

## Preface

ALL IS NOT WELL UNDER THE HOOD OF CHRISTIAN FAITH IN WESTERN culture. This study represents but one attempt to look underneath and examine our current condition to see what might be needed to make our vehicle more travel ready. In short, I will argue that various complex factors have conspired in disconnecting the transmission of our vehicle (mission) from its engine (spirituality). But this has not been so in periods of expansion of the church fueled by a robust spirituality. Hopefully, what I write will help us see more clearly what God has done in the past and is doing now to connect our vehicle to a “spirituality for the road,” to use missiologist David J. Bosch’s term (1979). Thus, this work attempts to link Christian spirituality with Christian mission and to integrate the academic study of spirituality with that of missiology.

These are crucial tasks in light of various phenomena that have arisen in Western societies over the past half century, including: (1) a pervasive postmodern fascination with the para-natural and with spiritualities not usually associated with modern forms of Christianity; (2) the opportunity to be instantaneously connected to any kind of spirituality anywhere on the globe through the Internet; (3) widespread recognition that Western culture now represents a cross-cultural missional challenge to the church; (4) our culture’s increasingly hurried pace of life, which has tended to separate outward mission practice from its inward spiritual roots; and (5) the disappearance of spaces and places conducive to intensive relationships, mentoring, and community.

The loss of the sense of place and our addictive hurry sickness have drained spiritual vitality and power for mission from the church in North America. We often focus on outward ministry to the exclusion of spirituality amidst the pressures of maintaining organizational structures infected with collapsed spatial and temporal codes and devoid of sufficient time and space for relationships. A spiritual discipline or practice, according to Henri J. M. Nouwen, is the creation of “space for God to be active” or “the human effort to create open space to listen to

the voice of the one who calls us the beloved” (1993b). The practice of a discipline, then, requires a reversal of what Wilbert R. Shenk has termed the cultural “collapse of space and time” (2000), which explains why it feels like we are swimming cross-current when engaging in spiritual practices. This study provides windows into this milieu as to how God might want to renew us and his mission in the world he loves. I pray it may nudge us further in renewing our practices of spirituality and mission for God’s glory.

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