross. He is ‘alone’ since for brief moment the unity of Trinity is lost (My God!) He chooses to be with humanity!

Trinity as perfect equilibrium of being with.

(VI. Good Samaritan is Jesus and we are the man fallen.)

VII. being a problem-solver feels great, to be a problem is foul. Who needs who?

Working With: examples of Paolo Friere & Saul Alinsky.

Action with the oppressed – banking education, conscientization, sees people as a problem. Admirable but only if it includes being with, which moves beyond ‘giver and receiver’. (cf monasticism)

VIII: God being with God ~ Trinity. Layers of -

.1 . Presence, 2. Attention (incl suffering), 3. Mystery (of the other), 4. Delight (mutual), 5. Participation (I-Thou, not I-It), 6. Partnership (action of one is action of all three). 7. Enjoyment (not to use), 8. Glory (the telos)

IX God being with Us.

Martha and Mary; Syro-Phoenician persuades him to be with them too, Eats with sinners, with even those who are hostile. With disciples, crowds, poor. Love enemies.

Jesus is with creation – walks on water. Dove of Creation on him.

Nazareth Manifesto: Luke 4:16-30. Jesus IS the Kingdom.

Jesus follows all eight layers of ‘being with’ us.

Examples of people to show 8 layers of being with: George Bell, Bonhoeffer,

I have argued that, while being with is rooted and grounded in the Nazareth of abiding, patient presence, it is also integral to both the Galilee of constructive common action and the Jerusalem of vicarious sacrificial courage. P222

XIII: THEOLOGICAL RAMIFICATIONS

Creation:

Arises from GOD’s desire to be with. Incarnation inherent in creation, not to solve the problem of human fall. GOD not there to do things for us but is with us. GOD sought to extend partnership to all creation through Israel But Israel becomes too dependent or too independent rather than covenant relationship. Assumes GOD as liberator so depends on God always to rescue. But God wants to be with in good times and in bad. Isolation is the human problem made good by God, but it is not suffering, evil, limitation.

Power and Glory:

Power is our insurance against limitation but God offers Glory, mutual presence. We train and educate etc to get power then regret not getting it or getting it and it meaning nothing.

Atonement:

Using God as 'for' instead of enjoying 'God as with'. Old notion of paying the necessary price at cross does not save us from isolation. Jesus places this salvation above his own life. He sustains the love 'whatever happens', does not solve the Fall. A love that abides, sticks around in the pain.

Eschatology:

Salvation comes from us (working-for model) or all from God (God works alone)
Isaiah 65. New heaven and earth, young prosper, old live, live in house you build etc.
This vision of heaven is infused with presence of God.

XIV.

Abundance not scarcity. We now manufacture dissatisfaction to sell goods.
Institutions take away our own abilities and offer dependency. Gifts galore await unearthing. Asset-based CDev.
So not abolishing working for, nor working with but glory in being with.
Church in pocket of wealthy and powerful so what of Justice? Not just fairness but generous hospitality and presence together – Vanier.

PRAYER Most suffering just happens, no fault, and the response is

1. Solve the problem – pray for a miracle – *prayer of Resurrection*
2. Find a coherent narrative to make sense of it – Jesus shares our pain – the *prayer of incarnation*
3. Let it bring us closer to you, the mystery – *Prayer of transfiguration* to glory