

# **FAITH AT WORK**

**Vocation, the Theology of Work  
and the Pastoral Implications.**

**by**

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## Abstract

When people are not sleeping most of their time is spent working. The average Christian spends less than 2 percent of their waking time at church. Yet the church puts most of its energy and resources into that 2 percent and very little into the world of daily work. This thesis explores Christian understandings of vocation and the theology of work and suggests ways that these can be applied to the process of equipping and supporting Christians for life in their places of work. The thesis is developed in five chapters.

The first chapter consists of a historical survey of developments in the doctrine of vocation from the first century, through the Middle Ages and Protestant Reformation, until the beginnings of the twentieth century. Particular interest is demonstrated in exploring how different understandings of vocation include, or exclude, the daily work of Christians. The modern secularization of the concept of vocation is traced and elements for the rehabilitation of the Christian concept of vocation are suggested.

The second chapter looks at an extensive and representative sample of theologies of work produced in the last fifty years, since World War II. The overall shape of each of these theologies is described and the particular perspective of each writer, with special reference to ways in which they develop the concept of vocation and apply this to everyday work. A mixture of contrasting theological perspectives is apparent, with a few common denominators, but also some significant differences. This reflects the fact that changing economic circumstances during this period have demanded different responses and the Bible itself presents us with a variety of different perspectives. Some themes that need to be further developed by future theologies of work are suggested.

The third chapter looks at the contributions of some other writers who have developed the concept of vocation in recent years, but not in the context of more comprehensive theologies of work. Some practical implications of these insights are described.

The fourth chapter briefly examines links between developments in the understanding of vocation and recent developments in the doctrines of ministry and mission. Points of convergence and divergence are noted between Catholic and Protestant developments of these doctrines.

The final chapter, building on insights drawn from previous chapters, explores some of the important resources the church can use to help its members gain and express a stronger sense of Christian vocation in and through their daily work. Particular importance is attached to people sharing stories of their everyday work experiences, more popular access to biblical and theological resources, the use of life planning resources and changing priorities and emphases in various aspects of church life. Reference is made to a variety of practical strategies and resources. The thesis con

cludes that daily work must be more frequently, and more explicitly, connected to Christian worship, discipleship, mission and ministry. And a contemporary reinterpretation of the doctrine of vocation is a necessary part of this quest, both at the academic level and as a grass-roots movement.

## **Preface**

The initial inspiration for this thesis comes from the examples I experienced in my childhood of a father who conscientiously sought to live out his Christian vocation in the world of timber processing and manufacturing, as well as voluntary Christian service in the church and community, and a mother who equally conscientiously lived out her Christian vocation through attending to family needs and domestic chores and doing voluntary work. The timber company, our home, the community and the church, were all valued as important spheres for Christian obedience. I noticed from an early age, however, that the world of the marketplace seemed to be mostly ignored by the church, except as a sphere for building relationships for evangelistic activity, understood in a fairly narrow sense.

Later it began to concern me, as I met more and more people who appeared to be wrestling with faith and work issues, that as a Baptist pastor my own orientation had changed. I had become preoccupied with who ‘came’ to church rather than who ‘went’ as the Body of Christ back into the world. I had become more concerned with my own performance on Sunday rather than the performance of all the members of the church on Monday. The rhythm of ‘coming’ and ‘going’, those two essential and complementary facets of Christian discipleship, were becoming disconnected and the importance of ‘going’ had diminished as a concern. I subsequently became aware that this was also happening elsewhere and that it was a battle that had been waged, and most often lost, throughout the history of the church.

The largest mission force the church has is mobilised in the world each day of the week as Christians go about their daily work. Yet the church finds it very difficult to prioritise the equipping and support of its members for these everyday ministries. Even though we must acknowledge, in our more thoughtful moments, that it is the depth of discipleship in these places of obedience that is deciding the future of the church.

It was my own failure and lack of understanding of these issues that motivated me to begin this thesis.

The form and style of the thesis conform to conventions outlined by McIntosh (1994). The Author-Date system of referencing and conventions adopted in dealing with abbreviations also follow McIntosh (1994).

I wish to acknowledge the help that many people have offered me in the course of this thesis. In particular I thank Robert Banks, Gordon Preece, Graeme Smith and Ian Hart for their willingness to give me time and share the fruits of their study so generously when I was in need of inspiration. Alister Rae has been a very encouraging and long-suffering supervisor who had no idea what a long-term project he was embarking on when we started out together in 1993! I also thank the numerous friends, colleagues and librarians who have offered their encouragement and assistance.

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## **INTRODUCTION.**

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate recent developments in the doctrine of vocation and the theology of work, and to examine ways in which these can be applied to the process of equipping and supporting Christians for life in their places of work. The thesis is comprised of five chapters. Conclusions are summarised at the end of each chapter.

The first chapter consists of a historical survey of developments in the doctrine of vocation from the first century until the beginnings of the twentieth century. Particular interest is demonstrated in exploring how different understandings of Christian vocation include, or exclude, the daily work of ordinary Christians.

The second chapter looks at an extensive and representative sample of theologies of work produced in the last fifty years, since World War II. The overall shape of each of these theologies is described and the particular perspective of each writer, with special reference to ways in which they develop the concept of vocation and apply this to the everyday work of ordinary Christians.

The third chapter looks at the contribution of some other writers who have developed the concept of vocation in recent years, but not in the context of a more comprehensive theology of work. Some practical implications of these insights are described.

The fourth chapter examines links between developments in the understanding of vocation and recent understandings of ministry and mission. Points of convergence and divergence are noted between Catholic and Protestant developments of these doctrines. Some practical implications of these developments are described.

The final chapter, building on insights drawn from previous chapters, explores some of the practical, theological, liturgical and pastoral resources the church can use to help its members gain and express a stronger sense of Christian vocation in and through their daily work. This study ends with some general observations in the conclusion of this chapter.

In this thesis daily work is understood to include unpaid work, domestic work and voluntary work, as well as employment. However at times we have struggled to maintain this inclusive definition consistently, as many writers are primarily focussed on work as employment or occupation rather than the broader definition we wish to promote.



# **CHAPTER ONE: HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENTS**

## **1.1 THE EARLY CHURCH**

There is no call in the New Testament for all Christians to withdraw from participation in everyday life and work, or the established order. Neither geographical isolation nor separation from normal human activities and relationships is advocated as a general rule. Paul Marshall draws the following conclusions about the approach of the early church to daily work: 'For the first century after the Apostles it would appear that Pauline views continued to set the pattern for the Christian church - a strong commendation of work, but with no specific doctrine of calling (1993: 33)'. However, gradually the Church Fathers began to draw more heavily on Greek and Roman motifs rather than specifically biblical teaching and this resulted in a lower view of work. Heiges quotes Eusebius, writing about AD 315, giving expression to this movement as Eusebius propounds his doctrine of two lives:

Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone ... such then is the perfect form of the Christian life. And the other, more humble, more human, permits man to join in pure nuptials, and to produce children ... it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well as for religion ... a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them. (Heiges 1984: 45)

In a similar way Augustine distinguished between the 'active life' (*vita activa*) and the 'contemplative life' (*vita contemplativa*). While both kinds of life were good, and Augustine had praise for the work of farmers, craftsmen and merchants, the contemplative life was of a higher order. At times it might be necessary to follow the active life but, according to Augustine, wherever possible, one should choose the other: 'The one life is loved, the other endured ... The obligations of charity make us undertake righteous business (*negotium*)' but, 'if no one lays this burden upon us we should give ourselves up to leisure (*otium*) to the perception and contemplation of truth' (Quoted in Bernbaum and Steer 1986: 19).

This pattern shaped much of subsequent Christian thinking. Different interpretations have been offered to explain this. Holl (1958) and Barnette (1965) illustrate these differences.

According to Barnette, 'the Biblical view of calling in which every man is summoned to salvation and service without a basic distinction between "clergy" and "laity", is the pattern which prevailed into second century Christianity (Barnette 1965: 39)'. Polycarp and Irenaeus reflect this view of ministry. However, during the latter half of the second century, there developed an official clergy with Bishops possessing the sole right to ordain and rule the Church. Barnette (1965: 40-42) traces this development from Clement (A.D.30-100), to Ignatius (30-107), to Cyprian (ca.200-258) to Eusebius (ca.315). By the time Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire, the distinction between clergy and laity was fairly well established. With the establishment of celibacy for the clergy in the 11th century the demarcation between priesthood and laity was complete, with the latter relegated to second-class status (Barnette 1956: 42; Bainton 1956: 82ff). Barnette attributes the bifurcation of calling into sacred and secular categories and the subsequent subordination of the laity to the creation of a professional priesthood and consequent loss of the New Testament view of the priesthood of all believers. This interpretation also sees the consolidation of spiritual power and privilege in the hands of the clergy, with the associated elevation of their spiritual status, reflected in the way the doctrine of vocation developed.

Holl's interpretation focusses more on the differentiation of 'contemplative' and 'active' spiritualities, with the elevation of the former over the latter, and the subsequent identification of only the former as a true 'vocation' or 'calling'. For Holl, it is this pattern which shaped much of subsequent Christian thinking and in particular the evolution of monasticism (Holl 1958: 126-127).

Holl maintains that when, with the growth of Christianity, infant baptism became the main route of entry into the Church so that most members were born into the church and fewer entered by means of a personal decision, the thought of a personal calling coming clearly to the consciousness of each individual began to disappear. The result was a rising tide of diluted discipleship and undemanding nominalism. Monasticism represented a break with this nominal church-Christianity (Holl 1958: 128).

Holl describes how monasticism desired to fulfil completely the demands of Christ once again in response to the challenge of nominalism. It saw the only solution as a call for complete separation from the world. Those who would direct their thoughts uninterrupted towards God must not be distracted by the activities of a profession, or family concerns. This did not mean that work with the hands was condemned. Work with the hands was not only allowed, it was actually demanded. However, its function was to ensure that idleness was avoided. And with the exception of the reading and writing of devotional literature, it was limited to purely mechanical processes which

would not disturb a person's ability to hold fast to thoughts of God for every moment of life.

Because this also meant letting go of all other attachments, including friends and relatives, there arose a new consciousness of a personal calling from God to adopt this radically different, more spiritual, lifestyle. Hence biblical stories like the call of Abraham and the rich young ruler were used to illustrate the challenge and opportunity that God presented to a monk. Novices in their initiation were told that God had called them and made them worthy to be disciples of Christ. They were admonished to live a life worthy of this calling (Holl 1958: 129-130).

Of particular significance for this study is the way that the thought of a calling (*Berufung*) was blended with the self-consciousness of a definite individual profession. Only the monk was considered to have a *klesis* (calling) (Holl 1958: 131). Hence Cassian speaks of the *vocation* of the monk and also calls monasticism a *professio* (Holl 1958: 132). And this latter term came into regular use, not merely recalling the usual sense of *professio* as a trade or occupation, but emphasising that for the monk a vow or solemn promise defined their whole lives (Holl 1958: 133).

Holl argues that this seizure of the title *vocatio* by monasticism meant that there was no opportunity for a proper religious evaluation of secular occupations to develop, nor for the word *vocatio* to be applied to them. He notes that, in spite of the fact that as early as Tertullian *klesis* was translated by *vocatio* when he quoted 1 Cor 7:20, there is no passage in the writing of the early Fathers where *vocatio* means anything like occupation (Holl 1958: 136).

## **1.2 THE MIDDLE AGES.**

During the Middle Ages a tension developed between the calling-consciousness of the monk and that self-consciousness which resulted from economic and political advances. Benedict laid down his *Rule* for a balanced life, including manual labour, intellectual exercise and prayer, in the sixth century (Benedict [530] 1975). However all this activity is directed to the *Opus Dei* or 'Work of God' and the place of manual labour is clearly secondary (Kaiser 1966: 143). Nevertheless, a more positive evaluation of manual labour is plainly evident: 'Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brothers should be occupied according to schedule in either manual labour or holy reading ... They are truly monks when they must live by manual labour, as did our fathers and the Apostles

(Benedict 1975: 86)'. Cyprian Alston maintains this Benedictine influence had a powerful civilising effect:

Previous to the institution of Monasticism labour had been regarded as the symbol of slavery and serfdom, but St. Benedict and his followers taught in the West that lesson of free labour which had first been inculcated by the fathers of the desert. Wherever the monks went, those who were not employed in preaching tilled the ground; thus whilst some sowed in pagan soils the seeds of the Christian faith, others transformed barren wastes and virgin forests into fruitful fields and verdant meadows. This principle of labour was a powerful instrument in the hands of the monastic pioneers, for it attracted to them the common people who learned from the monasteries the secrets of organised work, agriculture, the arts and sciences, and the principles of true government. (Alston 1907: 456)

However, Benedict also warns about the dangers of mastery in art and trade. He urges that any thoughts of pride or accomplishment must be suppressed and denounces greed and selling things at secular market prices (Benedict 1975: 93). It is these reservations of Benedict's that cause Holl to conclude that Weber goes too far in maintaining that monasticism, by increasingly getting involved in scientific and economic tasks and relating these to its religious-ascetic concept of *industria*, established an 'ethos' that prepared the way for the secular concept of calling (Holl 1958: 136-137). But, even if Holl is right, and monasticism did try to resist this secularization, it could not stop the development of city economies with their distribution of labour and more planned approaches to working for the common good. And these trends soon led to the development of a higher evaluation of secular work.

For its theological undergirding, this re-evaluation of secular work could also appeal to Basil's reminder that when the New Testament says that everything should be done for the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31; Col 3:17), this includes all human activity (Holl 1958: 138). However, it wasn't until the late scholastics, such as Berthold and Aquinas, that an understanding of Christian social life was developed which sought to relate the calling (*Beruf*) of the monk and secular work.

Nevertheless, even in these later writers, there is still a clear division between the classes which deal with spiritual works and those which carry on manual labour. The first are considered more necessary for the well-being of society than the second, because theirs is the ministry of spiritual care. It is recognised that however, if they are to be set free for this spiritual ministry, they must be supported by others. Hence both ranks belong

together. It is divine providence which has established various professions to care for the needs of all people (Holl 1958: 140).

Though the professions doing manual labour have been drawn into the order of providence, this does not mean they stand on the same moral and religious level as the higher professions. Both Berthold and Aquinas agree that, while the active have an indispensable service to render, and a service ordered by God, they still do not have a calling (*Beruf*) in the true sense of the word (Holl 1958: 140).

Thomas Aquinas took the world and its work seriously. He was a member of a largely urban order, the Dominicans, and sought to clarify the place of every human concern in the overarching order of God's creation. For him this division of labour was evidence that all are members of the one body; he even compared God to a master craftsman (Marshall 1993: 21). However Thomas also employed Augustine's distinction of the *vita contemplativa* and the *vita activa*, and so for him 'the life of contemplation' was 'simply better than the life of action'. The *vita contemplativa* was 'oriented to the eternal' whereas the *vita activa* had a place only because of the 'necessities of the present life' (Marshall 1993: 21).

Marshall argues that this was also the view of the divines of medieval England, for they taught that the highest form of piety was a forsaking of the world and the adoption of voluntary poverty. Hence the states closest to perfection were those of the nun, friar and monk (Marshall 1993: 22).

This is not to suggest that work was rejected. On the contrary, idleness was condemned and work was acclaimed. But although people must work and not dissipate their lives through sloth, religious energy should not be focussed on a person's occupation unless they have a religious vocation. Hence the high calling, the truly religious vocation, is one of contemplation, and other work, especially manual work, has lesser derivative value. Marshall shows how developments of this thinking are evident among the sermons and writings of English preachers during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries (Marshall 1993: 22). God is frequently said to be *cleping* (calling) people to various estates. For example, Thomas Wimbledon speaks of God *cleping* (calling) people to a *state*. And Thomas Beton speaks of a 'calling' to an office. Caxton speaks of 'men of noble name and vocation' (Marshall 1993: 23). However, with the possible exception of Caxton, this is not a view of calling like that held by Luther or later English reformers. Rather it is an expression of the medieval conception that God appoints, or 'calls', people to their particular 'estates' in society. This does not imply that the estate is itself a calling, the

focus of the divine command, merely that it is the place where God has ordained a person be to serve him.

### **1.3 THE GERMAN MYSTICS.**

It is the German mystics who first push beyond the monastic understanding of vocation. This is because Eckhart and Tauler and others recognise a call (*Ruf*) of God which comes to a person completely independent of monasticism or entrance into an order (Holl 1958: 141). They are even willing to apply to the laity the highest title of monasticism, that of 'the friend of God', and, in spite of their fascination with the mystical, with all its joy in suffering and insistence upon that which is inward, they also acknowledge that at times external work is more useful than internal (Holl 1958: 141).

Hence Meister Eckhart says, 'If one were in an ecstasy, even if it were as high as that of Paul, and knew that beside him there was an infirm man who needed a bowl of soup from him, it would be better for him to abandon his ecstasy and serve the needy man' (Quoted in Holl 1958: 141).

Marshall also draws attention to the way Eckhart and Tauler deal with the familiar biblical story of Mary and Martha (Marshall 1993: 24). Medieval authors generally used this text to assert the superiority of the *vita contemplativa*. Eckhart and Tauler however take a much more sympathetic view of Martha's predicament. In his sermon on 'The Contemplative and Active Life' Eckhart uses the word 'calling' to refer to Martha's activity:

...One (means) ... without which I cannot get into God, is work, vocation or calling in time ... He who works in the light rises straight up to God without let or hindrance: his light is his calling, and his calling is his light. This was the case with Martha ... Temporal work is as good as any communing with God, for it joins us as straitly to God as the best that can happen to us, barring the vision of God in his naked nature. [Such works are] just as good and unite us as closely to God as all Mary Magdalene's idle longings. (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 24)

Eckhart also maintains that it is the nature and purpose of our occupations to lead us to God: 'We are brought forth into time in order that our sensible worldly occupations may lead us nearer and make us like unto God (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 24)'. 'Not everyone is called to God in the same way' is how Eckhart translates 1 Cor 7:20. Even the lowest work and lowest occupation is compatible with the demand of the highest. According to

Eckhart, 'One can gather nettles and still stand in union with God' (Quoted in Holl 1958: 142).

In his sermons on 'Vocation' Tauler maintains Jesus rebuked Martha '... not because of the things she did, for these were good and sanctified; but because of the ways in which she did them, with too much worry and anxiety (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 25)'.

Marshall (1993: 25) shows how Tauler treats the *vita activa* and the *vita contemplativa* as parts of a body. According to Tauler, 'No part should usurp the name or office of another'. To abide in one's calling means one should not aspire to the monastic estate. There are different ways of serving and knowing God: one is 'external works', Tauler identifies the person who 'knows all the secrets of commerce'. He criticises those people who think such an estate is 'an obstacle for perfection' for it is 'certainly not God who has put this obstacle'. He condemns 'all those who would stop at contemplation, but scorn action'.

Holl records a story Tauler tells of a farmer who is taken by surprise with an ecstasy while he is threshing (1958: 142). Tauler relates this story to argue that people should remain in the position in which they have been placed by God. The position (*Amt*) a person is placed in is a 'summons' (*Ladung*), a "call" (*Ruf*), which comes to us just as much as the inner call. The person who obeys this call with singleness of purpose is truly on the way that leads to God (Holl 1958: 142). In fact, Tauler intensifies this argument by applying it to himself. He says that if he were not a priest, he would like to be a shoemaker and earn his bread with his own hands. Tauler, unlike Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, found it painful to live from alms and would have preferred the secular class even to his priestly position and says he would have chosen differently if he had realised as a minor that other options were open to him (Holl 1958: 142).

Here for the first time we discover the thought of a secular calling (*Beruf*), and the possibility that a person can experience the highest ideal of the nearness of God in the practice of secular work. However, it is still a very restricted view of secular calling because Tauler and the other mystics never dispute the superiority of monasticism. A monk who completes a genuine conversion undoubtedly stands at the pinnacle of spiritual achievement. For the mystics, suffering is better than service, and work in the calling (*Beruf*) is more renunciation, more martyr-like living, than joyful service. Diligence in secular work is called for, so that a person can return as quickly as possible to inner contemplation. The mystics still consider themselves friends of God in a special way. They consider themselves 'noblemen', a nobility set over against the common heap

of ordinary Christians (Holl 1958: 143). Hence it is still the monastic ideal that dominates.

There is still no hint of a universal priesthood to which each individual is called.

In spite of this, the German mystics did contribute to the elevation of the religious evaluation of secular work in the last centuries of the Middle Ages. Also 1 Corinthians 7:20 begins to have a greater influence in shaping thinking. Holl notes that theologians like Antoninus of Florence and John Gerson begin to talk of there being a calling (*Berufung*) by God for the secular class (Holl 1958: 144). Gabriel Biel extends the title *religiosus* (which previously had been used only within monasticism) to apply to those who live in a 'class' (or profession) sanctioned by Christ or the church (Holl 1958: 144). A number of Dominican preachers (the same order as Tauler's) develop this thinking more strongly by emphasising that for the laity the nearest way to blessedness and gaining heaven is by working faithfully in the secular position in which God has placed them. Indeed, by doing this the lay person may even go further than the monk who forgets his duty (Holl 1958: 144).

This new way of looking at things resulted in alterations to common speech. By the time of Luther the word 'vocation' or 'calling' (*Ruf*) in the sense of class or profession, was already in general usage (Holl 1958: 145).

But this is not to suggest that the division of labour which emphasises that some care for the necessities of life while others pray for them was overthrown so early. The contemplative life was still considered superior to the active. Mary chose the better way, even if Martha is indispensable. The monk's prayers do result in the granting of a higher level of blessedness in eternity (Holl 1958: 148). According to Holl, the Renaissance did not significantly change this situation, in spite of the fact that its representatives were filled with a passionate dislike for monasticism. Hence, although Erasmus can say that everyone receives a summons to the *militia Christi*, to the perfect life, he still differentiates between those who are able to reach the highest, the heroic virtue, and those who must settle for the lower, the political virtue (Holl 1958: 148). Clearly, despite the skirmishes with its Renaissance critics, the ideal of Monasticism was still flourishing and dominant when Luther came on the scene.

#### **1.4 MARTIN LUTHER**

Luther's life is the story of an ongoing struggle with the meaning of vocation. He entered the monastery with a strong feeling of a personal calling (*Berufung*) (Bainton 1950: 34;



Holl 1958: 149). Luther was conscious that God had encountered him and commanded him to embrace the monastic life.

However, once in the monastery, Luther is forced to examine the monastic ideal. Surely there is only one will of God and it is binding on every person. And there is only one level of relationship with God. A person either has God and has God completely, or they do not have God and therefore stand under God's wrath. The way to God is not through some mystical experience but attention to the clear word of God that shakes the conscience. It is faith which takes this call of God seriously and leads to a true and secure relationship with God.

Even before 1517, in his lectures on Romans, Luther's thinking is clearly moving in this direction, as he uses the example of Abraham to emphasise the sort of faith that needs imitating. Previously the example of Abraham leaving his home in response to God's call had been used to support the monastic ideal. But Luther emphasises that a calling (*Berufung*) like that of Abraham's is available not only for the monk but for all Christians who receive the Gospel in their heart (Holl 1958: 149). For Luther, even the smallest work performed at the right place in response to a divine commission, stands ethically on the same level as that which appearances suggest is the greatest work. Hence, even within the world, the highest level can be reached by the fulfilment of assigned duties (Holl 1958: 150). In this way Luther emphasises even more strongly than Tauler that the duties of an office are a call (*Ruf*) through which a person is summoned to God's service. In fact, Luther went so far as to reprimand his own sovereign, Frederick the Wise, for neglecting his administrative functions in order to devote himself to devotional exercises, as if in that way he could serve God better (Holl 1958: 150).

Luther was obviously clear and convinced about this principle from the time of his Leipzig Debate with John Eck in 1519 (Bainton 1950: 111-120; Holl 1958: 150). For it is from his affirmation of the universal priesthood at this time that he goes on to conclude that through the Gospel a call (*Ruf*) of God is addressed to every Christian, thus elevating all believers to the highest position of direct fellowship with God. The concept that some pray for the welfare of all Christians while others work to support them is now shattered for Luther. Every Christian has not only the right, but the duty, to pray for all Christians.

Monasticism is no longer a unique class or special order with sole rights to pray for the universal church (Holl 1958: 151). Not that Luther immediately condemned monasticism. He was willing to allow it to exist, so long as it is understood that the work of the monks stands no higher in God's eyes than the normal work of a farmer or housewife performed in sincere faith (Holl 1958: 151). It was only later in the Wartburg

(1521-22) that Luther condemned monasticism, (Bainton 1950: 200-201). This was prompted by the suggestion that by their vows monks offered something to God that moved along a more certain way to salvation.

For Luther, with his emphasis on justification by faith alone, this suggestion was abhorrent. As a result he concluded the oath was absolutely invalid, and also belief in a special calling (*Berufung*) of the monk. About the same time (1522) Luther used the word *Beruf* (calling) in a sermon giving it the same meaning as occupation, class, or office. Previously it had only been used to refer to the act of calling (*Berufung*) (Holl 1958: 152). That this was no accident is made plain by the fact that in the same sermon Luther explains that all Christians, in so far as they belong to a class or profession, should feel themselves called to that vocation. The duties which this vocation involves are to be accepted as the command of God directed to them (Holl 1958: 153).

Hence the idea of ‘calling’ (*Beruf*) begins to carry a new meaning different from the simple ‘call’ (*Ruf*). As Holl points out, Luther still retains some flexibility in his usage, sometimes using calling (*Beruf*) in the sense of the act of calling (*Berufung*) or using call (*Ruf*) or order (*Order*) instead of calling (*Beruf*) (1958: 153). However, it is clear that Luther’s change of emphasis, aided by Melancthon’s use of this terminology in the widely promoted Augsburg Confession, soon took hold and was adopted by others among the Reformers, (Melancthon 1530: Articles 16,26,27; Holl 1958: 153).

Luther also broke with tradition when, in translating Ecclesiasticus 11:20-21 and 1 Cor 7:20, he used *Beruf* in his German Bible. Earlier commentators had understood Ecclesiasticus 11:20 as *Werk* or *Arbeit*. So Luther used terminology previously only connected with a priestly or monastic calling, and applied it to all worldly duties. He was emphasizing that being a husband, wife, peasant, or magistrate was also a duty assigned by God. No longer is there something uniquely spiritual about the traditional priestly estate:

All Christian men are priests, the women priestesses, be they young or old, masters or servants, mistresses or maids, learned or unlearned. Here there are no differences unless faith be unequal ... Therefore the estate (*Stand*) of a priest is nothing else in Christendom than an office....Hence it follows from this that layman, priest, prince, bishop and as they say, spiritual and worldly, have no other difference at bottom than that of office and work, not of estate, for they are all of the spiritual estate, truly priests, bishops, popes. (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 26)

For Luther, the religious aura which surrounded the clerical vocation now permeates all worldly tasks. To work in one’s estate is a divine calling. Not only is the notion of

calling extended, but also focussed in terms of 'estate' (*Stand*). A person's 'estate' is their divine appointment to serve God by fulfilling the duties of the office that this estate requires. If some object that they have no calling, Luther replies, 'how is it possible that you should not be called? You will also be in some estate. You will be a husband, or wife, or child, or daughter, or maid'. Hence, 'everyone should take care that he remains in his estate, looks to himself, realises his calling, and in it serves God and keeps his command (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 26)'.

This fusion of estate, office and calling is the core of Luther's view of calling. Estates are the locus of one's office and hence are callings. After 1522 Luther uses *Beruf* synonymously with estate (*Stand*), office (*Amt*) and duty (*Befehl*). Therefore all work is understood to be divinely appointed, not just some particular offices. Everyone is called. No calling is more spiritual than any other. For Luther, work is part of God's creation. Work was instituted not just because of sin, but even before the fall. So Adam 'had work to do, that is ... plant the garden, cultivate and look after it'. Work is honourable and a blessing. Work has fallen under the curse of sin and so is wearying and disappointing and involves toil and trouble. But the Christian sees work beyond the curse. A person is blessed when they work industriously (Marshall 1993: 27).

Althaus summarises Luther's view in this way:

Work in our vocation or station is our appropriate service to God. Since God has commanded this work, it certainly pleases him. As a result Luther rejects any piety that tries to find especially "holy" works ... Let each "fulfill his duties in his vocation" - then he will have enough and more than enough to do ... If we take that requirement seriously we have neither time, nor space, nor energy to seek out special works for ourselves. There is no special outward characteristic that distinguishes the Christian's activity in his vocation from that of other men...What he does is Christian because he does it in the certainty that God has called him to serve his neighbour and that God is pleased with what he is doing. (Althaus 1972: 39-40)

Luther understood that, being the kind of people we are, we cannot fulfill any vocation without sinning. Vocation, along with all Christian living, is under justification. The work we do as our vocation is acceptable because our sins are forgiven. We are not to forsake our vocation simply because in it we cannot avoid sinning. We remain sinners no matter what we do. But God's forgiveness is greater and more certain if we remain in the station God has called us to (Althaus 1972: 41-42).

Luther's conception of calling is one of duty rather than position. He understands calling as a call to service that comes to a Christian within the midst of their sphere of work. Hence vocation is primarily a summons to work for a neighbour's sake within one's estate. In this sense a vocation is distinguished from a person's work; 'the eyes of God regard not works but our obedience in them. Therefore it is His will that we also have regard for His command and vocation (Quoted in Wingren 1958: 178 and Marshall 1993: 27).' As a result, vocation requires a right use of one's office. A person who is not a Christian cannot have a calling. They lack the faith which alone is pleasing to God. And some types of work are not part of God's calling. Luther lists a number of sinful orders like robbery, usury and prostitution. Each of these is a false 'estate' in which no Christian with sustained faith and love can remain. A person must avoid estates which are sinful (Wingren 1958: 4).

According to Luther, vocation is not confined to occupation, but also includes domestic roles and any action that concerns the world or a person's relationship with their neighbour. There is nothing which falls into a private sphere lying outside of estate, office or vocation. It is clear that every Christian occupies a number of different offices at the same time. Also vocation has nothing to do with salvation. Faith in God and willingness to serve one's neighbour constitute an organic unity. Salvation comes only through faith. Vocation is not the Gospel and does not give us heaven. Luther is most concerned that people should not place ultimate confidence in the work of their hands. There is a marked difference between the certainty that our work matters to God and is part of Christian discipleship and the certainty of our salvation which only the Gospel can give (Wingren 1958: 76). Luther separates the heavenly and earthly (eternal and temporal) realms so that work is not over valued as a means of salvation or eternal identity, significance or status. While Luther speaks about God's continuing work of creation through a person's work in their various estates, he also makes plain this only refers to a person's co-operation in response to God's initiative in the earthly realm. A person lacks this same free will in the heavenly realm (Wingren 1958: 17-18).

For Luther the 'religious' quest is over - there is no need to work to earn salvation any more: 'God has taken care of my salvation...' (Quoted in Miller 1953: 119). 'The Christian no longer works to seek his own advantage or salvation ... what is done is done just to please God (Quoted in Miller 1953: 120)'.

How is this loving service of God expressed? Firstly, as a loyal member of the church, the community of the justified, and secondly, through serving God in the orders of creation, the family, the political order and the economic order of property and labour. The work of citizenship expresses both love of neighbour and service of the commonwealth. Whatever is necessary for social health is good work for the Christian

(Miller 1953: 120-121). Ian Hart concludes his study of Luther's view of work with this summary:

The most obvious and most important element in Luther's overall teaching about work is the high valuation he placed upon it: the life God wants most people to lead is the life of daily work, and therefore such a life is holy and sacred and fully pleasing to God - in no way of less value in God's eyes than a life spent in prayer or church work. His other important thrusts were that each person should regard their job as a calling and stay in it; that menial work is of equal value to work more highly regarded by men; that one's work must serve one's ... neighbour; and his concern for honesty and fair dealing in one's work. (Hart 1995a: 51)

From this point on, in Protestant circles, the word vocation signifies something quite different to the meaning it held throughout the history of Monasticism. Monasticism suggested the monk alone had a true calling (*Beruf*) through pursuit of the contemplative life. But Luther ends up maintaining that the only true calling of God must be realised within the everyday world and its work and hence it is monasticism which has no genuine calling. Not that Luther secularises calling the way the Enlightenment would do later, as if God's will is done just through fulfilling the simple secular demands of a job. Rather, Luther was attempting to renew the original monastic ideal that God is to be held present in every moment of life. But, in opposition to monasticism, Luther maintains this is most fully experienced where believers participate most fully in everyday life with all its pressures and disappointments and struggles. A truly moral life can only be achieved in the consonance between the inner call (*Ruf*), which a person receives in the Gospel, and the voice which forces its way through to us from our circumstances and what they demand of us. And this is no longer true just for those who hold high office, such as the statesperson, but for every office and service when it is exercised genuinely as a calling (*Beruf*), i.e. as an office assigned by God and therefore to be carried out by God's Spirit. Luther elevated the status of the everyday discipleship of ordinary Christians, including their daily work.

## **1.5 JOHN CALVIN.**

When Calvin uses the term 'calling' he usually means a calling to salvation, or a calling to the ministry. But he also develops a vocational view of work similar to Luther's. One

difference from Luther is that Calvin tends to identify a calling with the work itself, rather than as something which comes into work:

the Lord enjoins every one of us, in all the actions of life to have respect to our own calling ... he has assigned distinct duties to each in the different modes of life. And that no one may presume to overstep his proper limits, he has distinguished the different modes of life by the name of "callings". (Calvin [1559] 1989: ii.34)

Luther maintains we obey the divine call when through faith we serve God in our estates. For Calvin the work of the calling is the work of the 'estate' itself, and so is itself obedience to God (Calvin 1989: ii.35; Marshall 1993: 28).

Although Calvin, like Luther, relates the calling both to the given orders of society and to the particular estate that a Christian is in, his view is not quite as static as Luther's. A person's given social position is not so restricted and unchangeable. When Calvin says that a person should stay in their calling, he does not propose this as an iron rule, but only as a caution to prevent undue 'restlessness' and 'fickleness' (Calvin 1989: ii.34; Marshall 1993: 28). Moreover, the way Calvin uses the word 'adopted' with regard to the calling a person occupies in his commentary on 1st Corinthians 7:20,24 seems to imply a definite choice (Marshall 1993: 28). For Calvin, a Christian might, with 'proper reason', change a calling and choose another. Calvin encourages Christians to examine the social consequences of their work. He challenges them to seek out a truly Christian vocation. He is explicit about a person's right to change occupations (Marshall 1993: 28-29). Here are the beginnings of an understanding of vocation which suggests a certain voluntarism in deciding on the Lord's calling. According to Troeltsch it is, 'a freer conception of the system of callings (Troeltsch 1986: 611).'

Another development in Calvin's understanding of vocation is his stress on the utility of callings. He talks about the 'advantage', 'utility', 'profit', and 'fruit' of Christian works. This is not an expression of ambition for worldly success, but rather Calvin's sense that things of importance are always for something: 'It is certain that a calling would never be approved by God that is not socially useful and that does not redound to the profit of all (Quoted in Little 1970: 60).' For Marshall this is underlined in the way that Calvin exegetes the parable of the talents (Luke 10:11-27):

Before Calvin the talents of gold, which one should use to glorify God, were seen as spiritual gifts and graces that God had bestowed on Christians. Calvin made a revolutionary change in interpretation when he understood the talents in terms of one's calling and in terms of people's 'talents': the particular instance he considered was trading (*negotiari*). Calvin stressed the historical nature of

these gifts and talents and in doing so helped shape the modern meaning of the word 'talent'. (Marshall 1993: 30)

Accompanying this awareness of usefulness is an emphasis on activity. Calvin stresses that the contemplative life is not better. He stresses that God is very active. God is 'not the vain, indolent, slumbering omnipotence which sophists feign, but vigilant, efficacious, energetic and ever active (Calvin 1989: i.174)'. According to Calvin, God put us here to work: '*se ideo creatum sesse ut laboret*' and 'the nature of the kingdom of Christ is that it every day grows and improves' (Marshall 1993: 30). And Calvin is clear that this activity is not restricted to the church or to pious duties, but encompasses the whole of creation. Its purpose is '... to establish the heavenly reign of God upon the earth (Quoted in Marshall 1993: 30)'. Hence Calvin's emphasis on utility and activity and the purposeful nature of God's work in the world, give his doctrine of callings quite a different ethos to that of Luther. While both emphasize the importance of quietly accepting the labour and duties that go with one's estate and abiding in one's calling, Calvin's approach to the understanding of callings is much more aggressive and busy. Calvin challenges believers 'to work, to perform, to develop, to progress, to change, to choose, to be active, and to overcome until the day of their death or the return of their Lord (Marshall 1993: 30)'. He writes as one who is eager to apply his theology to the realities of life in a bustling city.

For Luther the primary reason God gives a Christian a vocation in the world is to encourage a life of loving service, whereas for Calvin the reason is more related to the proper ordering of human life, to maintain order in response to the threat of confusion and chaos and to transform a corrupt status quo to reflect God's purposes. Therefore, Calvin's view of vocation encourages a degree of self-consciousness to examine and calculate which actions are most proper and likely to prove the most effective, whereas Luther's approach provides more room for spontaneity borne of the dynamic of love which has its source in God. Calvin sees vocation as a means of giving glory to God by furthering God's will in the world, while Luther sees it primarily as a means by which God's good gifts are bestowed on humankind. Ian Hart contrasts Luther's and Calvin's approaches:

Calvin went beyond Luther's understanding of work mainly in his stress upon the need for God to bless man's work, his acceptance of trade and interest, and in his idea (more optimistic, more ambitious than Luther) that Christians in their work order the world aright and restore it and so bring glory to God ... Calvin tied work tightly to the Christian life - even more tightly than Luther had done. (Hart 1995b: 135)

These differences between Luther and Calvin were initially differences in emphasis rather than serious disagreements. However, the fact that they pushed in different directions soon became apparent, especially as some of the differences which were implicit in Calvin's teaching became explicit in the Reformed tradition which developed after Calvin (Heiges 1984: 58).

Clearly the Reformation resulted in some marked changes in concepts of work. The views of Luther and Calvin and other Protestants contrast sharply with those of earlier and contemporary Catholics. Until the Reformation, anyone who sought for the highest Christian obedience would aspire to that contemplative life which was the only true vocation. From Luther on it is the workshop which provides the sphere of the highest Christian service. Now those who forsake everyday work abdicate their primary Christian duty. While Tauler and Eckhart had tentatively suggested this, Luther makes it central in his vision of Christian service. And Calvin develops this theme further, but with a new emphasis on useful activity rather than social station.

A clear progression is evident. According to Augustine and Aquinas, Christians were to serve in the world when necessary. Luther's followers are called to serve in the world. Calvin's followers are called to transform the world.

This leads us to note two additional distinctives implicit in Calvin's teaching, which soon become explicit in the Reformed tradition and add momentum to Calvinist developments of the concept of vocation.

Firstly, in the Reformed tradition vocation becomes closely related to predestination. Vocation provides an excellent opportunity for a person to win assurance that they are among the elect, since God will certainly prosper the work of those who are marked out as God's own people (Heiges 1984: 58). This becomes important because Calvin's rigorous logic of God's sovereignty and its corollary in predestination still leaves the problem of assurance unanswered. How can people be sure they are among the elect who are forgiven and saved? Here is a short and attractive answer. Confirm your election through your vocation! A view which could also appeal to the Scriptures for support: 'Therefore brothers and sisters be all the more eager to confirm your call and election, for if you do this, you will never stumble. For in this way entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be richly provided for you (2 Peter 1:10-11)'. While Luther is most concerned to emphasise there is no connection between vocation and salvation, the Reformed tradition begins to form a connection. Although Bainton (1982: 19-21) argues that this connection was never as strong in the Reformed tradition as Weber and others suggest.



Secondly, in the Reformed tradition vocation becomes not only a call to action but also to what we now call 'social action' - the translation of divine righteousness into the structures of human society. The Lutheran interpretation of vocation tended to be quietist, accepting the conventional limits of traditional social patterns. But the Calvinist interpretation pushes in the activist direction. R.H. Tawney explains what this means for the Puritans:

On the lips of the Puritan divines, [vocation] is not an invitation to resignation, but the bugle call which summons the elect to the long battle which will end only after death. "The world is all before them." They are to hammer out their salvation, not merely *in vocatione*, but *per vocationem*. The calling is not a condition in which an individual is born, but a strenuous and exacting enterprise, to be undertaken, indeed, under the guidance of Providence, but to be chosen by each man for himself, with a deep sense of his solemn responsibilities. (Tawney 1926: 240)

## **1.6 THE PURITANS AND THE 'PROTESTANT WORK ETHIC'.**

According to Heiges,

The fact that Luther was suspicious of, and opposed to, the rising commercialism of his day, while Calvin recognized the burgeoning world of commerce as an area of legitimate activity for Christians, had much to do with the direction that vocation took in Reformed Protestantism. Max Weber's thesis that the Calvinist view of vocation provided the inner motivation for the rise of capitalism has been severely criticised, but the fact remains that this view of vocation, as developed in Puritanism, provided a very convenient rationale for the leaders of the capitalistic enterprise. (Heiges 1984: 60)

Weber ([1930] 1970) maintains that Protestantism, by legitimising and imposing an ethic of individual rational achievement in this world not just on an elite but on all, or at least the great majority of a population, was a contributing factor in the emergence of a capitalist economy. His work on India and China seems to bring some confirmation that religious factors hampered a similar development in the East (Marshall 1993: 3-4). According to Weber a 'rational capitalistic' organisation of industrial labour was never known until the transition from the Middle Ages to modern times. Weber identifies what he calls the 'spirit' of modern capitalism and describes the 'protestant ethic', which he says preceded and gave impetus to the spirit of capitalism. This protestant ethic was particularly developed in Calvinism and was centered around a view of calling - the idea

that faithfully following one's job or trade is the focus for a person's obedience to God. In this calling the world is accepted and sanctified and hence religious energy and asceticism, hitherto confined to a monastic expression, now find their expression in the world of everyday work. Thus people are encouraged to pursue their work diligently and systematically, but without seeking to live luxuriously. Weber maintains that Calvinists felt diligence (and perhaps success) in one's calling was proof (at least to oneself) of a person's election. This created a religious motivation for seeking salvation primarily through immersion in one's worldly vocation. One's faith is proven in worldly activity (Weber 1970: 21). Weber does not say that Protestants advocated money making. He acknowledges numerous examples of Puritans condemning the pursuit of money and goods (Weber 1970: 220). What he does attempt to show is that the 'protestant ethic' of vocation and worldly asceticism helped to shape the later, more directly acquisitive, virtues of the spirit of capitalism: 'It opened the way to a career in business, especially for the most devout and ethically rigorous people (Weber 1964: 220)'. Weber does not argue that Calvinists promoted capitalism, but rather that they unwittingly smoothed its path (Marshall 1993 7).

Although Weber was not the first scholar to express such views, his work was the first systematically organised argument. Weber's writings provoked a storm of criticism from scholars who leapt into the debate from a variety of angles and with a variety of intents. Weber was widely criticised, although Ernst Troeltsch ([1912]1986) and, to a lesser extent, R.H. Tawney ([1926]1964), defended Weber's views. This is an ongoing debate (see Little 1969: 226-237).

Marshall (1993) tests Weber's theory by examining developments in the understanding of vocation through the sermons and writings of Christians in 16th and 17th century England. He notes that developments in the history of callings in England are, in general, similar to those we have already noted on the Continent, although a variety of views are evident and no simple line of evolution (Marshall 1993: 166). Marshall is particularly interested to compare developments among Anglicans with those of the Puritans whom he identifies as more extreme and zealous Protestants who carried forward the emphases of Calvin (1993: 167). According to Ryken the Puritan idea of calling covered a cluster of related ideas including

the providence of God in arranging human tasks, work as the response of a steward to God, contentment with one's tasks, and loyalty to one's vocation. These were admirably captured in John Cotton's exhortation "to serve God is thy calling, and do it with cheerfulness and faithfulness and an heavenly mind". (Ryken 1986: 29)

Ryken maintains that this doctrine of calling was even more prominent in American Puritanism (Ryken 1986: 27), and we will see in Chapter Three that it is in America that talk of 'calling' and 'vocation' have continued to be more pronounced in popular usage.

Marshall notes that in England it was the Puritans who consistently led the way in advocating views about calling which would later become current in society. These views include the conception of calling as trade, that one can change a calling, a more open attitude to thriving, a greater individualism and the urge to rationalise work habits. In each of these cases Anglicans accepted a view which had been advocated by Puritans at an earlier period. Also the earlier Puritans had a more integrated view and understood callings themselves as a fundamental part of religion, while the earlier Anglicans conceived of callings as something additional to the specifically religious and pious duties which were the central Christian concerns. While the Anglicans focussed on rationalising acts of piety, the Puritans extended their asceticism to the whole world, particularly the world of work. David Little points out that Anglicans accepted the existing order of Church and of Commonwealth as a structural embodiment of the will of God, while the Puritans believed God required a 'striving' to create an order in which 'everything must be tested anew'. He described this as a 'conflict between a pattern of conformation and a pattern of reformation (Little 1970: 98, 111, 127, 133, 147 - Little's underlining). With regard to vocation, the Puritans stressed work and activity, while Anglicans stressed status and acceptance. As the Puritan view began to prevail in social affairs, patterns of work were reformed and subjected to a religious rigour. Work was transformed into a disciplined vocation. The nature, purpose and priorities of labouring were redefined (Marshall 1993: 167-168).

However, with the passing of time, it seems that the Puritan impulse was weakened sufficiently for the Anglican view of the separation of calling from religion to become dominant again in England after the Restoration. With this weakening sense of the distinctive sanctification of work Christianity clearly begins to play a much less significant role in shaping the realities of economic life. As secularising tendencies, combined with wars and revolutions, began to wear them down, the Puritans retreated to a place outside the world, or to times taken apart for piety in the workshop. They kept their worldly callings, but now the world began to dictate what was expected in those callings. According to Marshall, 'Puritanism began to decay even as certain of its virtues triumphed (Marshall 1993: 169)'. At the same time Puritanism was influencing the creation of new economic attitudes, the ground beneath it was being eroded. After tracing these developments, Marshall concludes that there was a correlation between Protestantism, especially the new view of everyday work as religious vocation, and the rationalising of work, and that the move that resulted 'was similar to what Max Weber

describes as the “spirit of capitalism”, an economic asceticism increasingly devoid of religious heart (Marshall 1993: 169)’.

Marshall maintains that Weber is correct in his suggestion that Calvinists unwittingly smoothed the path of capitalism, although he dismisses some of Weber’s other observations, such as Weber’s proposition that it was Calvinist doubts of predestination and election which led to ascetic, restless work habits driven by an attempt to reassure an uncertain soul. Marshall rejects this proposal on three counts. Firstly, a doctrine of predestination was common currency in 16th century theology. Secondly, some of Weber’s major ‘Calvinist’ sources such as Richard Baxter were not strict predestinarians. And thirdly, there is little evidence that early Protestant Calvinists and Puritans were insecure about their salvation (Marshall 1993: 171).

Marshall also criticizes Weber for being unclear about the degree to which the ‘protestant ethic’ was the direct production of Protestantism, or alternatively, would be better portrayed as a corruption of Protestantism. Weber accepts that ‘Protestant asceticism was in turn influenced by the totality of social conditions, especially economic (Weber 1930: 183)’. He also writes about a ‘gradual modification of the doctrines of Calvin’ and that ‘Calvin’s theology must be distinguished from Calvinism’ (Weber 1970: 220; Marshall 1993: 172), but the relationship remains vague. This is not unimportant because it is precisely on this question that R. H. Tawney departs from Weber. Tawney maintains that it was the deterioration of Calvinism that produced the ‘protestant ethic’ (Tawney 1926: 313). Marshall’s study supports this by confirming, especially in his study of John Locke, that the more self-interested or ‘rational’ views of economic life in 17th century England were present not in Puritan or latitudinarian divines, but in relatively secular writers on the more technical aspects of economics: ‘While a set of social views triumphed which generally the Puritans had adopted sooner than Anglicans, still Puritanism was more reticent than some other sectors of society in advocating the more self-interested aspect of these new views (Marshall 1993: 173)’.

Hart maintains that the Puritan stress on the significance of work and the virtues and vices associated with it, ‘add up to the most comprehensive exposition of the Christian view of work ever presented’ (Hart 1995c: 209). Hart (1995c) and Ryken (1986; 1995) have assembled a wide range of Puritan teachings. Both writers emphasise that the goal of the Puritans was moderation between extremes. To work with zeal and yet not to give one’s soul to one’s work. The ideal is to steer a middle path between the extremes of the idler and the workaholic (Ryken 1986: 35). For Ryken it is John Milton who summarises best the original Puritan work ethic, in the words of Adam to Eve in *Paradise Lost*:

Man hath his daily work of body or mind

Appointed, which declares his dignity,  
And the regard of Heaven on all his ways.  
(Quoted in Ryken 1986: 35).

Marshall's understanding of post-Restoration views is similar to Tawney's: while Puritanism criticized greed and the accumulation of wealth, it also promoted a form of thrift and hard work that encouraged economic advancement, even though it sought to place limits on this. Tawney and Marshall conclude that Puritanism was a weak link in Christian resistance to the development of a self-interested economic culture, although it was by no means the principal dynamic in this development. It is not hard to see how a theology that emphasised a calling, taught the equality of callings, and elevated and advocated every day work as a direct service to God, would attract those who sought economic change and advancement through work. Tawney also links the development of the philosophy of individualism with the roots of the doctrine of calling. But Marshall rejects this on the grounds that in fact the relationship between calling and work was stressed most strongly by those who were most critical of anything resembling self-seeking because their views of social relationship also emphasised strongly the importance of service and stewardship. Overall, Marshall concludes that, 'There was a distinctively Protestant ethic, though not quite Weber's (Marshall 1993: 174).'

We may still debate the extent to which the corruption of the doctrine of vocation in the interests of money-getting which took place from the middle of the 17th century is a degeneration which results from elements in the Puritan doctrine itself, or whether men like Richard Steele are no longer representative of the authentic Puritan tradition (Miller 1953: 125). But whatever the case, it is clear that from the later part of the 17th century the old restraints on money-getting were corroded and the 'calling' doctrine was being forced to adapt to accommodate the interests of industrial and commercial acquisitiveness. While part of this pressure can be put down simply to human greed and selfishness, it is also true that industrialism was creating new forms of property and consequently new forms of work relations, which the older formulations of doctrine were unable to address. The older Puritan formulations were shaped by a proprietor class and by a clergy whose class-affiliation was with the proprietors. The code of the calling laid a uniform burden of hard work on both employer and employee. But the significant difference was that while the employer reaped the benefits of this the employees did not. Theologically this difference was considered insignificant since the hope of heaven and fire of hell burned equally for both. But employees were growing tired of postponing all thoughts of reward until the hereafter. Puritan stability could not maintain itself in the face of the growth of this more aggressively acquisitive capitalism on the one hand and the search for simple justice on the other (Miller 1953: 126).

## **1.7 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.**

The Industrial Revolution resulted in profound changes in work patterns and the work environment. These changes were often rapid and drastic. Traditional formulas were no longer adequate to address them. During the earlier part of the 18th century British production was still primarily based on agriculture and home industry. Hammond (1926) and Engels (1971) provide graphic descriptions of how, by the beginning of the 19th century, the moderated domination of the old proprietors had given way to the unregulated rule of industrial bosses whose survival in the fierce competition between mill and mine owners depended on the exploitation of wage labour in the interests of mounting profit on a seemingly limitless market. The process of industrialisation marks a critical turning point in the history of work. So sweeping were the changes that resulted that it is now difficult for people even to imagine work arrangements significantly different from those which we have inherited under the regimen of industrial society. The self-sufficiency of the traditional household gave way to dependence on wage labour, which had previously been despised and strongly resisted. The locus of economic work moved from the household to the factory.

While initially the hardship of the times required the involvement of women and children in factory work, as it still does in many contexts where industrialisation is still developing, eventually a family division of labour was created in which men undertook waged labour while women performed unpaid domestic work. Illich (1981) refers to this unpaid work which is the necessary complement of industrial production, as shadow work. He argues that this shadow work led to the domestic enclosure of women and to a form of alienation which, although distinct from that created by wage labour, was no less severe in its effects. Factory workers were also subjected to new patterns of authority, new work disciplines and new attitudes to time. Kumar (1984) notes that factory workers in 19th century Europe worked 70 and 80 hour weeks. It took 100 years for them to return to working hours equivalent to the guildsmen who were their medieval forebears. This period was also marked by a significant change in the relationship between workers and machines. As workers shifted from being the subject of the production process to adapting to the demands of large scale machines the character of economic work was drastically transformed.

Alexander Miller describes some of these challenges:

By the end of the 18th century, the strong Puritan discipline had been emasculated in the interests of unregulated money-getting and adapted to

become the ideology of a predatory industrialism, while the workers whom it had tutored to obedience were taken out of the patriarchal household and put to work at the machines, machines whose authority was to become as absolute as that of the old Puritan proprietors, and a good deal less considerate. It was the beginning of an enslavement. (Miller 1953: 126)

An observer says:

While the engine runs, the people must work - men, women and children are yoked together with iron and steam. The animal machine - breakable in the best cases, subject to a thousand sources of suffering - is chained fast to the iron machine which knows no suffering and no weariness. (Quoted in Hammond 1926: 208)

At the same time as the industrialised world embarked on this process of rapid change the Church began to lose influence among the working classes. Because it wanted to retain the patronage of the industrial *nouveaux riches* the church did not interfere to challenge the ruthless exploitation of workers. This passivity was reinforced by the fact that the church failed to promote an ethic that would encourage workers to stand up and fight for better wages and conditions. Instead it was still promoting an anachronistic ethic of docility. According to Tawney the church had ceased to engage in any critical analysis of the established economic order (Tawney 1938: 194-196). Miller maintains Tawney's criticism doesn't go far enough. It was not just an intellectual failure, but far more. And the contemporary church inherits this disaster. It has never really regained the ability to speak decisively to the concerns of workers in theory or in practice (Miller 1953: 127).

In part Evangelicalism attempted to redeem the position by importing a measure of meaning and community into working-class life; but the Methodist leaders ended up at odds with the Chartists and so, according to Miller,

while the "chapel" produced religious and political forces which mitigated the worst effects of industrialism (notice the connection between chapel and the industrial organisations of labour), yet in another aspect of it both the evangelical and modern missionary movements represent a diversion - a "spiritualisation" if you like - of the Reformation drive for the provisional sanctification of secular life. (Miller 1953: 127)

Historians still debate the extent to which Methodism ought to be accorded a positive role in the origins and development of working class movements (Scotland 1997: 37-38). Scotland maintains that Methodism at least taught the labouring classes a form of protest

and leadership and organizing skills (Scotland 1997: 48). But organized political protest came from the radical fringes of Methodism rather than its heart. There was no strongly critical social ethic to inspire the masses to challenge the status quo.

It is significant to note that William Carey, who would help to launch the modern missionary movement in 1792, was encouraged to become a cobbler because his father feared the dire effects of work at the cotton-mill. Already it seems people were despairing that British industrial life would be responsive to Christian or humane concerns. Yet Carey and others discerned the possibility of responsiveness to the Christian message among people in pre-industrial societies overseas.

Thus, at the same time the foreign missionary movement was advancing during the 19th century, the church on the home front was losing its influence in societies becoming ever more industrialised. To workers who were reacting to the tyranny of machines and striving to keep their humanity intact, the church seemed to offer only well worn traditional responses. The church denounced attempts to escape through debauchery or revolution. But it failed to proclaim any other insightful or compelling interpretation of events from a Christian perspective that offered hope. Certainly there were some voices for Christian Socialism raised among the Establishment, and some elements of non-conformity had a hand in the early labour movement, but generally the picture is one of 'the more industry, the less church', until by the beginning of the twentieth century main-line Protestantism was largely alienated from the urban masses on both sides of the Atlantic (Miller 1953: 128). Gamble profiles a number of English reformers and movements associated with them, but he concludes that in spite of their prophetic activities 'The society in which they lived, and even the Church of which they were members, never really accepted their example (Gamble 1991: 49)'. Ultimately the churches 'failed to understand, to communicate with and to care for the working classes (Gamble 1991: 43)'.

According to Max Weber, 'the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs (Weber 1970: 182)'. Alexander Miller concludes that the idea of duty in one's calling 'survives for the middle-classes in the idea of stewardship which is the fruit of evangelicalism, but for the manual worker it scarcely survives at all (1953: 128)'. Miller makes this statement in the context of pleading for a critical restatement of the doctrine of vocation as it comes from Luther through Calvin and Puritanism. He acknowledges that the received doctrine was directed too exclusively to the relationship between a particular person and their work. The social matrix in which the work was done was taken for granted and assumed to be both wholesome and self-regulating. It was assumed that if each person worked well everyone would profit. Any warnings were directed at individual motivation and not at social issues. Proprietors



were warned against the dangers of greed and ostentation. Workers were warned against sloth and envy. But the relationship between work patterns and developing social relationships and issues of social justice were not explored. Nor were these connected with faith issues or spiritual concerns. Also the high ethic of responsibility which was given its last influential formulation by the Puritan divines was developed in a way that only made sense to those in professional and middle-class occupations, and even then was interpreted much too narrowly. The doctrine of vocation expressed in this way made no sense to the industrial worker. It implied a measure of responsibility and freedom of choice and public influence that few workers enjoyed. Hence it would be developments through the thinking of Hegel and Marx that would connect more strongly with the everyday realities of working life for industrial labourers.

## **1.8 HEGEL AND MARX.**

Hegel's *Early Theological Writings* (Hegel[1795-1799] 1961) date from the same period as Carey's initiation of the modern missionary movement. Although Germany had not developed industrially as rapidly as England, it is still worth noting that at the same time as the Protestant churches backed away from the challenge of interpreting the situation of people in industry this challenge was accepted by Hegel (a Lutheran turned philosopher) and then by Marx.

Hegel criticises Luther for the 'senseless, sophistic reasoning' which leads him to say in *Christian Liberty* that 'the soul will not be touched or affected if the body is maltreated, and the person subjected to another's power' (Quoted in Miller 1953: 128). On the contrary, Hegel maintains, the subjection of individual workers to the tyranny of industrialism and the expropriation of their labour-power by the mechanical processes of the market represents a deep offence against the key centre of a person's personality. It is 'soul-destroying'; it robs life of meaning and purpose; it destroys the possibility of a true vocation. On this point Marx clearly develops Hegel's thinking through the concept of alienation. Marcuse, who deals at length with the continuity between Hegel and Marx, paraphrases Marx's discussion of alienation in this way: 'The worker alienated from his product is at the same time alienated from himself. His labour becomes no longer his own, and the fact that it becomes the property of another bespeaks an expropriation which touches the very essence of man (Marcuse 1941: 279)'. According to Paul Tillich, 'Socialism is the fight of man for his creative freedom against the forces of industrial society that transforms him into a thing' (Quoted in Miller 1953: 129).

Marx poses the problem of what patterns of property and work relations will sustain responsible work. His thesis is that Capitalism undercuts it and Socialism will restore it. It now seems clear that what Marx proposed was too simplistic. But the problem remains and the concerns he expresses still need addressing.

Miller concludes his discussion of the challenge that Hegel and Marx represent with these words:

what we have in the Hegel-Marx analysis of man-in-industrial-society is a refraction of the Reformation, lacking however the final dimension of forgiveness....This alienation of the worker from his work and therefore from himself is a situation which Reformation theology ought to have been able to understand and to interpret in its own more profound terms. It ought to have been able to relate the dimension of nature and society (which was the pre-occupation of Marxism) to the more ultimate dimension of forgiveness and justification by faith, but the implications at the secular and political level would have been revolutionary, and for this the Church was not ready. Nineteenth century German theology, which was confronted directly by Marxism, was not sufficiently governed by the doctrine of justification to spell out an intelligible relation of justification to justice. And it is clear that the later development of the Social Gospel in America was mis-directed by 19th century German theology into the shallows of a "Kingdom of God" progressivism which could not deal with the problem of the alienation of industrial man because it was informed neither by the full insights of the Reformation nor by the radical Marxist analysis of capitalist industrialism. In any event, inspite of the Copec movement in England, Rauschenbusch in America and Ragaz in Europe, by the present generation the church was without an adequate doctrine of vocation and had resigned itself to mitigating the worst excesses of industrialism by the doctrine of stewardship. (Miller 1953: 129)

In Chapter Two we will examine how twentieth century theologians have sought to respond to these challenges. However, in concluding this chapter, we also note briefly two popular conceptions of vocation that have grown in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries and that appear to have developed in contrary directions. Firstly, the word vocation has become widely used as a synonym for occupation or career, with no clear theological or spiritual associations. Vocational guidance is a very common concept in the late twentieth century, but it seldom has anything to do anymore with Christian faith or offering spiritual direction. The secularization of the concept is complete, although in the United States of America some Puritan and Reformed elements still surface in popular treatments of vocation. We will examine some of these in Chapter Three.

Secondly, and at the same time, the concept of calling has become more closely associated in Protestant circles with the work of people who sense the 'call' of God to enter ordained pastoral ministry or missionary service. It is commonly accepted that these forms of Christian service involve a special 'calling' from God. People wanting to move in such a direction are often examined by church leaders to 'test' their 'call', and people following such 'callings' are considered to have a special spiritual status in many people's minds. This represents a return to something similar to the spiritualization of vocation that dominated the pre-Reformation period although, as we briefly noted previously, Calvin also speaks of a 'secret call' from God that every minister is conscious of, in addition to their public and formal call to pastoral leadership (Calvin 1989: ii.323). In Catholic circles this change is less marked because traditional understandings continued to hold sway until the last 50 years and serious interaction with Protestant viewpoints is relatively recent. We will discuss some of these developments in Chapter Four.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is apparent that some time in the second century after the Apostles the idea grew that it was only priests, monks and nuns who were considered to have a 'religious' vocation or calling. This calling was associated with the contemplative life and clearly distinct from the active life associated with ordinary everyday work.

The Protestant Reformers opposed this view asserting that daily work is a part of the Christian's vocation. The heirs of the Calvinist tradition further developed this perspective, but also found themselves contending with the secularising effects of the Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. The result was that vocation became identified with occupation or career with no other spiritual qualifications or associations. Also the views of vocation of the Reformers and Puritans failed to address the changes, the inequalities and alienation that were the results of industrialisation. Consequently the Church became largely estranged from working class people. Socialism spoke more directly to their aspirations and anguish. Furthermore, Catholic theologians have only recently begun to demonstrate interest in Reformed and Puritan developments, while many Protestants appear to still elevate the status of ordained pastoral ministry and missionary service above other vocations.

Today we end up with a variety of destructive consequences resulting from the impact of these influences. These bad consequences include ....

(a) Ordained pastoral ministry or missionary service is elevated by many Christians above other vocations and they feel the need to pursue these even when they do not easily fit.

(b) The Sunday-Monday dualism: The world of the marketplace is seen as 'secular' and depraved: the world of the church as 'spiritual' and divine. They are two unconnected worlds. Another similar development is the way faith has become a private and personal leisure time pursuit that is considered out of place in the public sphere of a pluralistic and secular society.

(c) Workaholism and the devastating consequences of unemployment when employment is seen as necessary for a true vocation and the source of fulfilment.

(d) An inflexible view of vocation that is not adequate to cope with changes in work patterns and career paths and gender roles, etc...

(e) A view of Christian vocation which seems to foster either a strong personal spirituality or a strong social concern, but does not often combine these two essential elements effectively.

We need to find a path that will lead us between the twin heresies of divorcing faith from work and idolising work. We must rediscover that our primary vocation is the call to follow Jesus. But we must also emphasize that this call embraces the whole of our lives, including our everyday work. It needs to effectively combine both the personal and social dimensions of the gospel and nurture a lively everyday spirituality. We need to see ways in which our work is connected to the creating, sustaining and transforming work of God. This will not be a quietist view of Christian vocation that surrenders to the status quo, but one that will contest corruption and exploitation and work to name and resist what is evil and to transform bad circumstances. We must also strive to maintain a broad definition of work that encompasses not only paid employment but also domestic work and voluntary work. In this way we can seek to live a more radical yet also more balanced discipleship through the whole of our lives. The balance will be different for different people and different at different stages in our lives. Therefore we need a view of our vocation which includes some constant elements but is also flexible enough to help us make sense of lives in which the nature and mix of work that we do is regularly changing. Employment remains an important part of life through which we express our Christian discipleship. But it is only one part of a multi-faceted life of discipleship. Unemployed people, home makers and voluntary workers have a vocation too! Our vocation as Christians does not

depend on paid employment, but it must be expressed through our employment. We also need to understand that living out our vocation was never meant to be a solitary task and we need the encouragement of committed companions and the community of faith to assist us

Is the concept of vocation is too outdated to be useful anymore? Some believe this to be so (see Chapter 2.18), but this writer believes it may be rehabilitated and given new content. Our study thus far suggests that any rediscovery of the relevance of vocation would need to include at least the following elements:

1. A view of vocation that grants meaning to the life of every Christian and rediscovers the priesthood of all believers.
2. A view of vocation that overcomes the dualism of separate sacred and secular spheres.
3. A view of vocation that relates to a person's everyday work and helps to integrate the life of faith with that work.
4. A view of vocation that makes sense even when work is experienced as a negative and alienating reality.
5. A view of vocation which does not just accept unjust and oppressive circumstances but works to challenge injustices and redeem bad circumstances.
6. A view of vocation which is not static but can apply in a dynamic way to a world in which work patterns are constantly changing.
7. A view of vocation which includes an understanding of the place of leisure and the contemplative dimensions of life.

## **CHAPTER TWO: THE LAST FIFTY YEARS.**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION.**

The period following the end of World War II marks the beginning of the development of various 'theologies of work'. This terminology was not used until 1948, but from then on references to the theology of work are quite common (Smith 1990: 15). According to Smith, this development of a variety of new theological approaches to work was initially stimulated by a combination of the post-war economic boom and the ideological battle between communism and capitalism (1990: 16).

This chapter surveys a range of different attempts to develop theologies of work during this period. We include a general description of each approach and take special interest in the way the doctrine of vocation is developed.

These five decades have included significant changes in work patterns. Because these changes have stimulated, influenced and sometimes even shaped, theological reflection on work issues and working conditions, we begin with a brief explanation of some key factors which have marked the three most distinctive periods in this era.

#### **(i) The Post War Boom**

The massive boom in economic production that occurred following World War II and continued largely unabated until the early 1970s was the result of numerous factors, including the need for post-war reconstruction, the application of advanced technology developed during the war, and the availability of so many people looking for work after the war. It was a period of economic optimism, inspired by full employment, rising living standards and the availability of new consumer goods. There was pride in technological achievements. Futurologists predicted a time when human labour would be replaced by automation, machines would undertake most of the arduous work and leisure would become the new focus for human life. Not that these changes were accepted uncritically. Some questioned the dominance of technology in this new age; others questioned the hedonism and consumerism of the times; still others questioned the new work culture. Those who were closest to the changes felt these effects most acutely and began to debate them. Many of the theologians whose work is described in this chapter became engaged in this critique. It was also a period profoundly influenced by the ideological battles between communism and capitalism.

The emerging post-war society presented the churches with new challenges. The newly formed World Council of Churches (hereafter WCC) recognised that one of its first

priorities was to assess the implications of the new values and patterns of life that were emerging. Questions regarding the nature of work were near the top of the list. This is evident in the report on *Christian Faith and Daily Work* from the Second Assembly of the WCC in Evanston in August 1954 (WCC 1954: 106-111).

Prior to this period, mainstream Protestant and Catholic teaching had tended to become dominated by the view of work as a combination of divine command and divine curse imposed in response to human sin. This response recognised some of the harsher long-term effects of industrialization. The inevitability of human work involving widespread hardship and drudgery was widely accepted. Many of the more positive notes sounded by the Reformers and Puritans had been forgotten. Work was viewed primarily as a necessary evil to be endured. It was this endurance which was virtuous rather than any intrinsic value in the work itself. But now technological progress was offering the possibility of more leisure and a less arduous future. How would the church respond to this new scenario? Was it for or against technological progress? Was the curse on work being lifted, or was this apparent progress just another manifestation of human pride and arrogance?

We have already noted how, in the immediate post-war period, it seemed as if Christian views of work were seriously out of step with mainstream Western society. The circumstances called for a more positive doctrine of work, although the need still existed to counter the harsher aspects of some work. New theological thinking was needed. It was more than just a matter of reshaping the old categories and concepts. This is where the ideological tension between East and West, between communism and capitalism, between collectivism and individualism helped to shape the Christian response.

As an example of this process Smith traces the influence of the personalist movement on many of those who would become significant figures in the post-war development of theologies of work, including Marie-Dominique Chenu, Jacques Ellul, Karol Wojtyla and Joseph Oldham (Smith 1990: Chapter 2). Influential in France in the 1930's and Poland in the 1940's personalism inspired various movements and publications of the Catholic Left and was particularly attractive to Christians who were sympathetic to certain aspects of socialism, but who wanted to oppose Communism. They attempted to establish a 'third way' which would assert the spiritual and personal over and against the dehumanising materialism of both capitalist individualism and Stalinist communalism.

**(ii) The 1960s - 1970s**

The sustained production and optimism of the 1950's started to wane as the downside of technological advances began to be experienced. As work patterns changed, questions began to be asked. There was a huge growth in white collar as against blue collar employment. Women, especially married women, became much more involved in the paid work force. Materialism and the work ethic began to be challenged. Alienation at work was described as surveys identified many workers in a wide variety of occupations who were feeling stifled and unfulfilled. In many Western countries Union militancy increased and even white-collar workers joined the protesting.

From the mid 1970s to the early 1980s, unemployment rose and persisted at high levels, especially among the young, in most Western economies. There were many new and rapid technological changes, especially those related to computerisation. These developments, combined with the growing internationalisation of economic activity, led to widespread, often drastic and traumatic, industrial restructuring.

These were turbulent years marked by constant change and demanding flexible and creative responses. The new theological ideas which had begun to emerge in the early 1950's now had to contend with these new challenges. And these new challenges demanded new creative theological responses.

### **(iii) 1980 - 1997**

By the 1980s Western societies had encountered almost the full gamut of work place experiences: full employment, unemployment, technological change, married women in employment, computerisation, part-time work, job-sharing and redundancies, just to mention a few. Hence theologians writing in the 1980s and 1990's had a concentrated period of real-world experiences upon which to base their reflections.

In the discussion of particular writers that follows, it is important to consider their contribution in the light of prevailing work patterns at the time and the dominant mood in the market place. Some of these theologians sound a prophetic note, seeking to point to a new way ahead. Others seem to provide an explanation for what has been, rather than for what might be. Whatever the case, these 50 years include a period of rapid and drastic changes in work patterns that provide us with a fascinating study of Christians attempting to do their theology contextually and to relate academic reflections to everyday life concerns. It is a representative sample of these attempts we now examine.

### **2.2 J. H. OLDAM.**

In spite of the heavy Catholic involvement in the personalist movement, it was through a Protestant layperson, J.H. Oldham, that the application of personalist ideas to a theology



of work was first made. In fact, Oldham's *Work in Modern Society* (1950) should probably be regarded as the first formal theology of work (Smith 1990: Chapter 2). It is a ground-breaking booklet. For, although this pioneering work has received little recognition, there is hardly a theme which has emerged in subsequent theologies of work which was not raised or prefigured in Oldham's writing. Even his method is instructive; beginning with a description of the place and nature of work in modern society and only then seeking to define a Christian approach to the meaning of work.

Oldham wrote his two essays for the Inaugural Assembly of the World Council of Churches in 1948 (Oldham 1948a; 1948b). Motivated by the belief that this period is 'one of the great turning points of history' he urges the Church to gain understanding of the new circumstances, and not just to express new zeal in proclaiming the gospel. Oldham advocates a more positive attitude to technology than was evidenced in previous theological reflections. He argues that the effects of the machine on human life have 'in the main' been beneficial. Oldham willingly acknowledges the problems associated with new technology, but emphasises that abuses of machinery (including war) are not due to the machines themselves but to those who use them. But Oldham is concerned that scientific and technical stand points have so influenced society that people have come to think of themselves only as objects rather than as persons. Slavery to the machine can only be avoided by 'a revolutionary change in the accepted scale of values, in which a primary concern for the growth and welfare of persons takes the place of demonic concentration on technical efficiency and the material product (Oldham 1948a: 40)'.

Oldham argues that human efforts to transform their environment are not 'a diabolic revolt of man against his Maker' for these creative powers have been implanted by the Creator. Rather, these are our response to a demand of God. He notes, however, that there is a clear necessity to develop a Christian doctrine of work because, people have come to serve the machine:

we are confronted here with a fundamental contradiction between the claims of the human person and the whole structure of modern industry. Nothing will overcome this contradiction but a revolution in men's ideas by which human labour is conceived in terms not primarily of the technical process and the material product, but of human good; that is to say, of the human relations of those associated in the productive effort and the human purposes which it is designed to serve, the ultimate end and meaning of the whole process being found in the worship of God. (Oldham 1948b: 133)

For Oldham the church is being challenged to be involved in helping to bring about such a revolution. But he also recognises that for this to happen a lay theology must be developed through the engagement of those actively involved in industry. *Work in Modern Society* (1950) is Oldham's own attempt to develop such a theology of work.

Oldham notes that work is one of the central realities of existence for most people, and yet theologians are mostly lacking in first-hand experience of 'the perplexities and pressures of life' in secular society (Oldham 1950: 8). He makes many pleas for a greater involvement of the laity in developing a theology of work. He also explains that though the main focus of his book is on 'work in modern industry' still 'work must not be identified with gainful employment'. He acknowledges that much work is unremunerated, most notably the work of motherhood. However, like most later writers, he fails to maintain this broad view of work consistently and for the most part is focussed on work as industrial or manual employment. For Oldham it is the divorce of work from the personal life and from life in community that deprives it of meaning and is the heart of the problem of work in society. This is reinforced by the divorce that exists between institutional religion and the ways of thinking and feeling of ordinary men and women. Christianity appears remote from the affairs of daily life, especially everyday work (Oldham 1950: 6).

Oldham observes that what is said about work in the Bible and Church history is 'necessarily conditioned by the social and cultural situation which existed in their time (Oldham 1950: 34)'. These were pre-industrial societies. Hence we need to rethink the whole problem in the light of the new circumstances of society. So rather than examining the Biblical doctrine of work we should commence with the Christian understanding of humanity and what it means to be a person in relation to God, other people and the world: 'If man's responsibilities toward the world are larger than earlier generations supposed them to be, may they not contain new possibilities of man's co-operation with God in the making of the world? (Oldham 1950: 34)'. This last observation anticipates the 'co-creationist' thinking which would emerge more fully in the writings of others a few years later.

Oldham goes on to discuss the secular life. He sees the Gospel in the first instance as a call away from interests and cares of the immediate world, but also as a call back into the world,

where alone in this earthly life God is to be served. The belief that man's life is rooted in a spiritual and eternal world, transcending man's temporal life, does not diminish, though it may at times in the history of the Church have tended in that direction, but enormously enhances the importance of his earthly existence.

It is the world as a whole, and not merely individuals in it, that is the object of God's redeeming love. It is the historic achievement of Christianity to have brought this dualism into the life of the world, teaching men that they are citizens not only of an earthly but also of a heavenly city. By its proclamation of the Kingdom of God it related man's life to two different orders, spiritual and temporal. (Oldham 1950: 43-44)

Oldham pleads for a doctrine of work that will enable the majority of people to experience a genuine vocation to do ordinary kinds of work. He notes that it is a vital matter for believers to know how their Christian obedience is related to what they do during most of the hours of their day. Other-worldly interpretations of Christianity may engage the interest of theologians, but they leave Christians who have to live in the world and participate in its activities without guidance about the meaning of their daily work.

Can the Christian politician, administrator, business manager, technician, scientist or manual worker find a Christian meaning in the choices which he makes and the acts which he performs in his daily occupation, or has all this nothing to do with his real Christian life? Can he serve God in these professions or, if he wants to be a Christian in the full sense, must he become a missionary or enter the cloister? The question is in urgent need of an answer. (Oldham 1950: 46)

Oldham goes on to argue that the urgency for an answer to these questions is made more pressing because of the growing collectivism of modern society. This is because what people do today, as contrasted with what they may think or say, is increasingly determined not by their individual choice but by the collective decisions of society as a whole or of the various institutions and associations within it. Oldham's concern is that,

if there is a manifest contradiction between the understanding of life which Christianity offers and the acts which, as a result of collective decisions, men have to perform in their daily work, their lives are split into two parts which are at war with one another. The more robust and honest natures will find the contradiction insupportable, and, since they cannot give up their occupation without joining the ranks of the unemployed and becoming a burden on the community, many will give up their Christianity. (Oldham 1950: 46)

Oldham also identifies work as ministry:

work in the Christian view is inseparable from service to our fellow-men ... Work has a Christian meaning only if the occupation is one by which society is truly served. This meaning includes an obligation to do the work as well as it can be

done, because if the object is the service of society, the service should be the best that can be rendered. From the point of view of service to one's fellows manual and spiritual work are on the same level. (Oldham 1950: 51)

For Oldham this illustrates how profoundly different the Christian attitude to work is from that of classical antiquity. It sets the service of God and people at the centre as the ruling ends of human life and leaves no place for self-centred ambition. It also means that what happens to a person and the way they respond to the encounter is more important than any positive accomplishment. Suffering, in the Christian view, may be the highest form of action. Oldham then goes on to develop the idea that the need of society for creative activity needs to be combined with the view of work as ministry in any comprehensive account of the Christian meaning of work.

When it comes to specific discussion of the idea of vocation Oldham recognises the problems this terminology gives rise to, but is nevertheless reluctant to do away with it:

the primary meaning of vocation is the call of God to the new life in Christ and to the service of His Kingdom ... In view of this primary meaning of the term vocation, it might seem the better course to use it only in this sense and to speak of the functions which men perform in society simply as their "occupations". But this would be to deny to secular activities the possibility of being the fulfillment of a vocation or calling, and this would be entirely contrary to what has been said about the world being the place in which God is to be served. The religious mind craves for the hallowing of all work, whatever it may be. Whenever a man becomes aware of his work as having a relationship to a reality beyond the immediate present ... the word vocation irresistably suggests itself. We need it as a comprehensive term to include the service of God in the natural and temporal, as well as in the redemptive, order. (Oldham 1950: 56-57)

We have already noted how Oldham sees the idea of God's calling pulling in two different directions. He recognises that,

In the Christian view the centre of gravity in a [person's] life lies not in the present visible world but in a transcendent sphere. The Gospel is in the first instance a call *away* from absorption in the interests, cares and pleasures of the immediate world. It makes a breach with civilisation and its tasks-and just for this reason is a source from which civilisation can be continually renewed. Christianity is not the endorsement or consecration of life as it now is ... It is a call to repentance and change of direction. (Oldham 1950: 43)

Yet, at the same time the Gospel calls us away from the world and from immersion in temporal concerns, it also calls us back into the world, which is where we serve God during the course of our earthly lives:

It is a call, not to life in the Church as a sphere separate from the world, but to life in the world in the fellowship of the Church and in the service of God's redemptive purpose. It is in the transformation of society and of history in accordance with God's purposes that faith must be translated into act. (Oldham 1950: 44)

Oldham is aware of the problems that this view of two orders with different sets of values interpenetrating one another creates. The tension between them gives rise to a constant struggle. According to Oldham, 'Different solutions for it have been sought in different periods of Christian history, and fresh ones are needed in our time (1950: 44)'. Oldham traces developments in the Christian understanding of the relationship between sacred and secular. The Reformation repudiated the previous view of a double standard of religion and morals by making vocation a universal term applying to all states of life and all kinds of work. All work became recognized as service to God. But Oldham maintains 'the attempt of the Reformation to fill secular activities with Christian meaning was not carried to a successful conclusion' and as a result 'the emancipation of the secular from the domination of the sacred has led to the complete autonomy of the secular, so that the whole transcendental meaning of life has come to be almost entirely disregarded ..the triumph of the Renaissance over the Reformation has been almost complete (1950: 45)'. One of the greatest tasks now for Christian thought is to work towards 'the re-integration of all secular realms in the realm of faith (Oldham 1950: 45)'. For Oldham a rediscovery and new interpretation of the doctrine of vocation is essential 'if Christianity is to be a faith that can be *lived* in the arena of the common life (1950: 47)'. His own work serves to outline the agenda for this quest.

### **2.3 ALAN RICHARDSON**

Alan Richardson's *The Biblical Doctrine of Work* (1952) is not strictly a theology of work. In theory it confines itself to discussion of the biblical material. However in fact, Richardson frequently refers to wider issues and recognition of his contribution is important for this study, because his work subsequently influenced many other theologies of work, especially in more conservative Protestant circles. Richardson promotes a more optimistic view of work in the Bible than was generally current. But he does this not by developing the idea of work as human creativity, which he dismisses, but rather the view

of work as divine ordinance. Richardson maintains 'there is little in the Bible concerning what is today called creative workmanship (Richardson 1952: 17)'. He then asserts that this does not mean a negative view of work as a rule of life that limits permissible behaviour but rather 'an ordering of things which belongs to the very way in which the world has been made (Richardson 1952: 23)'. The divine command to work (Genesis 1:28, 2:15) is part of the original structure of life designed by God for human good. It predates the fall and therefore is given primacy over the curse on work (Genesis 3:17-19). Richardson also links human work to human creation 'in the image of God' (Genesis 1:26): 'Work is a necessity for man: it is his proper nature to be a worker, and to be denied the opportunity of work is to be treated as something less than a human being, created in the image of God, who is himself represented as a worker (Richardson 1952: 27)'.

Richardson further develops this positive tone in making much of the fact that Jesus was a worker. Hence Christ is the one who fulfills the divine ordinance of work (Richardson 1952: 30-32). And the original blessings of this divine ordinance are now available to the Christian believer:

when a man turns to Christ in repentance and faith, his whole life is sanctified, including his life as a worker. What had formerly been done as sheer necessity, or perhaps out of a sense of duty, or even as a means of self-expression and fulfillment, is now done "unto the Lord", and becomes joyous and free service and the source of deep satisfaction. (Richardson 1952: 49)

Richardson also takes a broad view of Christian service, so as to include service in public life or secular affairs as well as service in the Church. Daily work is an offering we can make to God. Even the bread and wine offered in the Eucharist are the symbols not only of 'ourselves, our souls and bodies', but also of all the work we do in our everyday lives.

When it comes to discussing vocation and work Richardson makes some very clear statements. He begins by asserting that in the New Testament the word 'work', when used in relation to people, generally means something other than daily toil. We are 'fellow-workers' with God. The proper work of Christians is the furtherance of the Gospel and the service of the purpose of God. This is the work to which we have been 'called'. This is our true 'vocation'. The New Testament does not refer to 'vocation' in the modern sense of a secular 'profession'. Rather vocation (*klesis*, 'calling') in the New Testament means God's call to repentance and faith and to a life of fellowship and service in the Church. According to Richardson,

The Bible knows no instance of a man's being called to an earthly profession or trade by God ... Those whom God calls (in the New Testament sense of the

word) are summoned to "work" within the Church, in the distinctive New Testament sense of the word "work" which we have noted. They thus become Christian "workers" whatever may be their secular occupation - whether they are rulers or silversmiths or sellers of purple or slaves. (Richardson 1952: 35)

Richardson warns, 'Our secular occupations are to be regarded not as ends in themselves but as means to the service of the Kingdom of God. They have Christian value only in so far as they can be made means to the end of the Gospel (Richardson 1952: 37)'. He also concludes, 'Though there is no parallel in the New Testament to the idea of vocation in the modern sense, it is assumed throughout the New Testament that daily work, so far from being a hindrance to Christian living, is a necessary ingredient of it (Richardson 1952: 39)'. Richardson then goes on to stress the duty of Christians to work and identifies ways the New Testament encourages Christians to approach their work.

#### **2.4 M.D. CHENU.**

It is M.D. Chenu in his *Theology of Work* (1963), originally published in France in 1955, who gives impetus to the doctrine of 'co-creation' which, as we have already noted, emerged in embryonic form in Oldham. This doctrine goes on to dominate the theology of work in both Catholic and Protestant traditions for the rest of the twentieth century. In contrast to the strictly biblical analysis of Richardson, Chenu's work is more philosophical and speculative. Chenu begins by emphasising the discontinuity of the 'machine age' with all previous periods. As a result, 'the traditional images of potter, blacksmith and peasant with which the Bible furnished the old theologians are not only inadequate but also lead to resentment against new technology (Chenu 1963: 6). This is disastrous according to Chenu because, although our first impulse is to resist the 'tyranny of the machine' as a 'forced adaptation', we must instead move to a 'real assimilation', and this can only occur 'by the achievement of a rational and moral conquest of nature' (Chenu 1963: 7).

Chenu holds a high view of both human work and modern technology. The human person is a 'collaborator in creation and participant in his evolution by his discovering, exploiting and spiritualising Nature. This dominion over Nature (work) is a divine participation ... The machine is the instrument of this creative enterprise (Chenu 1963: 17).' People transform history into eternity through their work. In Chenu the tension between personalism and Marxist materialism in co-creationist thinking, which would continue as a major element in the post-war development of the theology of work, is

already apparent. Chenu is also influenced by the optimistic evolutionary mysticism of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and the need to respond to the emerging wave of post-war growth and prosperity with a new and more positive theology of work.

Chenu does not propose that the progress of humanity can be represented by a direct and unbroken upward line. He recognises the dark side of human nature that threatens progress and adds uncertainty and struggle to the idea of social evolution. Nevertheless, Chenu is still strongly optimistic about the promise that this period holds - a certain 'historic energy' is present 'which renews the world in the dramatic moments of humanity. The conquest of the hidden forces of matter emphasizes the affinity between the transformation of the universe and the collective evolution of mankind (Chenu 1963: 75)'. He concludes with the formula for social evolution announced by Irenaeus 'God created matter in time, in order that man nurtured in matter, should crown it with immortality' (Chenu 1963: 75). This degree of optimism would not be widespread today.

Chenu gives no evidence of interacting with the Protestant 'vocation' tradition except to suggest that the Lutheran distinction between nature and grace is responsible for the failure of modern theologians to 'view the world as a natural frame and spiritual sphere of action for man in his work (Chenu 1963: 15)'. According to Chenu, earlier Catholic and Eastern theologians provide a more helpful 'discussion of man's place in the universe ... They observe the substantial connection of his human nature with material nature (Chenu 1963: 14)'. Chenu's only mention of vocation occurs in his discussion of 'Man and the Universe': 'Work is at their meeting point, and also at the conjunction of spirit and matter. Man is master of the universe: the divine purpose, the vocation of man, is revealed in Genesis (Chenu 1963: 16)'. What Genesis pictures, according to Chenu, is the cosmic unfolding of the divine plan in which humans are collaborators, as lords of creation, and their work is a divine participation, from which a new world is created.

## **2.5 JOSEF PIEPER**

Josef Pieper's *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* (1952) is important, because it deliberately challenges the emerging emphasis on work in society. While it is more philosophical than theological, it has influenced subsequent theologies of work, especially those which have sought to resist and critique 'co-creationism'. At the time it was written it was commonly believed that human society was about to enter a period in which much work would be displaced by increased leisure time. Many theologians responded to the



‘problem of leisure’ by opposing it in the name of the divine requirement for human work. Pieper chose to differ. He maintains that leisure, not labour, is the basis of the Western cultural tradition. Pieper sees leisure as implying inner calm and celebration, and as something radically distinct from utilitarian work. He distinguishes leisure from idleness. The restlessness that results from idleness is the result of emphasising the importance of ‘work for work’s sake’. Idleness, in fact, makes true leisure impossible. The answer is to reinstate divine worship at the centre of leisure. Any other approach leaves leisure subservient to the hegemony of work and the utilitarian world created around it.

Pieper does not view work as punishment or curse. Work is simply a necessity, part of a utilitarian dimension to life, but one which is distinct from the true centre and purpose of life. True human existence lies outside of work in the realm of leisure.

Although Pieper himself was a Catholic, it is in the approach to work of European Protestant theologians that his influence can be most clearly distinguished. Writers such as Barth and Ellul are representative of this perspective which sees work as over-emphasised in our society. For them work is a simple necessity. They share Pieper’s concern to guard against the idealisation of work as the meaning of human life. They also highlight the more negative Biblical traditions regarding work. And of particular note for our purposes is the fact that these theologians do not dispense with talk of ‘vocation’ and ‘calling’ but offer a new interpretation.

## **2.6 KARL BARTH**

Resistance to Catholic co-creationism was strong among a number of European Protestant theologians who took the view that work is just a simple necessity, given no prominence in the Bible, and consequently is not to be regarded as of any great importance for the life of faith. Barth exemplifies this view. He sees human work as a simple consequence of our existence as human creatures. It is not, in itself, ‘the active life’ required by God: that is obedience, which consists in a correspondence to (as distinct from a continuation of) divine action (Barth 1961: 471). Barth emphatically rejects co-creationism, or any view that seeks to elevate human culture. According to Barth,

It would be highly arrogant and materially more than doubtful to maintain that God’s work is improved or adorned by human labour ... It is pure assumption to suppose that this human activity is secretly identical with the action in which

God Himself asserts and magnifies His glory ... Work is the typical earthly and creaturely act, which distinguishes man as the centre of the earthly creation. This is its dignity. In no sense is it heavenly or divine. When it tries to be, it can only be demonic. (Barth 1961: 520-521)

Karl Barth's theology is a response to the confident 'cultural Christianity' of his teachers Adolf von Harnack and William Herrmann. He reacted against their support for Germany in World War I and against the German church's cultural accommodation to Hitler, who emphasised the significance of 'natural' categories such as the *volk* ('people') and *arbeit macht frei* ('work makes free') - the motto on the gates of Dachau concentration camp (Preece 1995: 174). Barth was very wary of allowing creation any independent status as a category of theology apart from Christ. Barth relativises work by emphasising that we are not self-made. God's work and the Christian life is larger than our work. Our work depends on God's work, not our own creativity and effort.

Barth follows Emil Brunner in warning that

faithfulness in vocation must exclude any intention of radically reforming life. We must not think ourselves summoned to clean up the "places within the world" before we can decide to live in them. We must not become those for whom "no place in the world is good enough ... until he has put something within it to rights" ... Brunner's prognosis ... is right: "His whole life is spent in this ceaseless endeavour to alter conditions, the personal meaning of life is forgotten, a nervous haste takes possession of him, and finally, since he is forced to admit that all these reforms do not alter anything essential, he falls into a state of mind which is either one of cynical resignation or of irritated hostility to everything and everyone ... The reform of life as a principle produces a way of living which ignores real life". (Barth 1961: 641; Brunner 1937: 202-203)

Barth vigorously disputes the way the teaching of human dominion over creation has been used to provide a rationale for Capitalism, the development of technology and the work ethic. In Barth's view, 'we search ... the New Testament in vain for the passion with which the "subdue the earth" of Genesis 1:28 has been interpreted and applied since the 16th century (Barth 1961: 472). Barth sees economic necessity rather than cultural enterprise as the basic biblical view of work: 'there is no option but to work. Hence one of the favourite insights of Protestant ethics, namely the importance of work to human personality and as a cultural enterprise is very much in the background, if not completely invisible (Barth 1961: 472)'. According to Barth, it is not accidental that there is no positive command to work, whereas there is an emphatic command to rest. Christ called his disciples *away* from their secular work rather than *to* it (Barth 1961: 472).

By picturing work as part of, but not the whole of, 'the active life', Barth deliberately counters 'the myth of modern Western civilisation with its ethos of work....very different from the command of God'. He challenges this ethos, maintaining that it has been exaggerated by Protestants. Barth warns that we should never over spiritualise work nor elevate it to the level of worship. Work is not prayer (Barth 1961: 474-5, 483). However Barth maintains that this critique

does not mean that we depreciate work ... Work has its place among the things which man is commanded to do, and in this place has its own dignity and importance. But ... the biblical witness enjoins greater reserve, and, greater relaxation than has become customary in Protestant ethics generally, not so much under biblical influences, but under the pressure of recent developments in European economy and economics. (Barth 1961: 473)

Although some of Barth's observations may seem to be overstated, and only one-sided, it is difficult to reject entirely the disquiet he expresses when we now live at the end of a century in which life seems to have become more and more dominated by competitive market forces and economic concerns. Barth warns us of the danger of identifying vocation too closely with our work, especially employment, or any other cultural achievement.

According to Barth, work is part of God's calling people out of themselves into the active life of service to the community. In creaturely humility, what God has done for the world should be imitated within a person's circle of contact. Thus Barth sets work in a relational context and focusses on its significance as an expression of humble and unassuming service in contrast to much other modern theological talk of 'co-creation' and 'co-redemption' (Barth 1961: 487).

For Barth, the church's unique vocation is to proclaim and live out the love of God before the watching world. Work is 'an incidental but necessary prerequisite of service (Barth 1961: 525-6)'. Here God provides the means for us to survive and thus affirm our existence as human creatures, in order to go about our primary task of being Christian and proclaiming Christ.

Barth goes on to offer an ethic of work, spelling out what it means for work to be 'specifically human in character ... and to serve the preservation, self-guarding, development and fashioning of human life'. He suggests five criteria for determining which work is proper work:

1. Criterion of objectivity: setting ends and devoting one's self to them.

2. Criterion of worth: is it honest constructive work?
3. Criterion of humanity: the social and co-operative dimension of work.
4. Criterion of reflectivity: the person must be the active subject and not just passive object of work and there must be room for reflection.
5. Criterion of limitation: work must not become an absolute, rest is also commanded. (Barth 1961: 528-63).

It is not clear how the criteria flow directly from Barth's theology. They appear to represent Barth's practical wisdom and reflections on the contemporary work scene rather than theological logic. However, Barth is clearly concerned about the need for worthwhile work, in terms of making some human contribution. But this also raises the question - who is going to bring this kind of work about - the individual, society, the Church, or do we simply wait for God's Kingdom to come? Barth is vague at this point. Also his criteria seem to place a lot of onus on the individual and little on the necessity to change the orders of society. Hence they have been criticised for being too moralistic and burdensome where social conditions make them unrealistic (Preece 1995: 180-181).

Barth distinguishes between calling in the sense of vocation and calling as the divine summons. The latter calling is primary and relates to the way in which the God who calls and rules finds a person and challenges them to orientate themselves to be obedient, 'to make the true and decisive choice of obedience in freedom (Barth 1961: 597)'. The goal of this calling is fellowship with Christ, so that 'Christ is in Christians and they are in Him (Barth 1962: 547)'. Christ calls a person to attachment to himself and to His discipleship (Barth 1962: 555). But vocation has to do with the way God has constituted a person as their Creator and with discipleship where they are placed. Barth draws on Bonhoeffer to define vocation as 'the place of responsibility' (Barth 1961: 598). For Bonhoeffer this calling is the particular situation in which a person finds themselves being challenged to live out obedience to God. The calling is the place at which the call of Christ is answered, the place at which a person lives responsibly. It encompasses different circumstances and different roles.

According to Bonhoeffer, 'From the standpoint of Christ my present situation is now my calling; from my own standpoint it is my responsibility (Bonhoeffer 1986: 255)'. Responsibility in one's calling must never be reduced to just fulfilling professional duties. It involves obeying the concrete call of Jesus in our particular circumstances - a total response of the whole person to the whole reality.

Barth broadens the concept of vocation to go beyond the job and to include the work of caring for children, the sick, the elderly, the unemployed, and the work of mothers and

housewives. Even those whose vocation is centred on their profession still work to live, rather than live to work. But he expresses particular concern for those whose profession can only be the circumference of their vocation. Vocation extends beyond profession, and is lived out in a range of different spheres of God's calling. Barth maintains that while the concept of calling or vocation was certainly debased by its limitation to the monastic life during the Middle Ages, Luther still tied it too tightly to a static hierarchical role for life. While broadening the concept to include all the people of God in the priesthood of all believers, it was still fundamentally a vocation to a fixed role in feudal society, not to live dynamically out of one's freedom before God. 'The concept of calling was thus secularised rather than being essentially inner and spiritual (Barth 1961: 600-602)'. Luther separated the law of the created order from the gospel, but allowed too much scope for confusion of the existing order with God's order. This allowed Christian concepts like vocation to be commandeered by feudal, or later by Capitalist society. By contrast, 'Barth describes vocation as involving all the factors of age, circumstance and aptitude applied in each person taking up his/her special responsibility in relation to the divine calling (Hore-Lacy 1985: 53)'.

Barth is clearly agitated by modern over-estimations of the value of work. He warns that 'the life of the human race is not exhausted in the process of labour, and therefore vocational participation [in the narrower sense of one's job] is not in any sense the totality or even an indispensable part of what makes a [person human] (Barth 1961: 630)'. Barth agrees with Calvin against Luther that this vocation may change and that what abides is the calling, the Word, the command of God, not the sphere of service to which the person is led (Barth 1961: 646). For Preece, this part of Barth's message is 'a liberating word for all those who do not find fulfillment in the conventional employment ethic (1995: 183)'.

In his treatment of work Barth clearly moves well beyond the approach of those who only do a word study based on the biblical words for work. His theology of work is defined with reference to other fundamental themes of theology and Scripture. He provides a strong challenge to the employment ethos of the Western world. However this also exposes Barth's weakness, because the way Barth downplays God's activity in creation compared with redemption in Christ, in his attempt to counter the idolization of work, ends up undermining and minimising the sense of God's constant involvement in our mundane working lives. While work, according to Barth, is essential for survival and to serve the central activities of the Church, cultural enterprises and attempts to enhance life by utilizing the resources of creation are very much secondary functions. Nevertheless, Barth's critique of the domination of employment in current discussions of work and his concern to develop a doctrine of vocation that does not exalt human

creativity above the work of God, add some important cautionary notes to our quest for a contemporary reinterpretation of vocation.

## **2.7 VATICAN II**

Within Catholicism in the 1950's the theological perspectives of Pieper and Chenu, 'leisure theology' and 'co-creationism' respectively, were vying for dominance. At first the former view seemed more relevant, providing a corrective to the excessive materialism of the time. Karl Rahner, for example, argued that freedom from the domination of economic necessity provides more opportunity for what he calls 'spiritual work' and 'spiritual leisure' including love, fellowship, joy, dance, music, art and religion. For Rahner, 'the shortening of the time for economically profitable work is therefore the self-discovery of the spirit to fulfill itself in acts of no economic value. It is a moment of the emancipation of the spirit as it realises itself in a domain beyond that of economics and material things (Rahner 1966: 387)'. For both Pieper and Rahner, authentic human existence lies beyond the reach of the work place. Yet it is not this point of view which would go on to dominate Catholic thinking. Instead it is the co-creationism of Chenu which received the ecclesiastical imprimatur of that momentous watershed for Catholic theology, the Second Vatican Council.

The Catholic church was experiencing mounting pressure to prove it still had something important and relevant to say to the world. Religion was being pushed to the periphery of society. In the industrial world decisions were being made on the basis of economic and technological realities, not spiritual concerns.

The task facing the Council is illustrated by Reck's (1964) description of the tension between 'incarnationalism' and 'transcendence' in Catholic thinking about work. Reck recognises that incarnational theology may fail to acknowledge the ambivalence of human progress and also fail to locate suffering as a real part of life, but he is even more afraid of the way an emphasis on transcendence seems inevitably to lead to an insistence on human powerlessness to make any morally significant change in this world. Reck argues,

it is necessary that we do precisely what is demanded in our circumstances to lessen the gap between the next world and its reflected prefiguration in this.....the current effort at formulating a theology of work is not merely an attempt to define the place of work and human progress in Christian life during an age in which improvement of the human milieu is both goal and

achievement: it is also an attempt to define the place of Christianity in the most distinctive phase of twentieth century life. (Reck 1964: 38-39)

In response to this challenge the Second Vatican Council chose to affirm God's blessing on humanity's technological and economic achievements. This embracing of the secular achievements and aspirations of humanity by the church is expressed very clearly in the chapter on 'Man's Activity Throughout the World', in *Gaudium et Spes-Pastoral Constitution on the Church In the Modern World* (hereafter *GES*) (Paul VI 1965b: 231-238).

This is not to suggest the question of work had not been addressed before in official church teaching. Questions of unionism, wages, private property and Socialism had been addressed forcefully in a series of encyclicals dating back to 1891. But the theological meaning of work, had been touched only very superficially. *GES* provides a very clear statement of co-creationism:

when men and women provide for themselves and their families in such a way as to be of service to the community as well, they can rightly look upon their work as a prolongation of the work of the Creator, a service to their fellowmen, and their personal contribution to the fulfillment in history of the divine plan. Human achievements are not to be seen as opposing God's power and purposes, but as a sign of God's greatness and the flowering of His own mysterious design. (Paul VI 1965b: 232)

*GES* also uses the doctrine of recapitulation to integrate the idea of human progress with traditional categories of soteriology (recapitulation includes the idea that in the incarnation the eternal Word joined all creation and all history together as one): 'Thus He entered the world's history as a perfect man, taking that history up into Himself and summarizing it (Paul VI 1965b: 236)'.

The final section addresses the eschatological problem of the ultimate significance of human activity on earth. While it does not go so far as to identify earthly progress with the Kingdom of God, it does say that such progress is of 'vital concern' to the Kingdom. There is some continuity between the fruits of our current enterprise and the coming Kingdom, which is 'mysteriously present' on earth already. The expectation of a new earth must not weaken, but rather should stimulate our concern to develop this earth (Paul VI 1965b: 237).

*GES* optimistically embraces human achievement, technological progress and economic growth. It does admit that not all human progress is positive, so its optimism is not

unrestrained, recognising that human activity can become an instrument of sin. Nevertheless, it remains largely supportive of human progress. It represents a significant change in Catholic thinking about human work. Now doctrines such as co-creation and recapitulation are proclaimed as part of official church teaching. This call to humanise the world in the name of the coming Kingdom encourages believers to take their daily work seriously as a spiritual exercise. It is a sign of Catholicism developing a work ethic of its own.

This bold attempt by Vatican II to formulate a theology of work relevant for the modern world would both stimulate on-going debate in Catholic circles and shape the themes around which most of this discussion would revolve. Kaiser (1966), Savary (1967), Hebblethwaite (1968), Kelly (1969), Chenu (1970), and Goosen (1974) provide examples of this discussion. Most are positive in their assessment of *GES* and develop closely related themes themselves. Kelly however is critical of the optimism of Vatican II. He distinguishes the creationist, eschatological and secularist theologies which he sees woven together in *GES* and critically analyses this mix. According to Kelly, the basic failure is that these theologies generally don't start from an understanding of work as it is. The Vatican II themes may be relevant for work that is physically productive and relatively fulfilling, but not to more unpleasant experiences of work. In the 1960s Western society was becoming more aware of alienation in the work place, especially on assembly lines. And this awareness of the oppressive and dehumanising effects of much work was dampening many people's enthusiasm for co-creationist or eschatological theologies of work. Once again tensions stemming from changes in the context were building up pressure for new theologies of work to be fashioned. Kelly himself defines work as a service rendered to society, and normally to earn one's living. But even he confesses that this leaves many 'loose ends still untied'.

From a later vantage point Baum concludes: 'these bishops and theologians, open, critical and reform-minded as they were, participated in the cultural optimism of the early Sixties. This optimism was grounded in the extraordinary progress that had been made in the West since World War II (Baum 1987: 13)'.

Discussion of vocation in the Vatican II documents is dominated by the identification of vocation with the calling of priests and religious into their religious 'vocations'. However, there is also some discussion of the vocation of the laity with relation to their work in the world. This represents a significant change of emphasis in Catholic thinking.

The 'Dogmatic Constitution on the Church' (*Lumen Gentium*) states that,



the laity, by their very vocation, seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular professions and occupations ... They are called there by God so that by exercising their proper function ... they can work for the sanctification of the world from within, in the manner of leaven. (Paul VI 1964: 57-58)

The same theme is underlined and expanded on in the 'Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity' (*Apostolicam Actuositatem*) which urges 'the whole church to labour vigorously so that men may become capable of constructing the temporal order rightly and directing it to God through Christ...The laity must take on the renewal of the temporal order as their special obligation (Paul VI 1965a: 497-498)'.

It is *GES* which sharpens up this challenge:

for man, created to God's image, received a mandate to subject to himself the earth and all that it contains and to govern the world with justice and holiness ... This mandate concerns even the most ordinary everyday activities ... men and women ... can justly consider that by their labour they are unfolding the Creator's work and contributing by their personal industry to the realisation in history of the divine plan. .. Therefore let there be no false opposition between professional and social activities on the one part and religious life on the other. The christian who neglects his temporal duties neglects his duties toward his neighbour and even God and jeopardizes his eternal salvation. (Paul VI 1965b: 232. 243)

The beginnings of a convergence of Catholic and Protestant understandings of vocation were emerging. Further developments from this are identified in Chapter 4. However, within Protestant circles, the energetic discussions about work that characterised Vatican II took longer to develop. There was no equivalent theological summit meeting to provoke rapid changes in thinking. Later meetings of the World Council of Churches did not give the subjects of work and the vocation of the laity the priority that the Evanston Report suggested they should (WCC 1954: 104-115). And groups with a strong allegiance to the biblical texts on work experienced difficulty adapting their traditional interpretations to speak to new and changing modern work realities.

## **2.8 SIR FREDERICK CATHERWOOD.**

Catherwood (1966) provides a good example of the sort of thinking that has prevailed in conservative American and British Protestantism. He recognises the struggle many lay people have in relating an increasingly privatised religion to an increasingly secularised work place. Catherwood desires to help bridge the Sunday-Monday divide. What he offers is a practical response rather than a carefully reasoned theology of work. Catherwood is concerned that the industrialised West is losing some important elements of the Protestant work ethic and understanding of vocation.

For Catherwood the world and its resources were made for humanity to control and administer. The Christian 'does not work simply to make money or pay the bills. He works because it is part of the divine order that he should work (Catherwood 1966: 2)'. And whatever work one has to do one must do it with enthusiasm, as if for God. A survey of biblical references endorses a strong work ethic: 'it would be fair to deduce from this teaching that it is the duty of the Christian to use his abilities to the limit of his physical and mental capacity (Catherwood 1966: 8)'.

Catherwood stresses the importance of intellectual integrity, self-discipline, honesty and 'sheer hard work' as the hallmarks of a Christian at work. He is also very wary of increased leisure. To use increased wealth to increase one's leisure rather than investing it wisely, or using it in Christian service, would be a 'wrong attitude' for a Christian.

Catherwood is representative of those conservative Protestants who emphasise the duty to work, the view of work as a necessity, the futility of human ambitions to reduce or do away with work, some concern for work reform but in a limited way (although a stronger emphasis on the need for reform is evident in the third edition (1980) of Catherwood's book), an emphasis on personal evangelism and personal ethics and integrity. The matter of personal vocation is important for Catherwood, although he does not develop the doctrine of vocation at any length in this book. However, his discussion of the 'Weber-Tawney Thesis' which Catherwood adds as an 'Appendix' to the Third Edition (1980: 172-184) spells out his assumptions more plainly. According to Catherwood, 'what does seem fairly clear is that Protestant Christianity has provided a necessary element in what was and as a rule still is, needed to encourage the development of science, commerce and industry (1980: 184)'. For Catherwood it is Calvinist Christianity which undergirds this Protestant ethic through a combination of Calvin's doctrine of vocation and his insistence on the virtues of thrift and diligence, duty and responsibility. According to Catherwood these same concerns still need emphasising to produce a healthy economy and society. The acceptance of Catherwood's message in conservative Protestant circles is evidenced by the succession of reprints this book has gone through over twenty years.

## **2.9 SIMON PHIPPS, MARGARET KANE AND BRITISH INDUSTRIAL MISSION.**

Another factor which has significantly influenced the development of a theology of work in Britain has been the experience of industrial mission. This tradition of industrial mission, mainly in the form of industrial chaplaincy, arose in the 1950's. An early example of theological reflection born out of this interface between the church and the workplace is provided by Simon Phipps, based on his eight years of experience in industrial mission (Phipps 1966). What Phipps points towards is the development of a contextual theology. A 'secular-based theology' instead of a 'Church-based theology', a corollary of which is the essential involvement of the laity in the process of theologising. He is opposed to the privatisation of faith and to the false distinction between secular and sacred. For Phipps the secular world is the arena of dialogue with God:

if we ask what it means to say that God speaks to us in the secular, it means that our concern for what makes for and against justice and love, our sense of social responsibility and of human love, is in fact His pressure nudging us into alertness, to take notice and to respond. But essentially it is ordinary secular situations that mediate this message and press it upon us. (Phipps 1966: 27)

Phipps sees God at work in the processes of industry, technology and wealth creation. He also maintains that Christians have an important role to play engaging in critical ethical analysis in order to 'disinfect human affairs from the passions of sectional self interest (Phipps 1966: 168)'. While Phipps draws some inspiration from theologians such as Niebuhr, Tillich, Bonhoeffer and Cox who give prominence to God's activity in the secular world and hence Christian's responsibility in the secular sphere, it is his involvement in industrial mission which is most influential in shaping his point of view.

Margaret Kane is another example of a person involved in industrial mission who pleads for a theology grounded in praxis more than in a particular theological tradition:

It is present events which force us to ask questions and search for meaning. Theology must therefore start in the present and is in principle the concern of every person. This is contrary to the common view which sees theology as having its beginning and ending in a study of the Bible and other documents of the past, and of interest only to those who have special training. (Kane 1975: 20)

According to Kane, if such an approach were taken seriously it would require, ‘a revolution in the role of lay people in order that theology might truly become something we "do" together which begins with the actualities of life, which learns from lay experience and the experience of those outside the Church, and which issues in provisional formulations of faith rather than providing prescriptive answers (Kane 1975: 20)’.

Loffler describes this new emerging theological method as ‘theology as process’ in contrast to ‘statement-orientated theology’. It is involvement which sets the theological process in motion: ‘the assumption is that the Mission of God is at work in what is going on in the world today and needs to be discovered, by participation in the events of our time, by joining the groups which strive for justice and peace, by being at the points of crisis and decision in society, by serving the poor and oppressed (Loffler 1971: 5)’.

Dialectical interaction with the records of past response and action then takes place in the light of this involvement in order to enrich theological understanding and inspire new courses of action.

Various liberation theologies would go on to become the better known exemplars of this contextual method. But liberation theology was originally born out of a different context. The examples of contextual theology that have grown out of industrial mission have been birthed in the heartland of Western industrial society.

Later in the 1970s and 1980s it would be the spectre of the unemployment which dominated the British scene which would call for a Christian response. Among those who sought to respond to these issues with some theological reflection were Ballard (1982, 1987), Bleakley (1981, 1983, 1985, 1986), Clarke (1982), Moynagh (1985) and Stott (1979a, 1979b, 1984). Smith summarises the contribution of these writers:

these reflections have similarities in that they have sought to distance themselves from the traditional Protestant work ethic, while at the same time proposing a more positive view of human work (at times verging on co-creationism). From this basis they were able to name the unemployment crisis as a tragedy from a theological perspective, while tacitly lending support for more creative grass-roots responses to unemployment. (Smith 1990: 47)

Clearly the spectre of unemployment was challenging traditional formulations of the work ethic in Britain and new Christian thinking was being stimulated. However, most often pastoral and ethical considerations tended to dominate over theological reflection, although the need to separate the notion of work from paid employment and to revalue domestic and voluntary work was plain. Alongside these was the need for a more flexible

view of the connection between faith and work that could offer some sense of constancy in the midst of changing work circumstances. These factors clearly demanded a reinterpretation of the doctrine of vocation, or the introduction of some new categories. But this thinking was just beginning.

Another influential British Christian thinker on work in this period was Fritz Schumacher. He argues that the purpose of work is three-fold:

First, to provide necessary and useful goods and services. Second, to enable every one of us to use and thereby perfect our gifts like good stewards. Third, to do so in service to, and in co-operation with, others, so as to liberate ourselves from our inborn egocentricity. (Schumacher 1980: 3-4)

According to Schumacher 'good work' fosters all three functions.

Schumacher identifies four characteristics of modern industrial society which, in the light of the Gospels, must be considered four great evils:

1. It's vastly complicated nature.
2. It's continuous stimulation of, and reliance on, the deadly sins of envy and avarice.
3. It's destruction of the content and dignity of most forms of work.
4. It's authoritarian character, owing to organisation in excessively large units.

Schumacher also notes that 'the question of what work does to the worker is hardly ever asked' (Schumacher 1980: 3). For Schumacher it is essential to wrestle with this question. He recognises that work is one of the most decisive formative influences on a person's character and performance. Surely we should try to see work adapted to the needs of the worker rather than workers adapted to the needs of the work. Schumacher identifies what he calls bad work. Bad work is mechanical, artificial, restrictive, offers no challenge, no chance of growth, and must be rejected. Bad work is the result of the way we have used technology and allowed it to dominate workers. It is Schumacher's aim to see 'good work' promoted and 'bad work' eliminated.

While Schumacher does not discuss vocation as such, he does recognize that it is only possible to tackle the subject of good work meaningfully when we begin by clarifying 'What is man? Where does he come from? What is the purpose of life?' He is alarmed that 'The Cartesian Revolution has removed the vertical dimension from our "map of knowledge". Only the horizontal dimensions are left (Schumacher 1980: 113)'. Schumacher concludes 'materialistic metaphysics' is inadequate. A religious quest to answer the three questions posed above is 'the most urgent need of our time'

(Schumacher 1980: 123). But while Schumacher may encourage us in our quest he does not move far beyond the questions themselves.

## **2.10 JOHN SCANZONI AND AMERICAN LUTHERANS.**

In America the work ethic also began to be examined. This is exemplified in the work of John Scanzoni a professor who was disturbed by the diminishing respect for work he perceived among his college students (Scanzoni 1973). Scanzoni argues, on the basis of Genesis 1:27-28, that work is a blend of obedience to God and the full freedom to express our uniqueness and creativity. After the Fall however, work becomes a necessity and, for most, synonymous with grinding labour. This is why work in Roman and Greek culture is looked down upon. But the Old Testament portrays work as honourable and pleasing to God. It is idleness which is offensive. However, later in the New Testament and early church this positive view of work is tempered with warnings about the dangers of succumbing to covetousness and greed. A wedge begins to be pushed between worldly activity and true religion. The Reformers overthrew this division and in time the idea grew that economic success is the sign of God's blessing. The current problem, argues Scanzoni, stems from this confusion between the outcomes of work and the work itself. If work becomes only a means for increasing our material wealth then other dimensions of meaning are ignored. Work needs to be seen in the light of God's purposes. Thus work can be fulfilling and satisfying: rather than being an 'absurd exercise in futility', it can be seen to have 'implications for immortality and eternity'. Scanzoni calls specifically for opportunities for women and blacks to express their creative talents in a vocation.

Clearly the previously optimistic scenarios regarding human work were being seriously reassessed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Dissatisfaction and alienation were widespread and being documented and publicised (e.g. O'Toole 1973 and Terkel 1974).

This promotion of the alienating and dehumanising aspects of work, combined with rising criticism of the Protestant work ethic, also caused Lutherans to reassess their notion of vocation. One response was to broaden the understanding of calling. Johnson, for example, speaks of 'the call which comes to a man from the Bible, the *vocatio*, summons him not to a job, but to joy and gratitude in whatever he is doing. It is equally relevant at work or at play (Johnson 1968: 44)'. This was an attempt to relativise the role of employment and counteract the deification of work. Victor Hoffmann endorses this criticism of the Protestant work ethic and also calls for 'a wider definition of divine

vocation: it is a call, a divine address to the total life (Hoffmann V. 1970: 238)'. He suggests an alternative view based on 'incarnational theology'.

Bengt Hoffmann also criticises the identification of vocation with occupationalism. He maintains 'it embraces all of life, including the formal occupation (Hoffman B. 1970: 244)'. Hoffman pleads for Lutheran social ethics to consider a greater emphasis on creation, particularly God's constant renewing of creation. He then combines this thinking with a view of the world as autonomous and secular, wherein 'work for a better society is part of faith's "yes" to life (Hoffmann B. 1970: 245)'. Hoffmann at this point draws on a tradition of Lutheran thought that includes Reinhold Niebuhr, Bonhoeffer, Tillich and Harvey Cox.

## **2.11 JACQUES ELLUL**

The approach adopted by Barth, and reminiscent of Pieper, remained influential in Europe, especially among Reformed theologians. The French layman Jacques Ellul was a particularly strong advocate of this Barthian perspective.

An article on Genesis written by Ellul in 1960 begins with these words: 'today we are overwhelmed by the Myth of Work and overcome by the grandeur of technological accomplishments; and the Church, like everyone else, grants work a place of distinction in her thought. She begins to justify it, and to justify technique. Because technique is a great human achievement, we have had to legitimise it (Quoted in Smith 1990: 52)'. This idea of *technique* has no exact English equivalent. It means more than just method or technology. It involves a commitment to the most efficient way of doing things (see Ellul 1964; 1967).

For Ellul, technique comes after the Fall. Technique is a product of necessity and not of human freedom. Before the Fall Adam does not work in our sense of the word: rather he plays. All is given to him by God. Ellul is strongly opposed to co-creationist thinking. Ellul later writes of the relationship between work and vocation in terms reminiscent of Barth. Ellul stresses that work is a simple human necessity: 'work is the painful lot of all men but is not particularly important (Ellul 1976: 495)'.

Work belongs in every sense to the order of necessity ... Work is no part of the order of grace, liberty, love and freedom ... Work has no ultimate or transcendent value before God. Before God it is simply that which makes our survival possible and keeps us in being ... Work is an everyday affair. It is

banal. It is done without hope. It is neither a value nor is it creative ... when satisfaction is given ... when human work produces joy... we have to realise this is an exceptional event, a grace, a gift of God for which we must give thanks. (Ellul 1976: 505-506)

Ellul is determined to counter that 'idealism which projects a marvellous future when everybody will be doing rich and meaningful work (Ellul 1976: 506)'.

For Ellul work has no absolute value. This is not to suggest work is completely devoid of relative value or interest. Work offers the possibility of sustaining life, of upholding the world and of a continuation of history. And this is God's will. At this level we have a vocation. God calls us to work (of any kind) in order to keep going this world which he has not yet decided to stop and judge. From Ellul's point of view work should neither be despised nor idealised.

Ellul's concern is that the development of mechanization and extension of technique have caused vocation and work to become separated: 'When a good technician is needed the man who is full of his vocation or divine calling is of no use. Vocation is a poor substitute for competence (1976: 502)'. At the same time, 'when there is no sense of vocation, technique is frigidly applied ... the right notions replace human relations (1976: 502)'. We are left torn between meaningless work which offers no satisfaction and a vocation which it is no longer possible to incarnate. The pressure of capitalism, mechanization and technologization has resulted in a complete break between work and vocation and a crisis of vocation among Christians (1976: 502-503). Ellul is disturbed by the way the idea of vocation is still applied to particular (mainly middle-class) professions. This just encourages the development of a Christian elite. But he is also bothered by the thought that we try to find authentic life in leisure.

We cannot unify our life, or incarnate our Christian vocation, in our work or our leisure. We have to discover another form of activity which will express our Christian vocation and thus be an incarnation of our faith. A new idea of vocation is necessary. Ellul says

since our responsibility is to the world, this cannot be a purely inward affair nor a good work in the ordinary meaning of the term, eg. a work of charity. This vocation must find expression in an action that will have a social and collective impact which in one way or another can change the form of the world in which we are: an action that has to be gratuitous. As vocation is free and an expression of grace, so this activity must be free in return. (Ellul 1976: 507)



Hence this vocation will be distinct from our work, even though it may be related to it in some way.

This view of vocation leaves a number of loose ends. The separation between work and vocation is too neat. If what Ellul describes as vocation is work in its broader sense, then why should payment matter? Is he suggesting that technique must be banned from vocation altogether? Ellul, like Barth, seems to divorce vocation from creation in his strong desire to relate it to the freedom of the coming Kingdom and not to a person's occupation. For Ellul creation is perfectly completed when humanity appears. There is no need to extend it or transform it. Humanity must relate to the world within the limits laid down by God. Although Smith notes that in Ellul's commentary on Revelation written later, Ellul does conclude that human work is linked to God's work in some way and there is some degree of continuity between work in this life and in the coming age (Smith 1990: Chapter 3.3).

Clearly the ongoing battle between co-creationism and Barth and Ellul's view of work as necessity provides one of the main creative theological tensions in discussions about work and vocation during the last fifty years.

This Barthian view also influenced others in Europe. Two scholars from the Uppsala School examined the biblical attitude to work in 1962. Ivan Engnell (1962) concluded from his examination of the Old Testament material that the attitude to work is consistently negative. And G'Artner (1962) came to a similar conclusion about the New Testament.

## **2.12 LABOREM EXERCENS.**

At the end of the 1970s Catholic expectations of further significant developments in the theology of work were ignited by the election of John Paul II. His first encyclical contained a clear statement of his agenda: 'the essential meeting of the "kingship" and "dominion" of man over the visible world, which the Creator Himself gave to man for his task, consists in the priority of ethics over technology, in the primacy of the person over things, and in the superiority of spirit over matter (John Paul II 1979: 31, section 16)'. Thus the firm outline of a new theology of work was already developing before the emergence of the influential Papal encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (hereafter *LE*) (John Paul II 1981). But it was this encyclical which put human labour at the centre of social

concerns. Not only was it received very positively at the time, but it has dominated Catholic thinking about work ever since.

*LE* tries harder than most other discussions to maintain a broad definition of work, although frequently it does identify work as employment. This highlights the difficulty of establishing and sustaining a wider definition of work.

*LE* attempts to incorporate insights from a variety of different sources; to draw on biblical motifs, to maintain continuity with the traditions of the church, to dialogue with Marxism, to include elements of personalism and to address contemporary work issues, including conflict between labour and capital, the rights of workers and a spirituality for work. Ronald Preston notes that *LE* invites lay people to share in the construction of social teaching in a way that is rare in the utterances of the *Magisterium* (Preston 1983: 23-23).

Co-creationism is promoted through emphasising particular biblical themes, especially those stemming from the early chapters of Genesis (specifically Genesis 1: 26-28). In line with other co-creationists John Paul II urges that humanity shares through work in the activity of the Creator:

The word of God's revelation is profoundly marked by the fundamental truth that man, created in the image of God, shares by his work in the activity of the Creator and that, within the limits of his own human capabilities, man in a sense continues to develop that activity, and perfects it as he advances further in the discovery of the resources and values contained in the whole of creation. (John Paul II 1981: 95)

Through work the 'dominion' of humanity is confirmed and every individual takes part in the process whereby humanity subdues the earth (John Paul II 1981: 27). Technology is an ally in this process although John Paul II strongly emphasises that the human person is the subject of work and never the object. Thus in his dialogue with Marxism John Paul II comes to a personalist conclusion.

John Paul II claims that through work a person not only transforms nature, but also achieves fulfilment as a human being 'and indeed, in a sense becomes more a human being (John Paul II 1981: 39)'. He asserts this with reference to the moral development of humanity and cultivation of the 'virtue of industriousness' rather than the Marxist idea that humanity is its own maker. However, as Preece warns, 'the person and performance of a particular task can easily become indistinguishable. People are then justified by their job rather than by faith (Preece 1994: 17)'. *LE* also seems to take little account of those people, who for reasons of age, disability or unemployment, cannot work in this more

restricted sense. Are their lives of lesser value than those of diligent workers? In spite of his expressed desire to uphold a wider view of work the Pope primarily addresses people in traditional jobs.

Although John Paul II views creation as a continuing process in which humanity participates he also recognises that the Fall has added an ambiguity to work. But he maintains that this is not so pronounced as to detract from its original purpose. However, mention of the curse upon work is only fleeting and, like the more rigorous ascetic Catholic thinking of the Middle Ages and in Jansenism, emphasis is placed on the way the hardship involved in work can be turned to spiritual advantage.

Stanley Hauerwas (1995) expresses dismay with the way John Paul II speaks so loosely of human work in terms of 'share in the work of the Creator', 'dominate' and 'master'. And with the way *LE* says technology 'facilitates, perfects, accelerates and augments' our work (Hauerwas 1995: 114). According to Hauerwas the concept of work as co-creation is 'a remarkably bad idea' and John Paul II has produced an excessively 'romantic theology of work' (Hauerwas 1995: 119). Another Protestant writer describes *LE* as 'having a persistent air of natural law optimism (Attwood 1987)'. *LE* shows little awareness of attacks made on the 'Protestant work ethic' and its associated stresses on human dominion. According to Preece, 'John Paul's rather grand view of work and technology reminds one of the "secularizing theologians" of the 1960s who tried to show that the Christian doctrine of creation deserved the credit for Western technological achievements (Preece 1995: 206)'. But Preece also notes 'when technological optimism changed to ecological pessimism, this claim backfired (Preece 1995: 206)'. *LE* does not recognise the growing ecological concern that demands a revision of traditional 'dominion' theology. However, we do note that John Paul II has attempted to redress this imbalance in *Peace With God the Creator, Peace with All of Creation* (1990).

The optimistic theology and 'this worldly' eschatology of *LE* do risk confusing the evolution of human culture with the Kingdom of God. This contrasts sharply with Barth and Ellul's pessimistic separation of the two. The encyclical addresses the same question as the Second Vatican Council, 'Is this new good - the fruit of human work - already a small part of that new earth, where justice dwells? (John Paul II 1981: 106)'. And with the Council it replies: 'the expectation of a new earth must not weaken but rather stimulate our concern for cultivating this one. For here grows the body of a new human family, a body which even now is able to give some kind of foreshadowing of the new age (John Paul II 1981: 106-107)'. Work united with prayer has a place not only 'in earthly progress but also in the development of the Kingdom of God (John Paul II 1981: 107)'. Although John Paul II acknowledges that 'earthly progress must be carefully

distinguished from the growth of Christ's Kingdom' he also asserts that this gives rise to a tension that is not resolved. Goosen states that 'Vatican II guides us in avoiding the extreme positions of the dual-eschatologists, who see no connection between earthly work and Christ's coming and the evolutionists-incarnationalists, who see too direct a connection and who attribute a saving value in the strict sense to earthly activities (Goosen1974: 72)'. It would seem that Barth and, even more so Ellul, err towards the former extreme, while John Paul II moves towards the latter. But we do note that John Paul II's later encyclical '*Centesimus Annus*' (1991) makes a clearer distinction between human culture and God's Kingdom, which may lead to a more modest and realistic assessment of work and technology. However, even if *LE* is criticised for embracing the working world and reviving the work ethic too enthusiastically, it is also applauded for the way it has encouraged the Catholic church out of the cloister into the working world after centuries of neglect.

The Pope does not develop the doctrine of vocation as such in *LE*. However, he clearly states that the approach to work he develops in this encyclical is built on the understandings of calling and vocation which are developed in Chapter 1 of the Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (Paul VI 1965b) which we discussed earlier in Chapter 2.7 (John Paul II 1981: 27).

### **2.13 PAUL MARSHALL**

Canadian Paul Marshall has written two essays on the theology of work (1980; 1988). Marshall looks to the Bible for authoritative teaching on the matter of human work. He attempts to establish the distinctiveness of the biblical perspective on work. He speaks of 'the high value the Scriptures put on work (1988: 199)' and concludes that 'one needn't look just to Protestantism for a high view of work; the Bible is full of it (1980: 2)'. According to Marshall, the Bible portrays a very different view of work compared with other ancient sources: 'the biblical authors stand out starkly in their praise of even the humblest honest labour. The Bible was a radical document in respect to work (1980: 6-7)'.

Marshall assumes that the Bible is normative for doctrine and ethics, that its various elements can be harmonised and form a unity, and that different parts of the Bible are to be given equal weight in establishing doctrine. Marshall does not appear to be disturbed about how much modern work patterns differ from those of biblical times.

Like most other recent theologians, Marshall concentrates attention on the early chapters of Genesis. He sees a connection between human work and God's creative work: 'our

calling is to obediently serve in the healing, renewing and unfolding of God's good creation (Marshall 1980: 16)'. But generally in this earlier essay he is reluctant to talk about an unfinished creation, in the way that co-creationists do. For Marshall, creation is essentially completed from the beginning, even though now it is in need of renewal and restoration because of the Fall. However his later essay goes further, and may reflect the influence of co-creationist thinking, when he talks about human involvement in the continuing process of creation: 'human molding of the earth is the continuation of God's creative acts (Marshall 1988: 206)'. Marshall refers to the 'cultural mandate' in Genesis 1: 28 saying that it is in terms of this mandate that our calling to work must be understood: 'God made humankind in order to fill and care for the earth: it is how and why we were made, it is built into who we are (Marshall 1988: 206)'. Work is not an afterthought or secondary consideration after the fact of creation. Marshall also links the Genesis notion of the 'image of God' to human creativity: 'in Genesis the image seems specifically to refer to lordship and creation, to having dominion over the world and being creative in it. We are those who are called to image God by our activities in shaping, forming and caring for God's creation (Marshall 1988: 206)'.

Marshall provides us with an example of a scholar from a conservative Reformed tradition who is cautiously moving to adopt some elements of co-creationism. He demonstrates how influential co-creationism has become in shaping theologies of work in the post-war period.

The nature of the struggle this represents for Marshall is evident in the way he interprets the Fall. Conservative interpretations usually emphasise the enduring historical consequences of the Fall. However, Marshall maintains that the Fall does not undo the original creation and the place assigned to human work in it. Sin distorts the world that God made but has not replaced it, nor suspended the cultural mandate: 'In Jesus Christ this mandate is renewed, is being redeemed and will be perfected (Marshall 1988: 207)'. But still the effects of the Fall endure and place limitations on the prospects for basic work reforms: 'Human stewardship is made perfect at the coming of Christ (Marshall 1985: 207)'. Hence Marshall ends up somewhere between the traditional conservative position and co-creationism. This gives rise to a tension that Marshall does not resolve.

Marshall also includes discussion of many other portions of the Old Testament to reinforce his contention that the Bible provides us with a positive vision of human work. With reference to the New Testament, Marshall concludes 'we find a people immersed in the life and problems of working people (Marshall 1980: 2)'. Marshall asserts that this is especially true of Jesus, on the basis that Jesus was a carpenter for most of his life, that

his disciples were mostly working people and that his parables are often built around the life of working people.

It is the teaching of Paul that Marshall develops at most length. Marshall argues that Paul's views are 'in radical opposition to the attitudes of Hellenistic culture'. To support this, Marshall maintains

Paul criticised idleness and exhorted Christians to work ... He made no distinction between physical and spiritual work, and he used the same terms to refer to both the manual labour by which he earned a living and also his apostolic service ... Paul himself worked with his hands so as not to be a burden on the church and he urges believers to do the same ... He was asserting that a life of leisure, religious contemplation, or eschatological abdication was a deficient life - that all members of the church should work. (Marshall 1988: 208-209)

Quoting Isaiah 65: 21-22, Marshall notes that even the new heavens and new earth will include work. He concludes that, 'work can be and will be fully redeemed and taken up as authentically free human action in the new creation (Marshall 1988: 209)'. However he also notes that for the present 'work has fallen under the curse of sin and so is torn with pain and suffering. But the curse is not the core of work: it is a cancer upon it (Marshall 1988: 209)'. We are never to accept the pain in work passively. We are called to fight the effects of sin on work: 'we are called continually to struggle to transform the work of all human creatures into secure, free and joyful service (Marshall 1988: 214)'. But, for Marshall, we undertake this fight in the knowledge that ultimate reform is essentially impossible. Here again we find ambiguous statements that highlight the ongoing tension and struggle between conservatism and co-creationism.

Marshall also gives more prominence than many other theologians to the biblical tradition of rest. 'Our mandate and calling', he argues, 'is to image God in every dimension of our existence (Marshall 1988: 214)'. This includes rest. He traces the development of rest as a significant biblical theme which reminds us that work has no right to dominate our lives. He is strongly critical of the modern secular stress on the salvific nature of work. Marshall warns, 'If we trust the work of our hands, then we will be controlled and shaped by that work: we will be remade in its image (Marshall 1988: 213)'. He maintains that we have fallen into this trap: 'It is a situation where "the economy" is hallowed. It is a situation where unemployment has the overtones of excommunication. It is a situation of captivity to idols (Marshall 1988: 213)'.

Marshall sees rest on an equal footing with work. Rest is not just recuperation from, and preparation for, work. Rest has a significance of its own: 'one part of our calling is the calling to rest (Marshall 1988: 214)'. In fact, in the Bible, salvation is pictured as rest. Rest is a time to cease from striving and as such sharply contrasts with much modern leisure which is often full of frenetic activity, consumption oriented and preoccupied with distractions. However, Marshall does not go on to explore in detail how one responds in practice to these competing callings to work and to rest.

Marshall demonstrates a keen interest in the idea of vocation. However, he does not attempt a biblical analysis of this concept. Rather, Marshall's concept of callings grows out of the Reformed tradition. His main focus is on the confusion which arose at the time of the Reformation about the relationship between occupation and vocation. It is for this reason that he is keen to explore the concept of rest and other factors which will cause us to recognise the limits of work.

According to Marshall there are limits on our work and on our achievement. These arise from both the nature of created reality and the consequences of sin. If we over-emphasise our own resources and abilities we end up deluded into thinking we are God and replaying Babel. If we over-emphasise the consequences of sin we end up paralysed and despairing. For Marshall, a new interpretation and development of the Reformed doctrine of vocation is required to enable us to walk this tightrope. Marshall appreciates the way that Barth and Ellul uncover many of the unbiblical and secular elements that have corrupted the way Protestantism has developed its doctrine of calling.

Protestantism has misidentified calling with job or profession and urged that we find our place in the social and economic order and do what it requires, albeit honestly and with integrity. However, Barth and Ellul's solution to this secularisation of calling fails because it divorces vocation from this creation altogether. For them, vocation relates only to the coming of God's kingdom, which is almost completely unrelated to God's created order. Marshall sees this view of work as necessity as just an echo of Augustine and Aquinas in a new garb: 'although different in intent, the position is not too different in substance to that of the fundamentalist who only accepts work in the "world" for income in order to allow the true obedience of evangelism and piety (Marshall 1988: 15)'.

So while Marshall applauds the analysis of Barth and Ellul he rejects their solution. For Marshall the Fall does not mean this creation can no longer be a proper sphere of obedience. Through our sin the creation is fallen and we know we need to be redeemed from this condition. But as Paul teaches us 'it was through Christ that the world was made' and 'even now it is Christ who upholds the world and through Christ the whole

creation will be redeemed'. 'Redemption is not the negation of creation but its renewal! (Marshall 1980: 15)'. This creation is still a proper sphere of obedience. If the Reformers confused vocation, work and job, it is our task to rediscover a better and bigger and more Biblical view of vocation: 'Our calling is to obediently serve in the healing, renewing and unfolding of God's good creation (Marshall 1980: 16)'. This covers all our activities, no matter how mundane, including work and employment. These are not the totality of our vocation, but they have a place. What makes true vocation?

We need to distinguish between those things which are the result of sin and those which reflect God's good creation no matter how broken ... We must seek to serve in ways that, in the light of justice and stewardship, will bring genuine healing ... The growth of christian community and mutual support will enable more of us to take up truly stewardly work. The sort of work we are to do is never something that can be decided abstractly and in isolation; it depends on the whole state of the polity, society and economy we live in. We can never take this world for granted, but we must seek to reform it through all our actions. (Marshall 1980: 16)

However, Marshall remains concerned about the danger of becoming obsessed with our work: 'Our vocation is not in the first place to do a particular task, but to be christian in all our relationships in God's creation ... this means, among other things, that we are called to rest (Marshall 1980: 16)'.

We certainly must not identify work as the totality of our calling: 'we are called to be and to live as Christians: work is only one part of this (Marshall 1988: 212)'. Because we must worship God rather than idols, we must find our true end in what God has given, not in what we can achieve. Marshall continues to look for a way of reinterpreting vocation that draws together threads from the reformed, co-creationist and rest traditions.

## **2.14 DOROTHEE SOELLE**

We have just observed how Paul Marshall attempts to combine themes from the reformed, co-creationist and rest traditions. Dorothee Soelle's *To Work and to Love* (1984) also represents an attempt to pull together different streams of theology in the process of developing a Christian perspective on work. Soelle begins by developing a theology of creation. It is from this foundation that she explores the themes of work and sexuality. Secondly, Soelle attempts to apply liberationist perspectives to work realities



in the First World. Thirdly, Soelle provides an example of Protestant usage of co-creationist categories. Fourthly, Soelle reflects a feminist perspective. Fifthly, Soelle values the insights of Marx. And sixthly, Soelle is also indebted to Process Theology.

Soelle's co-creationism is not so much just one element in her theology of work, but the framework for her theology of creation. Working and loving are seen as the two vital elements in our role as co-creators with God. At the same time Soelle's liberationist perspective causes her to question some aspects of the creation tradition.

For Soelle the Exodus tradition (of liberation from Egyptian oppression and slavery) precedes the creation tradition from Genesis. Our task, she argues, is to engage in 'scrutiny and questioning of the Christian tradition (Soelle 1984: 13)'. We must select 'liberating' traditions from those available to us in Scripture. And we must reject 'repressive' traditions. Hence with relation to the creation tradition she asks 'which elements in creation faith and creation thought are liberating and which are oppressive?' (Soelle 1984: 13)'.

Having asserted the primacy of the liberation tradition Soelle then goes on to challenge a number of traditional Christian beliefs (for example, creation as separate from God, the curse) and to formulate new traditions (for example, the image of the vineyard is used as a counter to the curse tradition) (Soelle 1984: 80-81). Soelle is also comfortable borrowing traditions from other cultures appearing to give them status equal to those in the Bible (e.g. Soelle 1984: 17-18). Liberation is the all-important principle.

Soelle strongly opposes the traditional view that creation was completed at the beginning: 'one premise underlying my concept of co-creation is that the first creation is unfinished. Creation continues; it is an on-going process (Soelle 1984: 37)'. She warns that, 'we cannot afford to have a naive trust in the first creation (Soelle 1984:165)'. This is because it promotes fatalism. If the fate of the earth is in God's hands, we fail to take responsibility for our creative work.

Soelle is also wary of the way in which the creation myth accentuates the domination of humanity over the earth. She argues that, because this has been accentuated, the distinctiveness of human beings over the rest of creation is overstated and we lose reverence for the rest of life. Soelle is aware that other co-creationists have been criticized for over-emphasizing the creative significance of human activity and ignoring concern for the environment. Because Soelle sees the problem related to the way that traditional theology has pictured creation separate from God, she seeks to respond to contemporary ecological concerns by moderating her co-creationism with a pantheism

drawn from Process Theology. She asserts that 'each nuclear bomb is a threat to undo creation and a harbinger of nothingness (Soelle 1984: 38)'.

For Soelle work is one way humans give evidence of being made in the 'image of God'. Therefore work is an essential aspect of life and failure to provide someone with satisfying work is a serious matter, for it is to deny that person's being created in the image of God (Soelle 1984: 70-71). But Soelle also emphasises the importance of giving expression to the image of God by imitating God in the way we strive for justice in the world and in becoming lovers like God (Soelle 1984: 42-44). There is a clear link between being in the image of God and being co-creators with God.

For Soelle the Fall and curse narrative is 'the story of a rise in human development rather than the story of our fall into guilt and sin. It is a story about growing up, about leaving the parent, about attaining adulthood by affirming the right to choose to contradict the authoritative voice of the parent God (Soelle 1984: 74)'. Soelle maintains that Protestantism has overstated the importance of the Fall. Human beings are fallen but not destroyed; creation continues.

Soelle also mentions the vital place of rest, but not with any clear indication of it placing limits on work. We fulfill our co-creative responsibilities through both work and rest, but it is work that seems to dominate. Soelle links the Sabbath command to the liberation tradition rather than the creation tradition which is more usual.

In considering the New Testament material Soelle makes almost no reference to the life and teaching of Jesus, although she explains that she is attempting to correct her own 'theological over-emphasis on Christ (Soelle 1984: 5)'. And, in contrast to Marshall and others, Soelle develops her theology of work with little reference to the writings of the apostle Paul. Nor does Soelle emphasise the eschatological dimensions of human work. She is more concerned with the process of creation in which we participate through our work, and not the end-result. The focus is on the present struggle to become creators and liberators and lovers in the face of opposition. And, because Soelle recognises the ongoing intensity of this struggle, she also emphasises the importance of hope:

Hope does not depend for its existence on what a person can do for herself; it is inseparable from faith in a transcendent power that some call God ... A God-ideology without hope is not faith. Hope tells us that God will work God's will.

From my perspective, God's will is justice for all. (Soelle 1984: 160-161)

For Soelle God is not distinct from the world and the traditional categories of salvation and eschatology are reinterpreted in the light of her understanding of liberation.

Following this line, Soelle makes no attempt to explore traditional Christian notions of the doctrine of vocation. For Soelle our human vocation is to participate in the process of liberation:

As human beings, we are born into the process of liberation. If we fail to take this project seriously we miss our vocation ... We can deny neither our frailty, earthiness, and mortality, nor the ontological project of liberation that God has in mind for all of us ... The tension between these two poles of our self understanding seems irreconcilable until we realise that affirming our createdness means embracing both sides of the dialectic. (Soelle 1984: 29)

Unfortunately, Soelle fails to define clearly what she means by work. Soelle says that she wants to attempt a broad definition: 'we have to de-ideologize ourselves from one of the most prevailing ideologies of our time, which is that work means paid work (Soelle 1984: 60)'. Yet, later she goes on to propose the following definition 'The purpose of work is to provide ourselves with the goods essential for our subsistence (Soelle 1984: 60-61)'. Perhaps her identification of working and loving as two separate aspects of co-creation pushes towards a narrow view of work as employment in spite of her best intentions. Perhaps her interest in Marx also reinforces this tendency to identify work as physical labour rather than intellectual, artistic or social work.

## **2.15 GRAEME SMITH**

Graeme Smith has made a comprehensive and comparative study of post-war theologies of work up to and including the 1980s (Smith 1990). We note below some of his conclusions which have particular relevance for our study.

### **(a) The Problem of Definition.**

Work is a much broader concept than 'employment' and yet, because the latter has been the centre of debate and policy-making, as well as coming to dominate the lives of individuals and families, it has tended to engulf its less precise parent (Smith 1990: Chapter 5.1). The result is that when the term 'work' is used, more often the reference is to 'employment'. The wider usage of the term 'work' is under threat. It is not only that employment has become the main form of economic work, but it has also become the major indicator of social class and prestige.

Although most writers seem aware of the need for a wider definition of work, they demonstrate that it is hard to sustain. Smith maintains that this is understandable, because the association of work with employment is so entrenched in Western culture, but it is not excusable: 'it is a problem of carelessness more than ignorance'. A wider definition of work is essential if non-economic work is to be placed on an equal footing with economic work. It is not just a matter of including 'unpaid employment'. The

broad spectrum of purposeful human activity comes into view; reproductive as well as productive work, the work of building people and communities as well as building goods for sale, artistic work as well as commercial work. All of this relativises paid employment and opens up the question of the comparative importance of various types of work. Unfortunately these possibilities are largely missed in these recent theologies of work because of their failure to maintain adequate distinctions between concepts such as 'work' and 'employment'. Just how difficult this is is illustrated in the way Smith himself struggles to consistently maintain a broad definition of work. A struggle which we find ourselves engaged in during the course of this thesis.

**(b) Different Approaches to the Bible.**

All the theologians Smith deals with claim some basis and authority for their views on the strength of biblical texts. Yet they come to very different conclusions. They clearly approach the Bible differently and employ different hermeneutical principles. Smith identifies the following areas of doctrine in which these divergences are particularly pronounced.

- a. Different views of creation.
- b. Different evaluations of the importance of work before the Fall.
- c. Differences in understanding the impact of the Fall.
- d. Genesis 1-3 is overemphasised at the expense of Genesis 4-11.
- e. The diversity of work traditions in the Old Testament is ignored.
- f. The fact that Jesus worked is over-emphasised whereas his relevant parallel teachings are under-emphasised.
- g. Variation in understanding the relationships between human work and soteriology.
- h. Paul's attitude to work is under-emphasised.
- i. The link between human and divine creativity is interpreted differently.
- j. The rest tradition is under-emphasised by the co-creationists.

A summary of Smith's comments can be found in Appendix 1.

**(c) A Selective Approach to the History of Work.**

Smith maintains that generally theologians have not taken history of work seriously as an independent influence in the formation of their theologies of work (Smith 1990: Chapter 4). They use historical examples to explain some contemporary work issues, but these usually demonstrate the outworking of biblical or Marxist principles rather than form the basis for shaping new principles. It is the history of ideologies of work that is cited more often than the history of work itself. And while writers such as Ellul and John Paul II

exhibit a greater engagement with historical issues than most, none takes very seriously the history of work in its full sweep.

Also notably absent from most recent theologies of work is a serious discussion of the Early Church's teachings and practices regarding work. Kaiser is an exception to this (Kaiser 1966: 81-155), but few others explore the contribution of the Church Fathers in any depth. Smith considers this strange in light of the fact that the contributions of Augustine and Maximus (see Chenu 1963: 77-82) in particular would seem to have exerted a significant influence on modern theologies of work, especially co-creationism. Also the monastic movement incorporated work into its daily rhythm of worship, thus giving human labour some theological prominence as well as developing that ascetic spirit which has been linked with the development of modern capitalism. We would expect some serious analysis here.

Smith also argues that the repercussions of industrialisation have not been given sufficient attention. Industrialisation brought with it fundamental changes in the relationship between work, family and local community, in the division of labour between the sexes, in the priority given to employment, in the attitudes to time, leisure and material advancement and in the very definition of work. These are different issues to those normally highlighted by Marxist analysis which tends to focus on the new power relationships in the work place and the new relationship between worker and machine. Smith asserts that it is these 'forgotten' changes brought about by industrialisation which have exerted the most influence on modern society and which cry out for a Christian response. Smith concludes that the main casualty in this process has been the proper consideration of women's work.

It is clear that the influence of Marxism has been extensive. The motif of alienation in particular has found fertile soil among most recent writers. In fact, some would argue that the influence of Marxism has been excessive, especially in the doctrine of co-creation. But it is evident that the magnitude and direction of the influence of Marx varies from theologian to theologian. According to Smith, 'Marshall acknowledges Marx; Ellul appropriates him; John Paul II accommodates him; and Soelle adopts him!' For Marshall it is biblical authority which holds sway. However, Soelle manifests a strong endorsement of Marxism and a commitment to Marxist categories. Smith contrasts Soelle's uncritical approach to Marx and communism with her very critical approach to the Bible and to church tradition. He sees in Ellul a correlation between biblical truth and historical reality as mediated partly through Marxist categories, especially alienation. But Ellul also perceives other themes in human history, especially the rise to dominance of technique. So his reliance on Marx is partial; on balance it may

be that biblical authority wins out. *Laborem Exercens* obviously reflects John Paul II's personal journey and the deep struggles in his native Poland. He enters into dialogue with Marxism in a significant way and seeks to reinterpret many of its basic doctrines and assumptions. In the theology of John Paul II the balance between biblical authority, Church tradition, personalism and Marxism is complex and delicately woven.

Smith concludes that 'the influence of Marxism on the theology of work has been substantial. Particularly through the development of personalism, co-creationism and liberationism'. Not that this influence implies uniformity, nor even convergence. Great divergences of opinion are evident. But we cannot ignore the important influence Marx has exerted on most modern theologies of work: 'the attitudes of these writers to Marx ... ranks in importance second only to their interpretation of the Bible. The two themes are not unrelated, for they represent two alternative sources of legitimisation and authority (Smith 1990: Chapter 6)'.

**(d) The Biblical Concept of Vocation is Inadequately Treated.**

According to Smith most recent theologies of work give little status to the concept of vocation (Smith 1990: Chapter 5.13). Those that do, such as Marshall and Ellul, tend to lack a sound biblical assessment. Karl Barth provides a more in-depth assessment. As Barth puts it, 'in the New Testament "*klesis*" always means quite unambiguously the divine calling, i.e., the act of the call of God issued in Jesus Christ by which a man is transplanted into his new state as a Christian. (Barth 1961: 600)'.

The ethical dimensions of this calling are often traced (eg. 'you have been called to peace/hope/freedom/holiness/out of darkness'), but more often it is the fact of that calling which is brought to mind. Occasionally calling may also refer to specific commissionings: Paul is called to be an apostle; Barnabas and Saul are set apart for the work to which God has called them; and of course there are the specific callings of the disciples themselves. The principal meaning then is our being called to God; another meaning is that we may be called to undertake specific tasks or fulfill certain roles for God.

Smith briefly traces developments in the doctrine of vocation from the Middle Ages to the present. His interpretation can be summarized in the following way. In the Middle Ages the Church had a very narrow view of calling and the tasks that it entailed. Vocation was limited to spiritual as against secular occupations. Even in more recent Catholic scholarship work is seldom mentioned in the context of vocation. The

Reformers protested against this restricted view of vocation, claiming that God's call could apply to secular occupations as well. But Luther's emphasis on the divine calling which addresses each person in their secular status or sphere of activity led to a confusion of the divine call with the secular demands of the occupation itself. It was a short step from this stage to the complete secularisation of the concept of vocation. Hence most Protestant discussions of vocation have tended to focus on the responsibilities of a person as family member, citizen and worker.

The rigidities in both Catholic and Protestant conceptions of vocation, combined with the increasing secularisation of the concept, led to the attempts in neo-orthodoxy to return to a biblical concept of calling. Both Bonhoeffer and Barth assert that the divine call must be given independence from and authority over the secular requirements of one's occupation. While one's occupation may form part of the human response to the divine calling, it nowhere near exhausts it. This more existential concept of the divine call and human response challenges the notion of human occupation as vocation.

Smith is clearly attracted to Paul Marshall's attempt to draw together threads from the reformed, co-creationist and rest traditions. However Smith would also like to add a mildly liberationist perspective to this mix. This liberationist perspective includes both identification with the poor and needy and the challenge to do our theologising contextually, alert to the presence of God in the context of our daily work, as we encounter people and engage situations. The present writer finds the mix that Smith advocates here an attractive proposition.

Smith sees vocation as specific obedience to God's will, as we seek after it and as it is disclosed to us. It involves moving in step with God. It is primarily an existential notion rather than something reduced by a theological system to a set of laws, whether they be laws of morality, laws of spiritual experience or laws of political action. Smith seeks a view of vocation which can guide us along a path between what he calls 'privatised religion' and 'politicised religion'.

Smith believes that James Fowler's attempts to revitalise the Christian concept of vocation hold some promise. He is drawn to Fowler's idea of calling as partnership or synergy with God in God's work in the world:

the shaping of vocation as total response of the self to the address of God involves the orchestration of our leisure, our relationships, our work, our private life, our public life, and of the resources we steward, so as to put it all at the disposal of God's purposes in the service of God and the neighbour. (Fowler 1985: 95; Smith 1990: Chapter 6e)

Smith also likes Fowler's identification of vocation as something dynamic, with a focus which changes over time, while continuing as a calling which becomes more intense: 'in an age when one's family and employment no longer hold the promise of providing a unifying focus for one's life journey, this revived notion of vocation is relevant and timely (Smith 1990: Chapter 6e)'. For Smith this adds an important time dimension to the theology of work. We will further discuss Fowler's contribution in Chapter Three.

## **2.16 LELAND RYKEN.**

Leland Ryken is Professor of English at Wheaton College, Illinois. In *Work and Leisure in Christian Perspective* (1987) Ryken provides a popular treatment of issues raised by the experience of work and leisure. However, he deals with these issues at more depth than most other popular lay perspectives provide. This is particularly true of the way he introduces historical and biblical material.

Ryken provides an interesting historical perspective on the development of the Protestant Work Ethic, based particularly on his familiarity with writings of the Puritans.

According to Ryken, the original Protestant Work Ethic was almost the opposite of what people today take it to mean:

starting from the assumption that work is a virtue and idleness a vice, the original Protestants asserted the sanctity of all legitimate types of work, viewing them as the response of a steward to a call from God. Service to God and society was viewed as the ultimate goal of work, which was to be undertaken with a sense of moderation. (Ryken 1987: 100)

For Ryken these ideas about work remain a standard to guide Christian thought on work today.

Ryken builds his theology of work on five themes - human work as co-operation with God, work as a curse, the sanctity of daily work, work as a calling, and work as stewardship. The last three elements are essential for the reclamation of work in a fallen world (Ryken 1987: 132).

In developing his understanding of the doctrine of vocation, Ryken differentiates between the two callings - the first to salvation, Godliness and discipleship, and the second to spiritual tasks including everyday work. He draws heavily on the writings of the



Reformers and Puritans to explain the content and implication of this latter calling. When it comes to how we discover our vocation Ryken explains: ‘at the most rudimentary level our calling is the job that provides our livelihood’, and ‘when we are free to choose our vocation, our choice should be guided by the principles of effective service to God and society, maximum use of one’s abilities and talents, and the providence or guidance of God as it is worked out through the circumstances of life (Ryken 1987: 148-150).

Ryken is wary of mysticizing the criteria and process for discovering a vocation saying, ‘as with other major decisions in our lives, God does not relieve us of the burden of human responsibility and choices (Ryken 1987: 150-151)’. He is also aware that if all our roles in life are callings then career choices must not be made without considering their impact on our other callings. We must also remember that our primary calling is to live a godly life. Our progress in the life of faith and holiness is more important than advancing in our career (Ryken 1987: 157).

Ryken’s work is a plea for us to reapply the essence of the Protestant and Puritan understandings of work to contemporary experience. Ryken also argues that work and leisure belong together. Together they make up our lives and our well-being depends on our satisfaction in both. He describes three models of the relationship between work and leisure - people who enjoy their work and experience a quality of leisure in their work; people who deliberately seek out leisure activities very different from the daily grind because they need a break; people who enjoy both work and leisure and for whom leisure activities are generally different from work, but not deliberately so. For Ryken the Bible, and particularly the fourth commandment (Exodus 20: 9-11), defines a God-ordained pattern of work and rest in complementary rhythm. With this framework, all models for relating work and leisure can be Christian. Each has its own pluses and minuses (Ryken 1987: 234).

The essential thing is to maintain the importance of both work and leisure in order to help keep either from becoming an idol that usurps all of a person’s devotion. Another aspect of the relationship between work and leisure is that even though the content of the two may be different, we can strive to import the ideal qualities of one into the other. Our work may be enriched if we can incorporate the quality of leisure into it including choices, enjoyment, creativity and fulfillment. And our leisure may also be enriched if it can produce some of the satisfactions that work at its best provides, including a sense of accomplishment, purposefulness, action and good use of time (Ryken 1987: 236). The goal is a balanced Christian lifestyle (Ryken 1987: 243-244).

Ryken has since extensively rewritten this book (Ryken 1995). It is restructured to assert even more strongly his concern that discussions of work and leisure belong together. Ryken is concerned that people are working longer hours and enjoying less leisure than they did a decade ago. Although people are demonstrating a concern to restore a sense of vocation to work, they are still neglecting the importance of leisure. For Ryken work and leisure are inter-connected creation ordinances. Labour and leisure need to be reframed around God's purposes for a holistic lifestyle. Ryken seeks to articulate a true Protestant work ethic, but with a leisure ethic to match it.

### **2.17 DOUGLAS MEEKS.**

Douglas Meeks is a Professor of Systematic Theology and Philosophy in the U.S.A. In *God the Economist* (1989) Meeks seeks, as a Trinitarian theologian, to develop the doctrine of God in a way that demonstrates its economic implications. Meeks makes a bold attempt to bridge the gap between theology and economics and to reclaim a public voice for Christianity. Part of this book is devoted to 'God and Work' (Meeks 1989: 127-180).

For Meeks the Trinitarian view portrays God as the community of righteousness united in self-giving love. Meeks sees the Economist as a helpful metaphor for describing the triune God. He argues that the economy must not be primarily concerned with livelihood. Human dignity and community is prior in value to economic organisation:

economy should serve democratic community which in turn serves the creation of conditions of human beings finding their calling. The great success of the market economy and its tendency to draw everything into commodity exchange relationships has conditioned us to treat ever more dimensions of life as private, that is, unaccountable ... If we rightfully appreciate the market's logic of the exchange of commodities as a tremendous instrument of economy, we nevertheless have to be aware that there are many social goods whose shared communal understanding should require different logics of property, work and distribution. (Meeks 1989: 181-182)

According to Meeks the church has an opportunity to point to alternative ways of producing and distributing what is necessary for an 'inclusive household of life'. God's economy is the foundation of livelihood for all God's creatures and the source of our hope for a just society.

Meeks develops the concept of the Trinity as the church's teaching against domination through work. The life of the triune God pictures the economy of work that God is working to bring into being. Meeks highlights four hermeneutical keys to describe the character of God's work ...

1. Each person of the Trinity engages in distinctive personal work.
2. The Trinity engages in co-operative work.
3. The equalitarian work of the Triune community.
4. The integration of the Triune community's work through the self-giving love of each other.

Meeks then identifies and critiques the three major tendencies he detects in modern ideologies of work:

1. The degradation of work - the romantic exaltation of leisure and the degradation of the worker. This is the result of a spiritualising tendency which separates the Holy Spirit from the economic community of the Trinity.
2. The exaltation of work - the valuing of work as the means of ordering and self-justification of life. It is the notion of God as Father-task master or as a monadic worker that provides justification for the freedom to pursue one's own interests at the expense of - or without regard for, the interests of others.
3. The redemption of work through work - both capitalism and socialism have turned to the reconstruction of work through managerialism. Because 'I am what I make out of myself' we must work to redeem work through the sophisticated application of psychology and sociology.

For Meeks new models of work liberated by his trinitarian view will emphasise:

1. full employment - the creation of meaningful work for every person according to their gifts.
2. service as incentive - work done as discipleship and self-giving for the sake of participation in the fullness of life.
3. work in community - worker participation in decision-making.
4. equity in work.

Meeks demonstrates the possibility of making new creative connections between the worlds of theology and work and ethics when a particular doctrine is investigated using a new set of questions raised by the practical concerns of people's existence. Although Meeks writes of the need to create conditions in which people can find their calling and discover meaningful work that corresponds with their gifts and abilities and represents an opportunity for them to serve God and to serve in building human community, he does not develop the concept of vocation or calling any further.

## **2.18 MIROSLAV VOLF.**

Miroslav Volf began his study on the question of work with a doctoral thesis under Jurgen Moltmann, analysing and giving a theological evaluation of Karl Marx's understanding of work (Volf: 1985). *Work in the Spirit* (1991) is Volf's attempt to articulate a broad contemporary theology of work.

Volf begins *Work in the Spirit* by examining the contemporary world of work. According to Volf, the purpose of a theology of work is to 'interpret, evaluate, and facilitate the transformation of human work,' and 'it can fulfill this purpose only if it takes the contemporary world of work seriously (Volf 1991: 7)'. Volf compares the characteristics of work in the modern world with work during other periods of history. He concludes that today we can observe a general crisis of work. It frequently surfaces in the negative attitude of workers toward their work. It is also evident in the widespread occurrence of child labour, unemployment, discrimination, dehumanisation, exploitation and environmental abuse. Volf distinguishes between personal, structural and technological causes of the present crisis of work. Volf then examines those understandings of work which have dominated thinking in contemporary developed and developing societies. He concentrates on analysing the theology of work of Adam Smith and Karl Marx.

The second half of *Work in the Spirit* is devoted to developing Volf's own theology of work. He stresses that it is a theology of work and not an ethic of work that he is pleading for. The theological framework within which Volf develops his theology of work is the concept of the new creation. He acknowledges the influence of Moltmann's 'Theology of Hope' which emphasises that at its very core, Christian faith is eschatological. Hence the Christian life, including work - secular as well as spiritual, is lived under the inspiration of the Spirit and in the light of the coming new creation. What Volf produces he calls an 'eschatological' and 'pneumatological' theology of work (Volf 1991: 79).

Volf chooses the deductive approach, setting up a theological framework within which biblical statements on work can be integrated. This is because he considers traditional attempts to summarise the biblical teaching on work have proved inadequate:

the inductive approach to developing a theology of work is inadequate because of the scarcity of biblical materials, their limited relevance to the modern world

of work, and their ambiguous nature ... To develop a theology of work means to consciously place biblical statements about work in the context of a reading of the Bible as a whole and to apply both these individual statements and the overarching reading of the Bible to the contemporary world of work. (Volf 1991: 78)

Volf recognises growing ecumenical agreement that the deepest meaning of work lies in the co-operation of men and women with God (Volf 1991: 98). However Volf also discerns two different conceptions of this co-operation with God. The one rests on the doctrine of creation and sees work as co-operation with God in the *creatio continua*, the other rests on the doctrine of the last things and sees work as co-operation with God in anticipation of God's eschatological *transformatio mundi*. The first draws heavily on the accounts of creation in the first chapters of Genesis and emphasises that there is a mutual dependence and co-operation between God and human beings in the task of the preservation of creation. The second approach leans more heavily on New Testament images of the 'new creation' and emphasises the nature of work as human co-operation in God's eschatological transformation of the world. Volf favours the second approach, maintaining that this includes the essential elements of the understanding of work as co-operation with God and the preservation of creation, but also adds the anticipation of the promised new creation. Volf also asserts that, because the world is presently under the power of sin and is transitory, it will not be human work that creates God's new world but God's action alone in the end. However since this divine work does not obliterate but transforms the historical anticipations of the new creation human beings have participated in Volf can still say: 'In their daily work human beings are co-workers in God's kingdom, which completes creation and renews heaven and earth (Volf 1991: 100)'.

Volf is attracted to this eschatological view of work, because it includes a dynamic perspective which is much more relevant for a world which wrestles to come to terms with the profound impact of modern technology. Modern work transforms the world as much as it preserves it, and it preserves it by transforming it. The static framework of preservation cannot adequately incorporate the dynamic nature of modern human work, nor can it easily break free of the strong inclination to hinder needed change on the basis that just as God the creator works to preserve creation so we must also strive to preserve the established order.

Clearly the question of continuity or discontinuity between the present and future orders is a key issue for Volf. Two radically different theologies of work follow from those who believe in the complete destruction of the present world at the end of the age and

creation of a fully new world and others who believe that it is this present world which will be transformed into the new heavens and new earth. If the world will be annihilated and a new one created *ex nihilo*, then mundane work only has significance for the well-being of the worker and their community until that day when the cumulative work of humankind is wiped out in the final apocalyptic catastrophe. In this case human work is devoid of direct ultimate significance. This does not deprive work of all significance, because clearly human beings can still only believe and be sanctified and serve as they live and work. But nevertheless human work and Christian cultural involvement are devalued when they have no direct ultimate significance and are made completely subservient to a purely vertical and spiritual relationship with God.

A very different picture emerges with the assumption that the world will end not in apocalyptic destruction, but eschatological transformation. In this case, the cumulative work of human beings has intrinsic value and ultimate significance, for it is related directly to the eschatological new creation by providing the 'building materials' from which (after they are transfigured) 'the glorified world' will be made. According to Volf, 'this continuity guarantees that no noble efforts will be wasted (Volf 1991: 92)'. Volf is not suggesting that cultural involvement is the only, nor even the most important, task of a Christian. In fact, he warns that just as 'faith does not exist for the sake of work (though it should stimulate, direct and limit work), so also work does not exist merely for the sake of faith (though one of its purposes is to make faith possible). Each in its own way, faith and human work, should stand in the service of the new creation (Volf 1991: 92)'. Volf is very clear that it is not the results of human work that create or replace 'heaven'. But he also recognises that this is a truth that people, particularly those who are charmed with success, easily forget. However in the end we must recognise it is only in a very modest and broken way that human beings contribute to God's new creation as the results of our work are purified in the eschatological *transformatio mundi* and thus integrated by an act of divine transformation into the new heaven and the new earth. And Volf is also concerned to emphasise that human work is ultimately significant not only because it contributes to the future environment of human beings, but also because of the indelible imprint it leaves on their personalities. With reference to Revelation 14:13, he maintains that 'earthly work will leave traces on resurrected personalities (Volf 1991: 97-98)'.

Volf goes on to assert that any eschatological approach to work must also be a pneumatological theology of work on the basis that 'the Spirit is the agent through which the future new creation is anticipated in the present (Volf 1991: 102)'. Volf complains that most Protestant theology suggests that the Spirit of God has very little to do with the mundane work of human beings. The human body and materiality in general have been

excluded from the sphere of salvation in Protestant thinking. But this is both exegetically and theologically unacceptable: 'when the ascended Christ gave the Spirit He "released the power of God into history, power which will not abate until God has made all things new"... The Spirit is not only the Spirit of religious experience but also the Spirit of worldly engagement. For this reason it is not at all strange to connect the Spirit of God with mundane work. In fact, an adequate understanding of human work will hardly be possible without recourse to pneumatology (Volf 1991: 104)'. According to Volf, this pneumatological understanding of work is not new. Luther talked about vocation in terms of the graces and gifts of God: 'each one should understand what his gift is, and practise it and so be of use to others (quoted in Volf 1990: 104)'. And more recently the Vatican II document *Gaudium Et Spes* develops the same theme (Volf 1991: 104-105).

Volf is very critical of Luther's understanding of work and vocation on a number of counts (1991: 106-109). These include:

1. Luther's view of vocation is indifferent towards alienation in work. If the only two things that are required for a vocation are the call of God and the opportunity to serve other people, then every type of work becomes a vocation no matter how dehumanising it might be (so long as it does not directly force the worker to transgress the commandments of God). Hence, according to Volf, Luther's view is far too accepting of alienating and dehumanising work in contexts where transformation is necessary and possible and needs to be encouraged.
2. There is a 'dangerous ambiguity' in Luther's notion of vocation: 'In Luther's notion of vocation ... spiritual calling comes through the proclamation of the gospel, while external calling comes through one's station (*Stand*). It has proven difficult for Lutheran theology to reconcile the two callings in the life of an individual Christian when a conflict arises between them ... Luther's bold identification of vocation [ie. *vocatio externa*] with the call [ie. *vocatio spiritalis*] has led again and again to the integration of the call into vocation and vocation into occupation, and thus to the consecration of the *vocational-occupational* structure: 'Vocation began to gain the upper hand over the call, the Word of God on the right (gospel) was absorbed by the word of God on the left (law) (Volf 1991: 108)'.  
3. The understanding of work as vocation is easily misused ideologically. This occurs when a high valuation of work combines with both indifference to alienation and the identification of calling with occupation. Since the notion of vocation suggests that any employment is a place of service to God, it offers no resources to foster change even in contexts where work is reduced to dehumanising 'soulless movement'.
4. The notion of vocation is not applicable to the increasingly mobile industrial and information society we live in, where work patterns are constantly changing. Luther's

counsel for people to 'remain' and 'be satisfied' in their vocations is the logical consequence of a static view of a single and permanent vocation.

5. For reasons similar to those referred to in 4, the Lutheran view of vocation is not helpful in contexts where people are increasingly taking on more than one job at the same time.

6. As the nature of human work changed in the course of industrialisation Lutheran social ethics reduced vocation to gainful employment. This 'reduction of vocation to employment, coupled with the belief that vocation is the primary service people render to God, contributed to the modern fateful elevation of work to the status of religion. The religious pursuit of work plays havoc for the working individual, fellow human beings and nature (Volf 1991: 109)'.

Volf sees no future in trying to rehabilitate the understanding of work as vocation. For him the exegetical and theological obstacles are too great. Exegetically the problem is that Luther misinterpreted 1 Corinthians 7:20, the main proof text for his understanding of work. Also Luther's interpretation is static and offers no place for change (Volf 1991: 110). Theologically the problem is defining how the one call of God, addressing all people to become Christians, branches out into a plurality of callings for particular tasks. Volf prefers not to deviate from the dogmatic soteriological use of vocation for the former and so uses the term *charisma* for the latter. It is on the foundation of this theology of *charisms* that Volf erects his theology of work (Volf 1991: 110). Volf thinks that it is the matching of gift to task which should guide Christians in their choice of career, not a dubious notion of divine calling. According to Volf *charisma*, the gifts of the Spirit, are related to the specific tasks or functions to which God calls and fits each Christian. *Charisma* do not include only ecclesiastical activities. The Spirit of Christ is not only active in the Christian fellowship but also desires to make an impact on the world through the fellowship. All functions which work to fulfil God's purposes are *charismatic*. *Charisms* are not the possession of any elite group. *Charisms* include both spectacular and ordinary gifts. The general calling to enter the Kingdom of God and bear the fruit of the Spirit branches out into the multiple gifts of the Spirit to each individual. For Volf the *charismatic* nature of all Christian activity is the theological basis for a pneumatological understanding of work: 'all human work, however complicated or simple, is made possible by the operation of the Spirit of God in the working person ... as Christians do their mundane work, the Spirit enables them to cooperate with God in the Kingdom of God that completes creation and renews heaven and earth (Volf 1991: 114-115)'. Not that the new creation will incorporate everything found in the present creation. The realisation of a new creation also involves Judgement Day, a day of negation of all that is negative in the present creation. This is why work must be patterned according to the values of the new creation and criticised in the light of the



eschatological judgement (Volf 1991: 120). All work that contradicts the new creation is meaningless; all work that corresponds to the new creation is ultimately meaningful. This should serve to encourage 'good workers' who find themselves contending against great odds. And also to encourage those who are weighed down by the toil that accompanies much human work, on the basis that their sufferings 'aren't worth comparing with the glory of God's new creation they are contributing to (Romans 8:18) (Volf 1990: 121)'.

Volf considers his approach to have a number of advantages over the vocational view of work (1990: 115-117). He goes on to discuss the implications of this pneumatological approach for understanding the relationship between work and human nature, leisure, ecology, unemployment, alienation and the humanisation of work.

The primary challenges of Volf's contribution for the purposes of this study, lie in his sharp and penetrating critique of the traditional Lutheran understanding of vocation and his reminder of the important perspective the doctrines of the Spirit and eschatology have to contribute to the theology of work.

This author does not think that Volf's total dismissal of the doctrine of vocation is justified. Volf's concern that the matching of gift to task should guide Christians in their career choices is clearly important. And where a sense of vocation is not accompanied by any evidence of appropriate gifts, a person should have cause to question whether their understanding of God's purpose for them is mistaken. But replacing the idea of vocation with that of gift is not likely to provide any sounder foundation. Surely it is not a question of 'either ... or ...', but rather 'both ... and ...' The concepts of vocation and gift belong together. Higginson also makes this criticism of Volf's conclusions:

ideally vocation and gift should be complementary concepts. There is no need to play one off sharply against the other, as Volf does. Indeed, there is reason to think that gift by itself is an inadequate sustaining motive. We can all think of situations at work which everyone finds uncongenial, tasks for which nobody will claim a gift ... For a Christian seeking to discharge this unpleasant responsibility faithfully... the conviction that God has called her to this particular job may play a very important part in ... carrying her through. (Higginson 1993: 43-44)

## **2.19 RICHARD HIGGINSON, CHRISTIAN SCHUMACHER.**

Dr Richard Higginson is Lecturer in Christian Ethics at Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and Director of the Ridley Hall Foundation for the study of 'Faith and Work' issues. Higginson writes for business people who are struggling to relate their personal faith and values to the way business seemingly has to operate. His *Called to Account* (1993) is one of those rare attempts to bring together serious Christian theology and business practice.

What Higginson advocates is a credal approach to theology and ethics. He maintains that the Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed provide Christianity with its essential structure of ideas and articulate the overall shape of the biblical story. The Creeds give us a sketch of what theologians sometimes call 'salvation history'. In them we find an outline of the key events described in the Bible, past, present and future, events which have momentous significance for the human condition.

Higginson devotes each chapter of this book to exploring the theological and ethical implications of a portion of the Creed to the business world. Chapters are devoted to The Trinity, Creation, Managing Planet Earth, The Reality of Sin, The Law, The Incarnation, The Cross, Resurrection, The Spirit and The End Time. Two later chapters deal with Christian Integrity and Moral Decision-Making and his final chapter looks at 'The Under-developed Role of the Church' in nourishing the people of God. An abbreviated version of Higginson's theology of business appears in Atkinson (1994: 153-164). In *Transforming Leadership* (1996) Higginson seeks to explore a Christian approach to management, building on the same theological perspective developed in his earlier work

Part of the attraction of Higginson's approach is that it develops the Bible story in a way that most Christians are familiar with. It is not built on an unfamiliar structure, nor does it assume a lot of previous theological knowledge. It also covers a comprehensive span of biblical themes rather than building a whole theology on just one or two themes. Thus it has the ability to incorporate the insights of other theologians and can easily be expanded or condensed. While Higginson does engage in theological reflection, his overall orientation is practical, with frequent reference to case studies and real-life illustrations. *Called To Account*, as the name suggests, concentrates on providing a theological framework for exploring the ethical dimensions of business practice and management issues.

Higginson also emphasises the importance of the concept of vocation, although he does not develop it at length. He considers Luther's development of the doctrine of calling to be very important in breaking down the dichotomy between 'sacred' and 'secular' work. Although he criticises Luther's understanding of vocation for being too static, Higginson

still appreciates Luther's assertion that 'almost every sphere of activity can be a genuine vocation in which the individual can serve his or her neighbour and please God ... Like Calvin after him, Luther invested even the most mundane of jobs with God-given significance (Higginson 1993: 41)'.

For Higginson 'this teaching still has enormous relevance, particularly for Christians working in business in the modern world (1993: 41)'. Higginson is aware of how easily people in the commercial world are misled into thinking that their work has little value in God's sight. Often there are moral ambiguities to deal with that involve emotional strains and psychological costs. A strong affirmation of the diversity and complexity of a Christian's calling is required to sustain believers in such circumstances. Hence Higginson's title *Called To Account*. The conviction that God has called a person to their occupation, (particularly if it involves demanding and difficult responsibilities), may play a very important part in strengthening their resolve and carrying them through (Higginson 1993: 44). At the same time, Higginson also emphasises that Luther's dominant image is not of a God who *drives* in relation to work, but one who *calls*. It is built on a foundation of relationship and an assurance of God's acceptance which is grounded not in our own achievements, but God's grace. Higginson is concerned to see people delivered from a compulsive attachment to work. A true understanding of vocation will counter workaholism, rather than reinforce it.

Overall, Higginson develops, in a more popular and systematic way, the work on Christian theology as a resource for management pioneered by Christian Schumacher (Schumacher 1987).

Schumacher seeks to investigate what 'wholeness' in work looks like in the light of the relationships between the three Persons of the Holy Trinity. He sees these relationships as the source of the three dimensions of human creativity: planning, doing and evaluating: 'Work is "whole" when the action of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is fully manifest in it, and when [people] collaborate within a structure and spirit which reflects Christ's mystical body the Church (Schumacher 1987: 93)'. Schumacher goes on to describe how and why work has become deformed and proposes a practical basis for restructuring in the light of the promise of the emergence of a New Order which we work to anticipate and which God will bring to completion. According to Schumacher, everyone should have the opportunity to apply creative and and critical thought to the work in which they are involved. On this basis, he advocates the organization of companies into small work-groups, so that all may experience the satisfaction of 'whole work'. Schumacher's work can be seen as an extension of the quest of his father, Fritz Schumacher, to promote 'good work' (see Chapter 2.8), but within a more explicit

theological framework and with more direct connections with industrial and commercial enterprises.

## **2.20 MATTHEW FOX**

Matthew Fox is best known for his controversial work on creation spirituality (eg. Fox 1983). Fox was formally dismissed from the Dominican Order in 1993 after a ten year struggle over his radical views. Fox has attempted to pursue the mystical creation tradition of spirituality with a special emphasis on the contributions of Meister Eckhart, Hildegard of Bingen and Thomas Aquinas. Fox believes their mystical approach to living represents the repressed side of Western civilisation and exposing ourselves to it is essential if we are to live and work more creatively. Fox attempts to provide the outline for an emerging 'post-modern systematic theology' - one based on Creation Spirituality rather than the 'fall/redemption' ideologies which have so influenced Western theology in the modern era (Fox 1983: 316-319; Fox 1994: 15). In *The Reinvention of Work* (1994) Fox attempts to apply this Creation Spirituality to the modern experience of work.

Fox differentiates two kinds of work: inner and outer. Inner work refers to that large world within our souls or selves; outer work is what we give birth to, or interact with, outside ourselves. Fox maintains that the Western world has only focussed on the importance of the latter. The Industrial Revolution was essentially an outer revolution which taught us to relate to things as we would to machines - objectively. This was also reinforced by the adoption of the Newtonian world view which pictures us as cogs in a big machine with each part doing its 'own thing' but with little sense of community or connection. As a result we have come to believe work is primarily about factories and industries. We have lost our sense of an inner life. According to Fox, work prior to the Industrial Revolution was more relational and today we need to regain the relational and spiritual dimensions of work:

putting our own inner house in order will prove the key to reinventing work for the human species. And not only individuals have inner houses; the inner houses of our communities, our churches and synagogues, our economic and political systems, and our neighbourhood and family relationships all need our attention at this critical moment in human and Earth History. (Fox 1994: 21)

Fox maintains that once a person has a spiritual centre from which to work, no work (provided it is good work) is alienating: no work is just a job:

A person who sweeps floors can, by knowing the meaning of his or her task and appreciating its contribution to the cosmic community's history, sweep floors as an act of sacred work ... if one's work is useful and not harmful it can always be holy work and part of one's meditative discipline - provided one is aware ... we praise God by our work. And this in turn gives our work grace and purpose ... all work contains drudgery; the issue is whether it holds meaning or not. If we do our work from our centre, from our Source, it will always hold meaning. The meaning will itself "break through (Eckhart's word)" on us from time to time, but the meaning will always be present to us even when it is hidden or shrouded in silence. (Fox 1994: 23)

To avoid creating a permanent distinction between outer work and inner work, Fox insists a third kind of work is also required - that of bringing inner and outer together. This task will assist the process of converting jobs to work and of inventing new work:

In bringing together inner and outer we are contributing to a cosmology, a making whole, a putting of order into our lives and that of our species ... here the dualism between us and the cosmos is erased. Here is where the healing of the deep wounds we received during the modern era begins ... When that distorted mode of human presence is healed work itself will be healed. And healing that distorted mode of presence will itself constitute good work. (Fox 1994: 24)

For Fox an essential key to the reinvention of work is the understanding that ultimately there is only one work going on in the universe, the 'Great Work' of creation itself - the work of creation unfolding. Fox quotes the poet Rilke to highlight the gap we feel in our work lives when we sense we are cut off from the Great Work:

For somewhere there is an ancient enmity between our daily life and the great work.

Help me, in saying it, to understand it

(Fox 1994: 61).

According to Fox:

because we lack a cosmology - an experience of the whole - our lives have become fractured and broken, as have our hearts. We have lost a sense of community and our efforts at work seem at best self-serving. Instead of recognising what is really a cosmic hole in our souls, we think that perhaps money will plug the hole, and so we strive for bigger pay checks. Our cosmic energy seeps away; work becomes lonely and alienating. We have become strangers to the Great Work. (Fox 1994: 62)

It will take time and effort for us to meditate on the message that the whole universe is involved in birthing one Great Work. It requires us to adopt a new cosmology that challenges the dominant Western world view. The universe itself is a single ongoing drama, and we and our work are part of it. All people and all things in the universe are interdependent. Our work is interconnected with God's work: 'All activity of the universe is God at work - not on its periphery but at its heart (Fox 1994: 64)'. It is this understanding which lies behind the journey that Fox invites us to embark on. He goes on to explore three particular aspects of the new spirituality of work he advocates.

Firstly, Fox explores 'The Great Work and the Inner Work' (Fox 1994: 19-130). This involves what Fox calls 'revisioning work'. Fox recognises that much work is experienced as a painful struggle. He relates this to what the mystics call 'the Dark Night of the Soul' and says that we must learn to enter such experiences, because daring to go into the Dark and dealing with our woundedness and brokenness is a necessary and significant work. This is the *via negativa* of work.

Fox also looks at the role of joy in work - the *via positiva* of work. He maintains that work has been defined by the church for too long in fall/redemption terms, as part of the 'curse tradition'. But the two great garden stories in the Hebrew Bible - that of Genesis and that of the Song of Songs - are not about work as curse so much as work as delight (Fox 1994: 93). Fox asserts: 'if there is no bliss in our work, we have not yet found our work. We may have a job but we do not yet have work (Fox 1994: 94)'. It is in this context that Fox looks at work as call, vocation or role: 'The maker of the universe calls us to be participants, at the level of our being, in the work of the universe (Fox 1994: 102)'. For Fox we find our calling by following our natural inclinations, by doing what we are equipped to do and feeling joy in doing. The questions we might ask of our work are: 'What role does my work have me play in the Great Work, and in the work of my community and species at this time in history? What role am I equipped to play? What role most attracts me? (Fox 1994: 105)'. It is a great joy to play a role in a cosmic drama. But the roles we are asked to play must begin not with acting but with being. Work as being needs to precede work as action. Fox follows the counsel of Meister Eckhart in this 'think more about who you are and less about what you do ... for if you are just your ways will be just (Fox 1994: 106)'. True creativity results when our inner work and outer work merge: 'we become real when our work joins the Great Work ... when our inner work becomes work in the world ... when our creativity, borne of deep attention to both enchantment and nothingness, serves the cause of transformation, healing and celebrating (Fox 1994: 114)'.

Secondly, Fox explores 'the Great Work and the Outer Work' (1994: 131-248). This involves the challenge of 'reinventing work'. Here Fox seeks to apply the criteria of a healthy inner life to the world of work itself. He envisages people mystically awakened and inspired by the new cosmology creating new roles and new possibilities for workers, by contributing their own spiritual imagination to a re-enchantment of their particular profession (Fox 1994: 138). Fox imagines what this could mean for farming, politics, education, health, art, economics, business and science.

Thirdly, Fox explores the role of ritual in 'Reinventing Work by Rediscovering the Festive' (1994: 249-295). Fox argues that 'it is in ritual that the people praise. And people need to praise. Without praise we have no energy to live deeply ... Ritual takes us to the deeper levels of our beings where we taste our connection to all things (Fox 1994: 252)'.

What Fox offers is a spirituality of work rather than a theology of work - a 'resacralization' of work. It is also a strong attack on 'dualistic work' - work that separates our lives from our livelihood, our personal values from our work values and human work from the universe's work. For Fox,

this very dualism constitutes the heart of the problem of our Earth crises and youth crises and poverty crises the world over. Just as the industrial revolution defined work for us for two hundred years, so the environmental revolution - and the Creation Spirituality it presumes - will usher in a new definition and therefore new opportunities for work for the next historical era ... The dualism between life and livelihood is itself a lie, for life is all about Spirit, and there is only one Spirit; it manifests itself in both and life and livelihood. (Fox 1994: 298-299)

Fox offers us a 'Green' theology and spirituality, applied to work.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

A variety of different theologies of work have been developed in the last fifty years. It has been a period of rapid change in which work patterns have undergone a succession of transformations from the war economy, through the post-war boom and the Cold War, the confused and questioning Sixties and Seventies, and the pluralism of the Eighties and Nineties. Changing economic circumstances have demanded different responses and new theological perspectives. The mixed messages about work in the Bible and the

variety of biblical approaches to work provide a rich resource for developing these new perspectives. Recent theologies of work have been developed around a number of themes, but work as co-creation is definitely the dominant one. But broader than this is the concern to understand how human work is related to the work of God. This includes God's creating, sustaining and redeeming work. It represents a desire to gain a view of the work of God that encompasses the whole biblical narrative, all three members of the Trinity and the whole gamut of systematic theological categories which provide us with a variety of lenses through which we can view and interpret the world of work.

It is a high view of daily work that our faith provides us with. Yet not so high that we have any excuse for idolising work or assuming that it is our work that will bring the Kingdom of God to completion. It is important therefore that we do not underestimate the significant impact of the Fall on work in a way that makes the experience of work such a difficult struggle for so many people. At a time when most people are working longer hours in an increasingly competitive and stressful context we need to be able to confront the struggles with a realistic faith. We also need help to maintain a healthy balance between paid employment, family responsibilities, domestic work, community involvement and church work. And we need a reminder of the importance of the 'rest' and leisure elements in our faith.

We are fortunate that Scripture and the Christian tradition have so many diverse strands of understanding to draw on, because part of the challenge of our present circumstances is that work represents such a variety of different experiences for people. These include:

- For the majority of men, and an increasing number of women, working lives are dominated by employment in a context which places many stresses and demands on them and which many find very wearying.
- A significant minority of people cannot find employment and must look for fulfillment in unpaid work and other activities, but in a society where identity and well being are still usually associated with employment.
- For some people employment is very enjoyable and a source of satisfying stimulation. For others employment is harsh or boring and oppressive. For many it is a mixture of both these experiences.
- Many women are struggling to maintain a healthy balance between paid and unpaid work, employment, work at home and voluntary work. Many would prefer to be employed for fewer hours if they could afford it. Some would like payment for their work at home.
- Many people are attempting to establish 'portfolio' careers doing a variety of different sorts of work for different clients involving a mix of different roles. This demands effective 'juggling' (see Handy 1989: 146-167).



- The old expectation of following a predictable career path has become the exception rather than the rule. Many people have been forced to change careers through the experience of redundancy. Other people have chosen to make changes in a context in which people have become markedly more mobile and willing to move. Do we have a core understanding of who we are that does not change even when our circumstances do, or do we just become a generation of chameleons who reinvent ourselves with each new move?
- Many people are living longer and looking for new ‘careers’ after retirement and/or filling their lives with voluntary work and leisure pursuits (see Handy 1994: 189-194).
- The ethical problems people confront in the course of their work are often increasingly complex and far removed from the simple biblical principles that we once hoped would provide neat and tidy answers to most of our moral dilemmas.
- There is a wide-spread spiritual hunger being expressed, but seldom in a way that connects easily with traditional Christian categories.
- There is a wide-spread concern for environmental, justice and gender issues.
- There are now more church and voluntary agencies than ever before needing to recruit workers.
- There are more leisure options available than ever before, although many people enjoy less leisure time.
- As an increasing number of people participate in in-service training and re-training ‘study work’ has to be recognised as an important component of adult life.

As we approach the second millenium the search is on for a more comprehensive, or wholistic, theology of work. Such a theology of work needs to include the following elements:

1. A broad definition of work that embraces employment, domestic and voluntary work.
2. A view of vocation that is bigger than occupation or career but also embraces occupation or career. This will begin by emphasizing Christian discipleship as the primary category, but also include all the different dimensions of daily work. In this way a person will be assisted to integrate the different aspects of their life into a single whole, and to interpret this in the light of their participation in God’s work.
3. A view of vocation that is flexible enough to accommodate job changes and experiences of redundancy and unemployment and other alterations in work patterns.
4. A view of work that draws on a variety of biblical and theological sources and holds different perspectives in balance.
5. A theology of work which will make direct connections with practical, pastoral and ethical concerns.
6. A theology of work which will address the issues of unemployment and leisure.

7. A theology of work which will address justice, gender and environmental issues.
8. A theology of work which will connect with the development of an appropriate spirituality of work, to help nurture and sustain faith at work.

## **CHAPTER THREE: OTHER RECENT DISCUSSIONS.**

In addition to recent theologies of work, there have also been a number of other attempts to develop contemporary understandings of vocation. These have arisen in different contexts and for a variety of different reasons. We now examine a few examples.

### **3.1 LEE HARDY**

Lee Hardy wrote *The Fabric of this World* as ‘an attempt to revitalise the concept of work as vocation - or calling - at least within the professing Christian community, where it should have some force (Hardy 1990: xv)’. Hardy begins by examining the history of Western attitudes towards work. He concludes that attitudes towards work in the Western tradition are polarised. They have been shaped directly and decisively by our self-understandings as they follow from our understanding of God. Work has sometimes been seen as a form of self-denial, sometimes as a form of self-fulfillment; sometimes as activity which demotes us to the level of animal existence, sometimes as activity which exalts us to the status of divine beings. Attitudes towards work have been accordingly either negative or positive (Hardy 1990: xvi). We are the inheritors of both of these conceptions of work and they war together within us with little hope of reconciliation. Against the background of these polarised attitudes towards work Hardy sets forth the concept of work as vocation as inaugurated by the Protestant Reformers. According to Hardy: ‘the concept of work as vocation ... steers a middle path between the vilification and the glorification of work. The concept of vocation ... claims it is in our work that we bear within us God’s image as Creator ... through the work we are called to do, God himself carries on his creative activity in the world (Hardy 1990: xvi)’. In this way ‘work makes us into God’s representatives on earth, his stewards, entrusted with the task of developing the rich resources of the earth for the benefit of the human community. Although work does not make us into gods, it does not reduce us to the level of animals either. It relates to what is specifically human about us (Hardy 1990: xvii)’. Hardy maintains that this perspective is also very compatible with modern Catholic social teaching and that a remarkable ecumenical convergence has developed.

In the second half of his book Hardy applies the Christian concept of vocation to two practical concerns - the personal issue of career choice and the social issue of job design. In his discussion of career choice Hardy draws on the Puritan distinction between the ‘general’ and ‘particular’ callings of God. The general calling is the call to be a Christian, that is to take on the virtues appropriate to followers of Christ, and is the same

for all people whatever one's status in life. The particular calling, on the other hand, is the call to a specific occupation - an occupation to which not all Christians are called. Having made this distinction between the general and particular callings of God Hardy asserts, on this basis, that it is both biblically appropriate and religiously important to talk about 'vocational' choice - in the sense of choosing a particular occupation in which we will exercise our gifts. Moreover, at certain junctures in our lives we are confronted with the need to identify our God-given gifts and choose an occupation; and an occupation can provide us with the concrete opportunity to employ our gifts in the service of our neighbour, as God commanded us to do.

Worldly wisdom, according to Hardy, tends to emphasize the importance of salary, security, status and satisfaction in shaping our career choices. Hardy does not dismiss these as significant considerations. But more important for those who seek to make a responsible choice of vocation is the matter of ascertaining precisely which gifts God has bestowed upon us and locating the place where our native abilities and acquired skills can best be put at the disposal of those who need them. This involves a personal inventory of talents and interests together with a moral self-examination of motives and attitudes and also a serious evaluation of various types of work according to their social value. It is the investment of our whole lives that must be considered and not just our employment. A condensed version of this approach is found in *The Christian and Career Choice* (Hardy 1985).

Hardy does still technically distinguish between vocation and occupation: 'a vocation, as such, is not something a person can choose. Strictly speaking what we choose are occupations, where our vocations can be pursued and fulfilled (Hardy 1990: 81)'. Hence according to Hardy vocation is a broader concept than occupation and certainly not to be reduced to paid occupation, although it may include our paid occupation. Furthermore, Hardy develops Luther's thinking in maintaining that it follows from the broad concept of vocation that we will always have a number of vocations, because we occupy a number of stations: parent, child, citizen, parishioner and so on. Some of these vocations are chosen, others are the result of circumstances inherited rather than chosen by us.

The value of Hardy's work for the purposes of this study, lies in the way it seeks to relate historical developments in the concept of vocation to the personal issue of career choice in the modern world and to a critical examination of contemporary American management theories regarding the social and structural dimensions of work.

The latter concern leads Hardy to applaud new concepts in job design such as calls for an increase in the level of freedom and responsibility for employees, expansion of the range

of skills and abilities utilized in employment and attempts to make employment more amenable to employees lives outside the workplace.

According to Hardy:

work is a social place where we can employ our gifts in service to others. God calls us to work because he wants us to love our neighbours in a concrete way.... jobs ought to be designed so that we can in fact apply ourselves - our whole selves - to our calling. Not that our work on the job ought to take up all our time; for we have other callings to attend to as well. Only that our jobs ought to engage us as whole persons, as creatures with high-level capacities for thought, imagination, and responsible choice as well as motor abilities. Our jobs ought to be places where the whole person can respond to the call of God ... In short, the job ought to be a place of responsibility. (Hardy 1990: 174-175)

According to Hardy, 'in all situations the aim of the appropriate design of human work remains the same: making a job the kind of place where a vocation can be pursued (Hardy 1990: 185)'.

### **3.2 GORDON PREECE**

Gordon Preece (1994; condensed in Preece 1993) believes that the Reformed concept of vocation still contains elements that can speak prophetically to the dilemmas of contemporary life. However Preece also recognises that the concept of vocation, as the Reformers understood it, needs itself to be reformed in the light of changes since the 16th century and the secularisation which it has suffered, and the alienation from work which many see as a central problem of industrialised societies.

Preece attempts to do this by firstly tracing historical developments in the process of alienation and secularisation of work. He then goes on to examine three twentieth century attempts to reform the Reformed view of vocation by placing them within a Trinitarian context. Preece uses the paradigm of Gustav Wingren regarding First, Second and Third Article (of the Creed) theologies. Preece looks at Wingren himself as a 'First Article' or Creation-centred theologian and advocate of Luther's view of vocation. He then examines Karl Barth as primarily a 'Second Article' or Christo-centric theologian and advocate of a Kingdom oriented view of vocation, in the light of his divergent views about the place of creation and Gospel and Law. He includes Jacques Ellul as an internal critic of Barth's view of vocation.

Jurgen Moltmann is the 'Third Article' theologian Preece chooses to examine in detail in the light of his theology of hope and his Spirit-centred view of the Trinity and the Kingdom, Creation, Christ and the Church. Preece shows how Moltmann begins to apply this perspective to the theology of work and then shows how Douglas Meeks and Miroslav Volf have also taken up and applied this perspective in their views of work. Finally, Preece seeks to draw these threads together by pleading for recognition of the importance of the three-fold call: the Trinitarian character of our everyday vocations. Preece resurrects Irenaeus' image of God as worker who created the world using two hands - the Word and the Spirit. He maintains that different Christian traditions, though they are all Trinitarian in theory, tend to emphasise the role of one member of the Trinity more than others. A truly Trinitarian view of vocation would include the strengths of each of these perspectives while at the same time compensating for the weaknesses of each and it would explain more helpfully the relationship between creation, Trinity and vocation.

Although Preece's dissertation primarily traces developments in Protestant theology, he is not unaware of John Paul II's view of work and also categorises him as a 'First Article' theologian (Preece 1994: Chapter 1 and Preece 1995: 199-231).

Preece explores God's nature as 'a divine dialogue or triologue in which each person - Father, Son and Spirit - calls the others to fulfill their varied vocations in the story of Creation and the *economy* of salvation ... God's three-fold calling overflows into our lives, calling us to bring the paraphernalia of our everyday, economic lives into the life of the Trinity just as God enters eagerly into our everyday existence and working life, "pitching a tent" among us ... and making a home in our world (Preece 1993: 160)'. Among those who have anchored vocation by an unbreakable chain to God as creator, Preece includes Lutherans, Calvinists and Catholic co-creationists. He maintains that it is a distortion of Luther that leads to the unchangeable view of vocation that endorses the status quo with little room for the spontaneity of creation: 'Luther emphasised God's continual creativity, sustaining life against the forces that would wilt and destroy it. From our birth to our death God is constantly creating, bringing new life and fertility out of barrenness (Preece 1993: 164)'. And the major area where God is constantly innovating is in our vocations: 'They are vehicles for God's vitality. Through our everyday domestic, work place, and political roles God is at work creating, nurturing and maintaining life (Preece 1993: 164)'. Through our vocations we are called to meet and serve our neighbours' needs in ever new and creative ways.

However as part of the Reformed reaction to the rather static and conservative German Christian overemphasis on 'law' and 'order' in the 1920s and 30s Karl Barth shied away

from this emphasis on God the Creator and instead stressed the role of the second person of the Trinity. This resulted in a more dynamic understanding of vocation that responded to one's freedom in Christ through the Gospel. This development emphasises the work of Christ in salvation rather than creation. It also means our primary vocation is to be involved in Christ's reconciling work bearing witness to Christ by proclamation and service. According to this view, although work is necessary to meet our own and others' needs, it is peripheral to God's central work of reconciliation. Work is only part of 'the active life' Christians are called to lead, and a part that is subordinate to prayer, witness and service. This emphasis insists that a new work ethic must be developed which speaks especially to the needs of those who are most severely affected by the current employment ethic: the unemployed (often including the sick and disabled), the bored worker and the workaholic.

This Christ-centred perspective gives vocation a dynamic sense of freedom and transformation, rather than anchoring it to a static social order. It provides an opportunity for each person regardless of limits imposed by age, circumstances, history or aptitude, to take up their special responsibility or calling:

This allows for greater flexibility in work, more fluidity between home and work place, more provision for self and others, rather than professionalism. Vocation is not restricted just to our job, and so does not exclude children, the sick, the elderly, unemployed and homemakers. Even those who have a profession do not exhaust their vocation in their job but imitate God's action in a wide array of different spheres. Rather than imprisoning us in a particular position or social order for life, it is a moment-by-moment process of being open to God's providential companionship. What abides is the call, not the sphere of service. (Preece 1993: 166)

This is a liberating view for those who experience frustration or boredom and struggle in conventional employment and hence find it hard to identify this with a fulfilling notion of calling. And liberating too for those whose lives do not fit conventional patterns of employment. But the weakness of this view is also clear. Creation is pushed to the margins. If Christ the Reconciler is divorced from God the Creator, the nature and range of God's creativity is reduced.

Recently a third perspective has been proposed, emphasising the role of the Holy Spirit, in order to correct an overly creation-centred view of vocation. Jurgen Moltmann is the primary representative of this perspective, though his student Miroslav Volf has followed it through more thoroughly in relation to work (Volf 1991). Preece sees ways in which this emphasis can be linked with the other perspectives: 'The Spirit is the dynamic link

between original creation, providence (or continuing creation), and new creation (1993: 167)'. The Spirit is God at work not just sustaining a static creation (as traditionally assumed) but breathing new life into a creation that waits in suspense to reach its goal and destiny of the 'new heavens and new earth' (Romans 8:22ff). This same Spirit gives inspiration and guidance to working people who 'co-operate with it, mindful of its longing to participate in the glorious liberty of the children of God (Romans 8:21) (Preece 1993: 167 quoting Volf 1991: 146)'.

Traditionally one's vocation was seen to be played out in the fairly static three-fold orders of labour, family and state. But Preece maintains human conditions are much more mobile, changeable and moveable now. Flexibility is necessary to fit with the more dynamic and mobile character of modern work and social roles. This also provides a warning for those who live in contexts where many people struggle for a sense of identity and worth, and hope to find it in their work, for as Preece says:

in the midst of the modern separation between the real-self (found in romance, leisure, therapy, and spirituality) and the role-self (found in work, politics, family commitments), our identity and integration does not come from some isolated sense of self, but through God's call to mission and hope. Social callings are then judged not by their capacity for self-realisation, but by the possibilities they offer for incarnating or fleshing out our faith. The criteria for choice and change of calling then becomes: Does it point in the direction of the Kingdom? (Preece 1993: 167)

Preece is concerned to see vocation rooted in the creative structures of this world, but also ready to be uprooted at a moment's notice to move towards the new creation. As he sees it, we are always on call for the Kingdom, living in the creative tension between the varied vocations of the members of the Trinity in terms of creation and recreation:

We are called to be Abrahamic, Exodus people, constantly on the move towards the Kingdom and Promised Land. But we are also called to rest with David ... and put down deep roots in land, family, work, city even exile. Jesus not only called His disciples *away* from their jobs to answer His call, but He also regularly called those He healed to take their healings back home with them, to *stay* where they were called ... Both dimensions of Christian vocation are important. Which one should be emphasised at any particular time is a matter for spiritual and corporate discernment. The mark of true wisdom and prophecy is its timeliness. But in a time dominated by change for change's sake, when loyalty and family, company and community seems to be forgotten and rootlessness has reached epidemic proportions, there is a place for a renewed emphasis on the orders of creation, for staying in one's calling. Thus if it



involves a rightful place for the reconciling work of Christ and remains open to the call of the Spirit, it may not be a conservative stance but a rare form of radicalism. In the end, the issue is not whether we start with Father, Son, or Spirit, but where we end. Do we encompass the whole narrative of Scripture - the story of creation, salvation and recreation - and so provide a full and dynamic context for our view of vocation? (Preece 1993: 169)

Thus Preece invites us to catch a glimpse of how our work fits into the past, present and future work of God - the work of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Preece's Trinitarian approach looks for a comprehensive view of vocation which will take seriously the whole work of God and whole span of Scripture. In this regard Preece's concept is not unlike Higginson's desire to seriously engage with all the major theological categories (see Chapter 2.19). The usefulness of both approaches resides in the fact that they use categories already familiar to most Christians. Preece's Trinitarian exploration of the nature of our everyday vocations does offer a useful framework for further reflection at both academic and popular levels.

### **3.3 JAMES FOWLER**

The developmental psychologist James Fowler sees vocation as central to an integrated view of life stages and the church's role in public life. Fowler uses the concept of vocation, or calling, to talk about people and communities living faith in conscious and committed relation to God. He defines vocation as 'the response a person makes with his or her total life to the call of God to partnership (Fowler 1991: xv)'. Fowler maintains that humans have evolved for 'ontological vocations of partnership with God - in co-creation, co-sustaining, and co-healing and rectification of the "world" (Fowler 1991: xv)'. According to Fowler this ontological calling is not limited to Christians, instead he sees his formulation as a Christian formulation of a universal vocation. Fowler develops his concept of vocation at some length in three recent books (1984, 1987, 1991).

Fowler describes the work of God using H. Richard Niebuhr's categories of God as Creator, God as Governor and God as Liberator-Redeemer. The human calling - the human vocation - is to partnership with God in God's work in the world including all of the above dimensions. Hence co-operation with the liberative and redemptive action of God, for example, will decisively shape the way people seek position, use resources, and make themselves available in the domains represented in the creative and governing action of God.

For Fowler, vocation is ‘finding a purpose for our lives that is part of the purposes of God (Fowler 1987: 37)’. Vocation is not our job, occupation, profession or career, nor is it a trajectory of these, although it may include these. Vocation is, ‘the response we make with our total selves to the call of God (acknowledged or unacknowledged) and to God’s call to partnership. In this more comprehensive sense vocation refers to the orchestration of our leisure, our relationships, our work, our private lives, our public lives, and the resources we steward. It is the focussing of our lives in the service of God and the love of the neighbour (Fowler 1987: 32). Vocation is linked to and grounded in that place in our heart where we recognise we are intended for some purpose beyond mere survival. It grows out of the intuition that we are called for some purpose beyond self-aggrandizement or the self-interested pursuit of pleasure. Vocation derives, ‘from that profound sense that we are called into existence in this time and this place and among these people for the sake of investing our gifts and potential and furthering some cause that is of transcending importance (Fowler 1987: 32)’. For Christians, vocation involves conversion to the work of God as disclosed in Jesus Christ (Fowler 1991: 126).

Fowler contrasts this view of vocation with the notion of self-actualization, which he labels ‘our most serious modern heresy, the individualistic assumption that we are or can be self-grounded persons (Fowler 1984: 101)’. For Fowler, vocation is essentially a communal notion. In fact, he argues ‘there is no vocation apart from community (Fowler 1984: 113)’. We discover our personhood in relationships with others. We find ourselves by giving ourselves. However Fowler is concerned that few prominent people today model really worthwhile vocational ideals. According to Fowler modern Western societies are in, or moving toward, a crisis point with respect to vocational ideals:

Where previously persons were admired as vocational models because of their virtues and usefulness to society, now admiration is drawn to the appearances of success and wealth, to fascination with exciting and fast-moving lives, and to the name-face recognition that comes with public notoriety. Hence in our society we now claim the vocational models of the rock-star, the movie celebrity, the sports idol, the eccentric millionaire-adventurer and the television preacher-mogul. (Fowler 1984: 2)

Fowler warns that we face a crisis because the above developments have also been accompanied by the erosion of traditional professions as examples of vocational ideals. Increasingly doctors, lawyers, educators, politicians, public servants, even ministers are being regarded predominantly as self-interested and opportunistic entrepreneurs. He notes the shift that David Yankelovich has documented from an ‘ethic of self-denial’,

which characterised American society through World War 2, to an 'ethic of self-fulfillment', which has become dominant since the 1950s.

The vocational question is, 'What are human beings here for? In what consists the virtue or the excellence of human beings? In what pursuits, attainments or investments will human beings find deepest fulfillment? In what modes of living, of spending, and being spent, will humans realise their full potential and contributions? (Fowler 1984: 1)'. A vital key to understanding any society consists in examining the vocational ideals that it recognises and to which it nurtures its members. If Fowler is correct in his analysis and we are experiencing a societal crisis of vocational ideals, then the meaning of adulthood and the identification of worthy models for envisioning it, have become problematic for us.

Fowler emphasizes the important role communities of faith play in forming people and groups for vocational existence. He discusses five levels of meaning and orientation by which Christian communities awaken, shape and sustain the vocations of their members (Fowler 1984: 114-115).

1. The provision of a shared core story. A community of faith shapes its identity in relation to a corporately held narrative structure. This encourages 'the creative and transformative interplay between one's personal narrative and the core story of a religious tradition'.
2. A participation in, and life prioritizing identification with, the *central passion* of the shared core narrative.
3. A formation of the *affections* in accordance with the community's identification with its central passion.
4. The generation of *virtues* - moral perception, judgement and action, that serve the central passion of the community of faith and 'give tensile character to the affections'.
5. *The practical and particular shape of worldly vocation* in each life as members of the community seek to encourage one another to participate in the purposes of God in the world.

Fowler goes on to relate vocation to his theories of adult development by suggesting that vocation is something dynamic with a focus which changes over time, while continuing as a calling which becomes more intense. He maintains that

vocation involves a *process* of commitment, an ongoing discerning of one's gifts and giftedness in community, and of finding the means and settings in which those gifts - in all the dimensions of our living - can be placed at the disposal of the One who calls us into being and partnership. In this perspective, partnership

with God constitutes the core of our evolving identity - the construction of our lives. We are called to an availability and to shaping a way of being that responds and is responsible to some part of God's purposes in the world. (Fowler 1991: 121)

Vocation is characterised by a movement away from self-groundedness.

While there is no doubt that Fowler moves well beyond the strict New Testament notion of calling, he nevertheless attempts to revitalise the concept with a combination of Reformation and modern insights. Fowler looks at the ways the configurations of our lives are in constant flux today with changing patterns of relationships to people, to institutions and to causes and the changing patterns of our leisure, our faith, our families, our employment and our public and private lives. The nature of the modern world means rapid changes are inevitable. But healthy maturation also involves such changes. Our life structures are constantly altering in shape and complexity. This is not something to be resisted, but it does demand new integrating factors. When family and employment no longer hold the promise of providing a unifying focus for life's journey, Fowler maintains this revived notion of vocation is what is needed: 'a Christian view of the human vocation suggests that partnership with the action of God may be the single most fruitful way of finding a principle to orchestrate our changing adult life structures (Fowler 1984: 105)'.

Fowler quotes Daniel Bell's three-fold division which he says characterises advanced post-industrial societies - a division into techno-economic order, the polity (or government), and culture. Bell argues that a major disjunction has opened up between culture - the domain in which meanings and normative images of personhood are addressed - and the techno-economic order, where efficiency, profitability and productivity tend to dominate and control the defining of virtues. The central passion that underlies Fowler's work is the concern, conceptually and ethically, to reunify the worlds of work, governments and meaning. According to Fowler, new models of identity and vocation are required for this.

In *Weaving the New Creation* (1991) Fowler urges churches to recapture a vision of the 'public church'. This will involve balancing nurture and group solidarity with forming an accountability in vocation in work and public life beyond the walls of the church. To achieve this 'we must reclaim the term vocation from guidance counsellors and occupational therapists and from a too-narrow association with the world of work. Nor may we allow it to refer only to the callings of priests, nuns, ministers and those pursuing "full-time Christian (meaning professional) service" (Fowler 1991: 159)'.

Vocation is a larger concept than career, occupation or profession. If it were not, children would not have vocations; people whose lives are spent primarily in voluntary service would not have vocations; and that most rapidly growing group of people in U.S. society, those who are in or near retirement, would not have vocations. According to Fowler's scheme public churches encourage and support their members in the development of vocations in which partnership with God is carried into the large-scale economic, technical, political, commercial and religious structures that shape our lives:

Public churches try to free their members from many of the tasks of institutional maintenance and internal ministry for the sake of strengthening their vocations as Christians in the market place, the school, the law office, the legislative halls, the hospital, and the corridors and committees of peace making and ecological healing. Public churches call forth and empower the ministry of lay persons, not by telling them what they must do in the context of the complex systems in which they work and live, but by giving them access to and grounding in Scriptures and tradition so that they can become informed practical theologians and ethicists in their roles as leaders and followers in their public lives ... They work to maintain a balance between spiritual deepening and renewal and the sustainment and accountability of members in vocation and public life. (Fowler 1991: 159)

Fowler's contribution is particularly valuable for the recognition it gives to the role of personal development in the maturation of a sense of vocation and the role of the faith community in awakening, shaping and sustaining that vocation.

### **3.4: WALTER BRUEGGEMANN**

We make mention of Brueggemann not because he has written extensively about vocation as such, but because he is a prominent Old Testament scholar whose brief references to vocation have influenced others such as James Fowler, who have gone on to develop these thoughts at greater length (e.g. see James Fowler 1984: 93). In 1979 Walter Brueggemann wrote an article entitled 'Covenanting as Human Vocation'. Brueggemann asserts that to view humans as shaped for covenantal living 'transposes all identity questions into vocational questions (Brueggemann 1979: 125)'. We move from the question 'Who am I?' to the question 'Whose am I?' We move from the question 'Who am I in relation to all the other significant people in my life?' to the question 'Who am I in relation to God?' According to Brueggemann, 'all questions of identity become

questions of vocation. And vocation means finding a purpose for being in the world that is related to the purposes of God (Brueggemann 1979: 126)'.

Brueggemann points out that exploring the meaning of this vocation inevitably raises issues of ecclesiology, ethics and interpersonal relationship. Pastoral care involves the formation of a community that is holding to and practicing its vocation. Brueggemann asserts that

over a period of time the practice of pastoral care has in some circles been co-opted by various psychologies. But there are hopeful signs among us, signs that the time is now ripe for facing the promissory offer of biblical faith ... The claims of the Bible provide important alternatives to psychologies that, on the one hand, champion personal autonomy and, on the other hand, urge non-conventional religion. (Brueggemann 1995: 166)

Like many other scholars we have discussed, Brueggemann finds the term vocation useful and wants to define it in terms of human participation in the purposes of God. Unlike most other scholars we have discussed, Brueggemann comes to this conclusion through pondering the story of the work of God and God's people in the Jewish scriptures. For Brueggemann the concepts of covenant and call are inseparable - calling and vocation are inextricably linked to the foundations of our faith.

### **3.5: MARILYN FERGUSON**

Marilyn Ferguson in *The Aquarian Conspiracy* (1982) heralds the transformation of our consciousness. What Ferguson calls the 'Whole Earth Conspiracy' is the product of a world wide movement of people whose ways of thinking about the universe and their place in it is changing. According to Ferguson, a new paradigm is emerging that could produce more radical changes than even the Renaissance (Ferguson 1982: 446). This leaderless, but nevertheless powerful, underground movement is working towards the creation of a very different kind of society based on a vastly enlarged concept of human potential, a new spirituality and a new sense of the interdependence of people and their inter-connectedness with the earth and the whole cosmos. For Ferguson a very important development in this movement is a rediscovery of the importance of intuition: 'that "natural knowledge" which becomes a trusted partner in every day life, available to guide even minor decisions, generating an even more pervasive sense of flow and rightness (Ferguson 1982: 115)'. It is at this point Ferguson introduces her view of vocation: 'closely tied to intuition is vocation - literally a "calling"... vocation is the process of

making one's way towards something. It is a direction more than a goal (Ferguson 1982: 115)'.

Ferguson quotes a housewife who became a film-maker who said: 'I felt as if I'd been called to serve on somebody's plan for mankind (Ferguson 1982: 115)'. Vocation is when people feel they are cooperating with events rather than controlling them: 'A curious blend of the voluntary and involuntary - choice and surrender ... people remark that they feel strongly drawn in a particular direction or to certain tasks, and simultaneously convinced that they were somehow "supposed" to take just those steps (Ferguson 1982: 115-116)'.

The mid-life crisis may be the result of a vocation surfacing. After decades of denial suddenly pain is thrust into consciousness that can no longer be sedated: 'it manifests in either a cry or a call - a cry of disappointment or the stirring call to a new purpose - to vocation - experienced by one who has been engaged in introspective, transformative processes for some time (Ferguson 1982: 376)'. The workaholic attempts to find meaning by working. The person with a vocation may also pursue their purpose very intently, but by finding meaningful work: 'a vocation is not a job. It is an on-going transformative relationship (Ferguson 1982: 376)'. Aquarian Conspirators are also often involved in gently prodding others towards transforming work and wealth or working towards institutional rehabilitation.

Ferguson notes that participants often go through a process of conflict and struggle that is particularly related to their experience of work. During the entry-point stage of the transformative process, the new ideas do not seem to threaten work in relationships. During the second stage, exploration, there is an uneasy hope that this new interest will be no more than an intensive avocation. But by the third stage, integration, the struggle to reconcile the old work with the new perspective has intensified and it becomes apparent that the transformative process cannot be compartmentalised:

the wholeness experienced through the transformative process says that there doesn't have to be a break between work and pleasure, between convictions and career, between personal ethics and "business is business". Fragmentation becomes increasingly intolerable to the person moving toward greater awareness....New attitudes change the very experience of daily work. Work becomes a ritual, a game, a discipline, an adventure, learning, even an art, as our perceptions change ... we see that meaning can be discovered and expressed in any human service: cleaning, teaching, gardening, carpentry, selling, caring for children, driving a taxi. (Ferguson 1982: 378-379)

Ferguson sees the emerging spiritual tradition as a move from religion to spirituality. She emphasises the importance of the 'transmission' of knowledge by direct experience. Doctrine on the other hand, is second-hand knowledge and a danger. Mystical glimpses of the true nature of reality through experiences of 'flow' and 'wholeness' hold the key. The emphasis is on 'knowing without doctrine (Ferguson 1982: 414)'. Traditional religion, apart from the mystical tradition, tends to express our futile efforts to define and control and impedes the flow we might otherwise have in our lives. 'Once we get out of our own way we can become ourselves (Ferguson 1982: 417-418)'.

Ferguson's analysis identifies some significant challenges the church is still struggling to come to terms with. Her mystical view of vocation is certainly not firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. But the hunger and search that causes her and others to reach out and grope after this concept should cause us to ponder more deeply why such people have not found the answer in Christianity. For Ferguson it is clear that people need a sense of vocation. That the church has failed to communicate a view of vocation that speaks to this need seems equally clear. Matthew Fox is one theologian who tries to respond to this challenge by drawing on sources from the mystical tradition (see Chapter 2.20). But this approach, while attractive to some, is alarming to many other Christians. A hunger is being expressed for a combination of theology, ethics and spirituality which forms a more coherent whole, while at the same time offering spiritual and emotional nourishment as well as intellectual stimulus. If this search could be summarised in a word it would probably be 'connection'. People seem to be in search of a new sense of connection with the Source of our being in a way that can provide a new sense of connection with one another and the world we live in. Surely this is something a Christian understanding of vocation ought to provide.

### **3.6: EVELYN AND JAMES WHITEHEAD.**

In *Seasons of Strength* (1984) Evelyn and James Whitehead look at the adult journey with God in terms of two ideas they see as central to Christian spirituality: vocation and virtue. In developing the idea of vocation the Whiteheads are concerned firstly to make plain that it is not an elitist calling they are talking about, but that confluence of gifts and wounds and hopes that each of us is shaped by. Every Christian is called. Secondly, they emphasise that we are not called to a static 'state' in life but to a journey. We are called over a lifetime. We are called again and again. A vocation grows and changes as we come into a fuller realisation of our adult journey of faith. In their vocations people are invited in a certain direction or coaxed along a particular path or career. Christian



vocation, rooted in our best and deepest hopes for our lives, leads us along certain careers supported by particular life-styles, focussed on the promise of the Kingdom of God. One's vocation is a path to be followed in pursuit of the Lord. A vocation is not a once-and-for-all call in young adulthood to follow this career or enter this religious congregation. It is a life-long conversation with God:

like any rich conversation, it is patterned by periods of spirited exchange, times of strain and argument, and intervals of silence. In such a developmental vision of vocation, fidelity is more than a memory. To be faithful entails more than recalling an early invitation; it requires that we remain in conversation. Our fidelity must be mobile because the conversation continues ... a Christian vocation is a gradual revelation - of me to myself, by God. I gradually learn the shape of my life. And it takes a life time. (Whitehead and Whitehead 1984: 10)

Discerning vocation involves the exercise of imagination. 'First, I *envision* my life moving in a particular direction. From scattered hints and uncertain inclinations I begin to envision the shape of my life ... this vision comes as a gift and sometimes as a command (Whitehead and Whitehead 1984: 10).' But discerning vocation is more than just envisioning a purpose for living. Subsequently, 'I must *create* it as well. My life unfolds demanding choices of love and work. It is in the face of these choices that I both receive my vocation and invent it (Whitehead and Whitehead 1984: 10)'.

With the passing of time people come to see that the details of their lives are not as haphazard or random as they seemed. They catch a glimpse of a design: 'there is a plot here! This recognition of a plot - a sequence in my life, a connection between my past and my future - becomes the core of an adult identity. This is who I am and what I am for. To come to this conviction is ... the beginning of a vocation (Whitehead and Whitehead 1984: 10)'.

At the outset of adult life the challenge is to imagine what one's life is to be about. In mid-life a person is often required - by experience of profound change or loss or stagnation - to re-imagine the pattern and purpose of life. New visions of hope are needed to rescue us when we find ourselves losing the plot or unable to discern the purpose - sometimes both identity and vocation seem gone. It is necessary for earlier visions to undergo change at such a point or we may find ourselves no longer able to imagine that God is about something in our lives because the old categories no longer work for us. And nearing the end of life people are invited to affirm, in retrospect, the shape and goodness of the peculiar plot that has defined vocation for them. Yet even in senior years there are still often new aspects of vocation to be discovered and lived out.

The Whiteheads introduce three images of creation which they say shape our view of vocation. The first is creation as God's production, now fully accomplished, that we *inhabit*. In such a stable environment our lives are guided by 'natural laws', rules built in at the beginning. A vocation is seen as a clear role, stable and unchanging. We are called to inhabit a vocational state and live faithful to its rules and guidelines. Inventiveness or improvising on our part are not encouraged because God had a clear plan from the beginning.

A second vision sees creation as something that is worked. Whether finished or still in process God's creation enterprise has been handed over for us to cultivate 'in the sweat of our brow'. The chief feature of this image, as the Whiteheads present it, is seriousness. We participate in God's creation purposefully, earnest and sober. Once again there is little encouragement for experimentation or delight.

A third way to image creation is as something that is being played. In play (and so, in the play of a vocation) we do not simply repeat a prepared script, we also invent and improvise. We do not just imitate, we also create. Creation is still being played. We are participants in this drama. We can replay classic roles or script new scenes in the continuing story. It is an unfinished drama. The Whiteheads maintain that Western culture has dismissed the importance of play because it is seen as childish, frivolous and unreal. They say the figure of Wisdom in Scripture encourages us to rediscover this element (eg Proverbs 8:30-31). To rediscover this third view of vocation is to be 'better able to risk and test and fall ... we witness that vocation is a lively, fragile, flexible gift to be played with energy (Whitehead and Whitehead 1984: 21)'. As we tame failing and falling, we become mature players in our vocations.

The maturing of a vocation is described as a passage from the child of God, to the disciple in young adulthood and into the stewardship of mature middle years. This is not to suggest that all aspects of the former states are left behind in the process of maturing. Spiritual maturing involves us in the inter-play of child, disciple and steward. The process is one of expanding on what has been learned. Often the child is lost along the way, abandoned in the seriousness of gaining adulthood. But several decades of surviving struggle and disappointment through grace and good fortune often allows the child to return. With the growth of the steward the seriousness of the disciple is lifted and we are free to take more risks as we learn to value our failures and to laugh at our mistakes. And having struggled for independence in our twenties and thirties we often learn to depend on others again and become reliable and strong enough for others to depend on us. While all the time of course we still continue to be disciples. As followers of Jesus Christ, we remain apprenticed for a lifetime - always learners. So we

are reminded that maturing takes time; that many seasons are required for that seasoning of instincts which marks us as Christian adults.

What the Whiteheads remind us is that vocation is not something that is ultimately defined in doctrinal terms, but a person's growing sense of place and usefulness in the purposes of God. Like James Fowler, the Whiteheads introduce us to an understanding of vocation as a dynamic experience that involves changes in the process of Christian maturing. It is as much about spiritual formation as it is about growing intellectual appreciation.

In *Community of Faith* (1992) the Whiteheads explore further the role that Christian communities play in shaping the vocations of their members. We expand on this in Chapter 5.43 'A Sponsoring Community'.

### **3.7 ROBERT BELLAH et al.**

*Habits of the Heart* (Bellah et al. 1985) explores the traditions Americans use to make sense of themselves and their society. The authors conclude that as Americans have grown a vocabulary of individualism, they have lost the language needed to make moral sense of their lives. This is based on a five year sociological study of various American communities, during which it was found that people of all descriptions expressed in different ways how hard it can be to commit yourself to others if you believe that 'in the end you are really alone (Bellah et al. 1985: 84)'. According to Bellah., 'clearly the meaning of one's life for most Americans is to become one's own person, almost to give birth to oneself (Bellah et al. 1985: 82)'. Bellah quotes Gail Sheehy: 'It is for each of us to find a course that is valid by our own reckoning (Bellah et al. 1985: 79)'.

Bellah et al. present the conflict between fierce individualism and our urgent need for community and commitment to each other. They characterise modernity as the 'culture of separation' and quote John Donne, 'tis all in peeces, all cohaerence gone (Bellah et al. 1985: 276)'.

The world of work is described as one sphere that has been seriously impacted in this way. According to Bellah the demand to 'make something of yourself' through work is very common in America. It encompasses several different notions of work: work as a 'job', a way of making money and a living; work as a 'career', progress through achievement and advancement in an occupation; work as a 'calling', a practical ideal of

activity and character that makes a person's work morally inseparable from his or her life (Bellah et al. 1958: 65-68). Work in the sense of calling is never private. A calling links a person to the larger community. The calling of each is a contribution to the common good. The Episcopal Book of Common Prayer says in the collect for Labour Day, 'so guide us in the work we do, that we may do it not for the self alone, but for the common good' (Quoted in Bellah et al. 1985: 66).

However with the coming of large scale industrial society, it became more difficult to see work as a contribution to the whole and easier to view it as a segmental, self-interested activity. Thus the predominantly private 'job' and 'career' views of work have largely overtaken the idea of work as 'calling'. However Bellah et al. conclude that

few have found the life devoted to "personal ambition and consumerism" satisfactory, and most are seeking in one way or another to transcend the limitations of a self-centred life ... and many of those with whom we talked were locked into a split between a public world of competitive striving and a private world supposed to provide the meaning and love that make competitive striving bearable. Some however, were engaged in an effort to overcome this split, to make our public and private worlds mutually coherent - in a word to recover our social ecology. (Bellah et al. 1985: 290, 292)

These people according to Bellah et al. are 'reappropriating tradition' finding sustenance in biblical and republican traditions such as that of 'calling' and trying to apply these actively and creatively to present realities. These are attempts to 'make what have become second languages into our first language again (Bellah et al. 1985: 292)'.

For Bellah et al. finding oneself means, among other things, finding the story or narrative in terms of which one's life makes sense. Yet they note that while much has been written in recent times about life cycles and their major stages, with adolescence, mid-life and retirement being described as particularly important choice points, this has mostly been done with no reference to any social, historical or religious context. Historically, in most societies, the meaning of one's life has been derived to a large degree from a sense of connectedness to the lives and values of one's parents and one's children. Yet in contemporary America the aim is to break free and find meaning by becoming one's own person. Bellah et al. conclude:

the small town and the doctrinaire church, which did offer more coherent narratives, were often narrow and oppressive ... yet in our desperate effort to free ourselves from the constrictions of the past we have jettisoned too much, forgotten a history that we cannot abandon ... we are parts of a larger whole that we can neither forget nor imagine in our own image without paying a high price.

If we are not to have a self that hangs in the void, slowly twisting in the wind, these are issues we cannot ignore. (Bellah et al. 1958: 83-84)

According to Bellah et al., now is the time to re-examine the story of our life upon the earth. To look again at where we have come from and where we are going. And to gain a new sense of what it is we are committed to that will add sense and shape to our lives. Bellah et al. conclude their book with these words:

we still have the capacity to re-consider the course upon which we are embarked. The morally concerned social movement, informed by republican and biblical sentiments, has stood us in good stead in the past and may still do again. But we have never before faced a situation that called our deepest assumptions so radically into question. Our problems today are not just political. They are moral and have to do with the meaning of life. We have assumed that as long as economic growth continues, we could leave all else to the private sphere. Now that economic growth is faltering and the moral ecology on which we have tacitly depended is in disarray, we are beginning to understand that our common life requires more than an exclusive concern for material accumulation. Perhaps life is not a race whose only goal is being foremost ... perhaps the truth lies in what most of the world outside the Modern West has always believed, namely that there are practises of life, good in themselves, that are inherently fulfilling. Perhaps work that is intrinsically rewarding is better for human beings than work that is only extrinsically rewarding. Perhaps enduring commitment to those we love and civic friendship towards our fellow citizens are preferable to restless competition and anxious self-defence. Perhaps common worship, in which we express our gratitude and wonder in the face of the mystery of being itself, is the most important thing of all. If so, we will have to change our lives and begin to remember what we have been happier to forget. (Bellah et al. 1958: 295)

The work of Bellah et al. underlines the importance of nurturing communal narratives that give expression to shared values and dreams, if people are to regain a sense of vocation. Some clear challenges and opportunities for Christian churches are apparent: particularly the challenge to help individuals explore the connections between their stories and God's story; and the connections between their work and God's work. Also the challenge to grow a sense of community and collective ownership of a shared story in a context where individualism has been promoted so aggressively.

### **3.8: CHUCK COLSON AND JACK ECKERD**

Colson and Eckerd have examined *Why America Doesn't Work* (1991). They believe that current problems with productivity, international competitiveness, standard of living, the irresponsibility of young people and the mess in inner cities and prisons is due largely to an erosion of the work ethic. Their answer is to restore a high and morally rooted view of work that will once again inculcate into people those historic virtues of the work ethic - industry, thrift, respect for property, pride in craft and concern for community. They also believe, 'loss of the work ethic does not begin in the work place; it begins in the hearts of people - in the values that motivate them or fail to motivate them (Colson and Eckerd 1991: Introduction)'. They maintain that:

since our view of work flows out of our view of life, we must change the underlying values by which people choose to live. In other words we must reawaken the conscience of our culture ... we must penetrate "the moral imagination". This consists of the whole array of social and moral assumptions widely shared by a people - what earlier cultures called tribal myths or the folklore of society. Attitudes towards diligence, work and excellence are part of this cultural consensus or moral imagination. (Colson and Eckerd 1991: 82)

Colson and Eckerd then suggest a comprehensive programme for transforming the culture.

The first task is moral education at every level - in the home, in the church, in the schools, in the universities, in the corporate world, in media, in Government and among the cultural elite who are influential in setting national priorities.

Then, because education is so vital in providing motivation and training and skills for young people, the educational establishment must be radically overhauled to bring back competition and accountability to America's schools.

And a complete overhaul of paternalistic Government welfare programmes is required to free the subsidised, permanently dependent under-class. This must be accompanied by more effort to take meaningful work into prisons.

Finally, American labour and business must re-evaluate the rules of the marketplace to change the way work is treated and workers are cared for.

According to Colson and Eckerd, the church has an important role to play in this process. They suggest a four point programme for the church:

First, the church must reclaim its own heritage. That means preaching and teaching the work ethic. Teach diligence, excellence, thrift, respect for property and that through work that we participate in Christ's work of redeeming the earth...

Second, the church must teach vocation. Every Christian needs to rediscover and understand that the individual's calling is at the very heart of faith and that it is imperative that each Christian glorify God with his or her work.

Third, the church must teach ethics ... Biblical truths about honest scales, helping the poor, not cheating others, and paying fair wages are unchanging and profoundly life-changing ...

Fourth, whenever and wherever it has preached a false health-and-wealth gospel, the church needs to repent. The church must proclaim a message that convicts individuals of their own responsibility. "If a man will not work, let him not eat" were not compassionless words; they were a call to individual responsibility. (Colson and Eckerd 1991: 96)

Colson and Eckerd trace the origins of the Protestant doctrine of vocation and particularly the Puritan version which was transplanted in America and merged with the immigrant work ethic - the commitment to hard work that enabled immigrants to leave the shores and factories of Europe behind for the promise of prosperity in America. They also trace the secularisation of the doctrine of vocation in America that resulted in a work ethic divorced from God. Yet so deeply was this work ethic engrained in the American psyche that it wasn't until the great cultural revolution of the 1960's that it was undermined:

This "good old all-American" version continued to preserve the essential virtues of honest work, thrift, investment, savings, respect of property and charity toward others. Even if they didn't believe it their godly duty, people still taught their children these values because they realised that at heart they were what cherished and sanctified the great American dream. Thus the work ethic survived. Until the revolution ... (Colson and Eckerd 1991: 40)

Although the rot had set in a long time before, the authors maintain that it was only during the 1960's that the attack on tradition became so fierce that the work ethic was finally undermined. This is what now needs turning around through the proclamation of the true meaning of vocation once again.

Should we dismiss this as just simplistic right wing economic and political polemics, or is it another part of the more complete view of vocation we are groping after? In some respects Colson and Eckerd's analysis is quite penetrating, in others it seems very

simplistic. Many will interpret it as just another call for workers to accept the status quo and produce more discipline and effort. Yet at the same time Colson and Eckerd do call for more compassionate responses and meaningful expressions of work for those who are brutalised by the current system. They are both actively involved in working with prisoners and unemployed young people. We have here a more populist expression of widely felt concerns. A twin call for more competition and more compassion. It worries this writer that the former will dominate the latter and a distorted view of vocation and the Protestant work ethic be used to promote it. It challenges us to be discerning.

### **3.9: ROBERT WUTHNOW; A. WEBSTER AND P. PERRY**

Wuthnow is an American sociologist. Part of his book *God and Mammon in America* (1994) is devoted to examining the relationship between religious commitment and work in American society. He argues that religious commitment plays a more important role in guiding work than has generally been acknowledged in scholarly literature on the subject. But he also acknowledges that prevailing cultural assumptions have weakened the influence of religious commitment in the workplace. According to Wuthnow the reason for this is because:

we have come to think of religion - at least implicitly - as a way of making ourselves feel better and have largely abandoned the idea that religion can guide our behaviour, except to discourage activities considered blatantly immoral. We believe economists and advertisers when they tell us that careers and work habits are matters merely of personal preference. We look to religion, therefore, to make us happy about our preferences, not to channel them in specific directions. In giving up its ability to shape our behaviour in the workplace, contemporary religion has lost a great deal of its power. (Wuthnow 1994: 39)

Yet, at the same time, a recent study conducted among church and synagogue members in Chicago concluded, 'many Christians and Jews hunger for more support from their religious communities in relating their faith to their work lives (Hart and Krueger [1992] quoted in Wuthnow 1994: 40)'.

Drawing on a national survey of two thousand members of the U.S. labour force, plus a hundred and seventy five indepth interviews, as well as the research of others, Wuthnow explores a variety of faith and work issues. In particular he examines the meaning of calling. Wuthnow found that a relatively small percentage of people believe religious values influence them in deciding what kind of work to pursue - 10 percent overall,



(although another 12 percent say maybe), and 22 percent of those who attend church weekly. This finding suggests that few people experience a calling that literally tells them to go into a vocation because God wants them to do so (Wuthnow 1994: 40). The interviews revealed that not many people, even ones with strong religious convictions, think very much or very clearly about the doctrine of calling, at least in the abstract (Wuthnow 1994: 40).

Yet, at the same time, 30 percent of people agreed with the statement, 'I feel God has called me to the particular line of work I am in'. This figure increased to 40 percent among church members and 46 percent for weekly attenders. Thus for half of the most actively religious segment of the population, the idea of calling is meaningful. There was not much difference between Protestants and Catholics (35 percent and 31 percent respectively), but significant differences did show up between religious conservatives (45 percent), moderates (32 percent) and liberals (19 percent) (Wuthnow 1994: 69-70).

People who believe they are called to their line of work are more likely than others to list reasons like 'the opportunity to use my talents' and 'wanting to grow as a person'. They are less likely to select reasons like 'the money' or 'circumstances just lead me to it' (Wuthnow 1994: 70).

The most common understanding of this calling is that God wants people to do something useful with their lives. The closely related idea of making the best use of one's individual talents was the second choice. Both of these responses are more likely among people who have experienced a calling. A substantial minority of the called and uncalled feel God simply wants them to be happy. Among church members who expressed a calling 90 percent agree 'God wants me to have the kind of job that will make me happy'.

Wuthnow maintains that the utilitarian understanding of calling is still the dominant view, although the introspective or emotional calling is quite prominent in contemporary culture as well. In fact, 61 percent of those who have experienced a calling say 'getting in touch with your feelings is more important than doing well in your job' and half say, 'working on my emotional life takes priority over other things (Wuthnow 1994: 72)'.

Wuthnow concludes that the introspective connotations arise from the use of religion in American society for therapeutic purposes: it emphasises counselling, personal adjustment, self-esteem and simply feeling good about one's self: 'given the demands of the contemporary workplace, it may be especially therapeutic for people to have some sense that their religious faith helps them in this context. One of the strongest differences

between the called and uncalled is that the former say praying in the morning helps them have a better day (Wuthnow 1994: 72).

When it comes to establishing the difference a sense of calling makes in people's work lives, Wuthnow maintains there is no difference between the two groups in terms of hours a week worked nor the inclination to work harder. This is in spite of standard arguments about the calling's relation to the work ethic. The biggest differences are that those who feel called to their work score higher on job satisfaction, are more likely to say that their work is meaningful and are more likely to say it is important to them to do well in their jobs. Apart from their work, they also feel closer to God (Wuthnow 1994: 73).

Wuthnow also explores the extent to which people bring their religious commitments into the workplace in a public way. Approximately one-third claim to have discussed their faith with someone at work during the past year. This rises to 58 percent of weekly attenders. Protestants are more inclined to have done so (42 percent) than Catholics (33 percent). And religious conservatives (50 percent) are more likely to have done so than moderates (38 percent) or liberals (31 percent). Women are more likely than men to engage in such discussions and people living in the South are nearly twice as likely to do than those who live in the North East (Wuthnow 1994: 74-75).

The data suggests discussions of faith in the workplace are stimulated by people who are consciously thinking about the connections between their own work and faith, that some people who are interested in their faith and relationship to God in general simply bring this interest with them to the workplace, and some other socio-religious factors are also influential.

Religious commitment is also associated with opting for a theistic or absolutist orientation toward ethics. When religious commitment includes active participation in a small primary group it can make a considerable difference to ways people think about moral standards and their willingness to engage in questionable workplace behaviour. The religiously committed, however, have also been influenced by emotivism and by the norm of minding their own business in matters of ethics (Wuthnow 1994: 114). Explicit training in ethics still occurs in religious settings but increasingly appears to be associated with secular programmes. Wuthnow concludes:

the forces of secularisation are very much in evidence. Religious understandings of ethics are often highly subjective, oriented largely toward personal honesty and influenced by the economic thinking that governs the workplace ... religious considerations still matter ... but organisational and cultural forces have become much more important than religious convictions in

shaping how people think about ethics and how they make ethical decisions that work. (Wuthnow 1994: 115)

Overall it would seem that the workplace has become an autonomous sphere subject to few religious influences. Wuthnow says that individuals themselves exercise enough discretion over their choices in the workplace that religious commitment could have more of an effect than it does, but unfortunately religious teachings concerning work at the popular level have focussed almost entirely on subjective or psychological issues:

people are counselled to recognise that their work matters to God. They are told that if they pray about their work they will experience peace of mind. When choosing a career, they will feel more confident if they have asked themselves what God would like them to do. They believe that God is interested, above all, in their own personal happiness. As long as they pursue their happiness, therefore, they are following God's desires. (Wuthnow 1994: 77)

For Wuthnow this modest vision is flawed. It sells out too easily, risks nothing and is an administrative convenience, rather than a moral vision that calls us to significant commitments. He also warns about the dangers of moving to the opposite extreme in trying to promote a radically heroic vision that stands in fundamental opposition to the world. Instead Wuthnow suggests that what is needed is critical and collective resistance to save ourselves from the moral decay that goes with obsessive materialism and excessive secular work. We need a new vision of how religious faith can influence the disposition of our work and our money for the better. What is required is for concerned people to band together with other seekers to share their experiences and read and discuss the sacred texts, to discover principles, values and stories that call for reflection and application; people who are willing to re-think their priorities and reinforce alternative values and hold each other accountable; people who are gaining a new perspective on their work, who will think harder about ethical decisions than many of their co-workers and be less occupied with their own concerns so they can be of greater service to others (Wuthnow 1994: 266-268).

What Wuthnow seeks, although he does not express it in exactly these terms, is to see Christians working together in community to recover a true sense of their vocation in the world in order that they might be free to live more faithfully their Christian values and less captive to the prevailing culture.

Wuthnow challenges us not to overlook or give away the opportunities we have to influence attitudes toward work, greed, materialism, stewardship and economic structures. He is realistic about the limits we operate under, but nevertheless presses us

to rediscover the language of simplicity, social justice and sacrifice in order that we might be able to resist the tendency to put the economic and religious aspects of our lives in different compartments between which there is no meaningful dialogue.

The nearest thing this writer is aware of in New Zealand to compare with Wuthnow's (1994) survey is the 'New Zealand Study of Values' (Gold and Webster 1990). Two helpful analyses of this data from a religious perspective have also been produced by Webster and Perry (1989: 1992). Some relevant conclusions noted by Webster and Perry are listed below:

1. Religiosity is linked with a somewhat greater sense of meaning in life, but has little apparent effect on people's conformity to the priority given by a clear majority of New Zealanders to a materially prosperous life, although some differences between denominations is noted (Gold and Webster 1990: 121).
2. Religiosity makes little difference to people's work-related attitudes (Webster and Perry 1989: 23; 1992: 28-30).
3. Religiosity makes little difference to people's views on the conservation of natural resources.
4. Religiosity is strongly positively related to traditional moral beliefs (Webster and Perry 1989: 23).
5. Traditional believers favour competition and free enterprise more strongly than others (Webster and Perry 1992: 33).
6. Traditional believers are more fervent in opposition to dishonesty (Webster and Perry 1992: 33).
7. The church has lost its opportunity to side with the labour movement and instead sided with private piety, property and profit making (Webster and Perry 1989: 19; 1992: 28).
8. Believers are more likely than unbelievers or those of No Religion to support the work ethic (honesty and hard work are the basic rules), but it is still a clear majority across all groups. Church attendance level does not affect this view. Some denominational affiliations (Methodist, Baptist) are still stronger in work ethic than the average (Webster and Perry 1992: 30).
9. Workers are more likely to say laziness, rather than bad luck or injustice, is the reason for people being in poverty. The well-educated are more likely to identify social circumstances. Self-help and a growing economy are the preferred solutions respectively (Webster and Perry 1992: 29).
10. Denominational differences are evident in responses to inequality. Anglicans see little wrong with it. Baptists are most critical of it and believe that injustice is the root problem. Methodists and Baptists favour equalisation.

11. The most frequent reason for working is that work is interesting, which is more true of younger adults, females and Asians. Pacific Islanders are much more likely to say money is their reason for working.

Webster and Perry conclude:

overall, there seems to be good ground for saying that the work ethic is part of the New Zealand culture, that for a great many it focusses on security and the qualitative aspects of a job are more emphasised by those in a position to aspire to them. Church affiliation is traditionally linked to the work ethic but it cannot be argued that a distinct work ethic is linked to church attendance. In short, attitudes to work are highly traditional and church people are a bit more traditional about them. (Webster and Perry 1992: 29)

It is interesting to compare these results with those of Wuthnow and note some very similar concerns. This is in spite of the fact that regular church-going in New Zealand is much more of a minority activity. The idea of calling is not explored in the New Zealand surveys. This reflects in large part the different approaches to preparing the surveys, but perhaps also the different theological traditions that have shaped each context. And perhaps, the lack of significant religious roots in formulating the New Zealand dream. If so, this presents an even more profound challenge to provide a compelling Christian reinterpretation of vocation in a context where, for most people, sacred and secular activities have never been integrated within a coherent world view. This is true at least for pakeha New Zealanders. The traditional Maori view would not recognise the same sacred-secular divide.

### **3.10 M. SCOTT PECK**

Another recent attempt to reinterpret the concept of vocation comes from popular American writer M. Scott Peck (1993a; 1997). Peck argues that God calls each and every human being to civility. This means we are all under the obligation to become more intentionally conscious, to grow in spiritual competence and to strive to be ethical in our behaviour. Building on the concept of community promoted in an earlier work (Peck 1987) Peck shares his dream of a world in community with a planetary culture of civility. It involves encouraging people to let God into their organisations because 'we can do it only in co-operation with the grace of God. Any attempt at radical "social engineering" that does not incorporate God, that does not welcome grace and leave vast

room for divine intervention, will utterly fail (Peck 1993a: 149)'. Peck's aim is to help people learn the skills that will enable them to respond to God's calling to daily civility.

Peck maintains that business is more interested in building community than is the church. This is because the workplace is more the centre of most people's lives. Next comes the family. Church comes a poor third or fourth. Moreover most church goers do not have the time, inclination or energy to 'do' community at church. They want it to be a pseudo-community - to feel like a happy community without confronting the conflict and chaos involved in real community building. Many of the minority who do invest voluntary time in the church do so out of their own leadership needs and seek to be influential in ways that promote conflict rather than community. This leads Peck to conclude that it is in business and families that the skills to forge a culture of civility will be learned and tested. And businesses are open to investing in community as a standard mode of operation because it is cost-effective (Peck 1993a: 353).

Peck refers to the concept of vocation many times. He speaks of God's unique vocation for each of us. He also refers to 'sequential vocations' as a way of including the changes we go through at different points in our lives. He writes about 'little' momentary vocations, when we sense God is prompting us to small acts of civility. For Peck the matter of vocation is multi-dimensional (Peck 1993a: 77). Most vocations are unconscious. We need to become more conscious of the different ways God communicates with us. Finding our vocation usually results in a sense of fit. When people's work and lifestyles do not fit their vocations there is always a sense of dis-ease. While the fulfillment of a vocation does not guarantee happiness - as in the case of the tortured artist Van Gogh - it does often set the stage for the peace of mind that may result from fulfillment. There is pleasure in witnessing a person doing what she or he was meant to do. Discovering one's vocation stems from an openness and willingness to venture through a process of uncertainty and doubt as a new sense of self emerges (Peck 1997: 157). It demands the development of a more contemplative lifestyle. It means rediscovering God at work in the world, particularly in the process of restoring civility to ourselves and our institutions.

Peck's view of vocation is vague and not firmly rooted in the Christian tradition. It is built on anecdotal evidence rather than careful theological or ethical reflection. Although this criticism can also be made of some of the other popular American treatments e.g. Ferguson (1982). However Peck is another part of the attempt to see religion applied with more direct relevance to some of the most pressing needs in society. He expresses a desire to rediscover God at work in a supposedly secular world; to rediscover community in the midst of aggressive individualism; to rediscover civility where social conscience is

withering; to rediscover a nourishing spirituality in the midst of tired and formal religiosity. Once again we sense the urgent need for a simple, yet still credible, communication of the Christian vision that will connect theology, ethics and spirituality with everyday concerns. People are searching for reminders of what we have been placed on this earth to be and to do. Peck senses that a rediscovery of vocation is the solution, although his own explanation is inadequate. Relevance alone is not enough. A clearer, compelling and more Christian interpretation of vocation is required.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

It is fascinating to see a variety of writers from quite different contexts advocating the resurrection of the concept of vocation. This would seem to signal both some encouragement and some warnings for our endeavour in this study. Encouragement, for clearly there is a hunger abroad for lives to be rooted in some purpose greater than just self-gratification. As the sense of separation between sacred and secular pursuits has grown, and with it the sense of separation between our private and public lives, so has the lack of connection between our faith and our work. This has set up a yearning for a sense of connectedness once more and the reintegration of lives that feel like they are falling apart.

Without a sense of vocation, and being caught up in God's purposes, we are people adrift on a sea of uncertainty. Many people are expressing a yearning to rediscover the spiritual roots of our existence. But we must also be warned, that this concept of vocation is somewhat slippery. All sorts of meanings can be read into it. We have seen in earlier chapters how it has been both spiritualised and secularised in Christian history. Those two tendencies still remain. This would seem to be particularly true in America where, as a result of the Puritan influence (see Chapter 1.6), the concept of vocation has been more closely wedded to the idea of the American dream and thus can be referred to by writers with the assumption that there is some common understanding. Not that the American writers cited here all agree. But there is a warning here that certain cultural assumptions may be made which do not transplant easily from one context to another. Thus any contemporary reinterpretations of vocation will need to take care to define terms carefully and to root these firmly in the Bible and Christian tradition. The ideas of calling and vocation would seem to be very open to misinterpretation particularly by free marketers on the one hand and new age gurus on the other.

The work of Bellah, Colson and Wuthnow highlights the difficulty of consistently maintaining a broad view of work. Their discussions tend to major on vocation as employment or occupation. These contributions have helped to clarify some popular American conceptions of the link between vocation, faith and work. Yet at the same time we run the risk of undermining the wider view of work we wish to promote. We seek a re-interpretation of vocation that incorporates this broader conception of work. We have already noted in earlier chapters the struggle that is involved in sustaining such a broad definition of work with consistency.

Another concern, highlighted particularly by the contributions of Fowler and the Whiteheads, is the reminder that we need a view of vocation that will see a person through a variety of different stages of life and faith. Not only because external circumstances change for a person, but also because human development and maturation means different stages of growth involve changes in balancing the different tasks that everyday life involves and changes in the way a person views and understands the meaning of their life and faith. We must recognise the maturing of a vocation. And more work needs to be done on the relationship between vocation, spiritual formation and developmental and life stages. We are also being challenged to develop patterns of church life to prepare people for, and support them in, their public life. We cannot begin talking seriously about the reinterpretation of vocation without also being open to re-evaluate the shape of church life in response to the challenges we have become aware of. These more practical and less theological explorations of vocation also remind us that the academic quest for an understanding of vocation must be accompanied by attempts to spell out practical implications. Lee Hardy attempts to do this. He lays some theological foundations, then looks at the process of clarifying the nature of the work we are best equipped to do by discerning our gifts and talents, our passions and concerns. This is combined with a challenge for us to view the world from God's perspective and discern where the social needs are that call for our involvement. And to investigate how these insights apply to the shaping of human work, to management theory and job design.

Overall, the variety of different perspectives proposed by writers examined in this chapter warn us that clarity in defining vocation, both theoretically and practically, is not easy to attain. And those who attempt to do so need to proceed with care. Nevertheless, the fact that so many have sought to explore this theme from such a variety of different angles does encourage us to think that the doctrine of vocation does represent an integrated understanding of faith and work that is worth pursuing.



Having examined the concept of vocation from historical, theological and practical perspectives, we can now identify some of the important components that are required for people to grow a clear sense of vocation for themselves.

Five particular needs are evident:

**I. A theological framework that connects faith and everyday life.**

To understand what God is doing and gain a sense that we are participating in something of ultimate significance. An understanding of vocation which imparts purpose to our lives.

**II. Self knowledge.**

To understand the gifts, abilities, passion and personality that make us unique and help to define the work we are best fitted to do.

**III. Service.**

To be of service to others, so that our search for significance also makes a worthwhile investment in God's wider purposes and the lives of other people.

**IV. Balance.**

To establish a balance in our lives that enables us to express our vocation through a mixture of domestic and voluntary work and leisure, as well as employment. To find meaning in the whole of life by understanding the functions that different parts play and how they are harmonised.

**V. Encouragement.**

To gain support and encouragement from a community of committed companions. This may include family, friends, mentors and faith community.

For a healthy sense of vocation to grow and be sustained a combination of these elements needs to be present.

Many problems related to finding meaning and purpose in our work are the result of the lack of, or confusion about, one or more of the elements above. These often correspond with times of transition and change either forced on people by circumstances or as a natural result of maturing. People in transition often need help to understand what is happening to them and to reformulate their understanding and to readjust their lives. At such times, something like the list above may be useful to help us discern the areas in which a person is most needing assistance.

It is with these needs in mind that we will approach discussion of pastoral implications and resources in Chapter Five.

But before that we include a brief discussion in Chapter Four of some theological connections that we have suggested at a number of points without clarifying. If a theological framework that connects faith and life is to be established then we must be clear about how the daily work of the laity is related to the ministry and mission of the church. Chapter Four seeks to define contemporary Protestant and Catholic understandings of ministry and mission to demonstrate that definitions have been expanding to include the whole church and to embrace the whole of life, including the world of everyday work.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: VOCATION, MINISTRY AND MISSION.**

The concern that this chapter attempts to address is probably best illustrated by a story. It is the story of Ted Peck. It is narrated by his son:

My father was a coal miner in Australia. He worked in that industry for nearly forty years. During that whole time he was also a devout Christian, and for most of that time he was a deacon in our local Baptist church. There is no doubt that he brought to bear upon his life in the mines the Christian faith that he professed. He did not hesitate to testify to Christ, and in all kinds of ways his commitment to the gospel made him an influence for good in day-by-day situations, in special circumstances (such as his role in the Mines Rescue Brigade), and in the industry itself throughout the district where we lived. But my father always had within him a secret disappointment: He wanted to be a minister. He certainly was a preacher (for at least three different denominations) and a Sunday church school teacher. He was a leader in his local congregation at several important points in time. He helped raise a Christian family (his two sons were ordained and his daughter became a missionary). But as far as he was aware, and as far as his church led him to believe, he was never able to fulfill the one desire that had often been uppermost in his mind. Lacking the education and the opportunity, he had never been able to become a minister ... I became a minister; he did not. He found fulfillment by proxy in my vocation, but he remained a coal miner and, as such, just an "ordinary" Christian.

One of the things that my recent journey has done for me has been to make me seriously dissatisfied with this evaluation of who and what my father was. He lived as a Christian where God had placed him. He made a significant impact on his environment as a servant of Christ. On many occasions he took stands and pursued courses of action because he was convinced they were required of him as a Christian. He ministered, if anyone did, to individuals, to the structures of his society, to his community. In places to which I as an ordained person could not have gained access, he was present in Christ's name, and he bore witness. The neighbourhood, the organizations, the mines of our region were better because Ted Peck lived and worked there and was not afraid to minister the gospel.

Yet neither he nor his church ever thought of him as a minister or of his service as ministry. He was not acknowledged in that way; he was not specifically trained for such a task; he was not explicitly supported in what he did; he was

not commissioned; he was not held accountable. Those things all happened, by the grace of God, but neither he nor his church ever brought them to consciousness or developed the programs and structures that might have made him feel throughout his life and at its end that he had, indeed, attained the status and fulfilled the function for which he had longed. He ministered without ever being able to say with clarity, "I am a minister of Christ." (Peck 1984: 13-14)

In the discussions of vocation that we have surveyed so far, seldom has the concept of the vocation of the laity in the world been directly related to discussion of the doctrines of ministry or mission. This is not to suggest that no links are made, but rarely are these links explored at any depth. Heiges' examination of 'vocation as ministry' is an exception (Heiges 1984: 81-104). This does seem surprising on at least two counts. Firstly, we might expect stronger links because the development of the concepts of ministry and mission has in many respects paralleled the development of the concept of vocation. That is to say, mission and ministry have been traditionally related to the work of specially called and ordained groups of people within the Church, identified as missionaries or ministers. These were commonly perceived to be 'spiritual' roles within the Church as distinct from the secular roles that necessity demands most Christians invest most of their time and energy in outside the Church. Hence, traditionally it has been difficult to discern the real connection between the daily work of most Christians and the ministry and mission of the Church.

But recent theologies of mission and ministry do recognise the mission and ministry of the whole people of God. And they also recognise that for most of the laity most of the time and energy they invest in this mission and ministry will be in the context of their daily lives in the world rather than the Church.

Secondly, it is surprising that this connection has not been developed at more length recently, because almost 40 years ago Hendrik Kraemer in his pioneering work on *A Theology of the Laity* insisted that two essential ingredients in developing a theology of the laity must be a rediscovery of the missionary calling of the laity and the understanding that all Christians are *diakonoi*, ministers, called to a ministry (Kraemer 1958: 131-155). Kraemer went on to underline the close connection between the mission and ministry of the laity and their every day work in the world.

To explore how these concepts of ministry, mission and daily work might be linked in a re-statement of the doctrine of vocation we now go on to look at three recent documents which examine ecumenical understandings of mission and ministry.

#### **4.1 BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY**

The 1982 Lima text of the *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* report of the Faith and Order Commission of the World Council of Churches is the end product of more than 50 years work by the Commission and ‘represents the significant theological convergence which Faith and Order has discerned and formulated (WCC 1982a: ix)’. It is the most widely based ecumenical pronouncement on the subject of ministry, especially as the Commission includes among its full members theologians of Roman Catholic and other Churches which do not belong to the WCC itself.

The Lima text begins its discussion of ministry by emphasising the significance of ‘The Calling of the Whole People of God (WCC 1982a: 20)’. It then quickly moves its focus to discuss *ordained ministry*, but still acknowledges that, ‘the word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church (WCC 1982a: 21)’. It is clear that the churches agree in their general understanding of the calling of the people of God. It is also clear that differences still exist concerning the place and forms of the ‘ordained ministry’ which is what the Lima text goes on to discuss in detail. But what is significant for our purposes is the shared recognition that ‘as they engage in the effort to overcome these differences, the Churches need to work from the perspective of the calling of the whole people of God (WCC 1982a: 20)’. Hence what is emphasised is that the ministry of the whole people of God is the living context for the service of the ordained ministry. No longer is ministry just the preserve of a special class within the Church. Every Christian is a minister. And ministry applies to our service in the world as well as in the Church. There is a dual calling for Christians. A calling out of the world to form one family of people under God. And a calling back into the world to serve a needy world in God’s name. Everyone is called to participate in this service. It is from the ministry of Jesus that all ministry derives and on it all ministry is patterned. Ministry is from Christ to the world through the Spirit.

The Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God. Living in communion with God, all members of the Church are called to confess their faith and to give account of their hope. They are to identify with the joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ’s body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom. This mission needs to be carried out in varying political, social and cultural contexts. In order to fulfill this mission faithfully, they will seek relevant forms of witness and service in

each situation. In so doing they bring to the world a foretaste of the joy and glory of God's Kingdom. (WCC 1982a: 20)

When the document says, 'The Holy Spirit bestows on the whole people of God diverse and complementary gifts for acts of service within the community and to the world. Hence all members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent (WCC 1982a: 20)', a clear foundation is laid for connecting ministry, calling and daily work in the world. Although the Lima text does not set about exploring these implications itself.

## **4.2 DAVID BOSCH - TRANSFORMING MISSION**

Another bold, although individual, attempt to give expression to the emerging ecumenical consensus is made by David Bosch in his book *Transforming Mission* (1991). Bosch attempts to identify and describe common themes in what he sees is a convergence of thinking about mission coming from different streams of contemporary Christianity. One of the thirteen major elements in Bosch's 'emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm' is 'Mission as Ministry by the Whole People of God' (Bosch 1991: 467-473).

Bosch maintains that 'the movement away from ministry as the monopoly of ordained men to ministry as the responsibility of the whole people of God, ordained as well as non-ordained, is one of the most dramatic shifts taking place in the Church today (Bosch 1991: 467)'. He also quotes Moltmann: 'Christian theology will in the future become more and more a practical and political theology. It will no longer simply be a theology for priests and pastors, but also a theology for the laity in their callings in the world ... it will be directed not only toward divine service in the church, but also toward divine service in the every day life of the world (Moltmann 1975: 11; Bosch 1991: 467).

According to Bosch the missionary societies of the Church have been influential in fostering the rediscovery of the 'apostolate of the laity' and the 'priesthood of all believers'. Catholic missions have always had a significant lay involvement although firmly under the jurisdiction of the clergy. Protestant missions were from the beginning largely a lay movement, and a movement in which women were often in the majority and able to assume leadership positions not open to them elsewhere in their home churches. After World War II it seems the 'home front' slowly began to catch up and both

Catholics and Protestants rediscovered that apostolicity is an attribute of the entire church and the role of the laity is central, especially with respect to the church's missionary calling:

an unmistakable shift is taking place. Lay persons are no longer just the scouts who are returning from the outside world with eyewitness accounts ... to report to the "operational bases"; they are the operational bases from which the *Missio Dei* proceeds. It is, in fact, not they who have to "accompany" those who hold "special offices" in the latter's mission in the world. Rather, it is the office bearers who have to accompany the laity, the people of God. (Bosch 1991: 472)

It is the community which is the primary bearer of mission: 'mission does not proceed primarily from the Pope, nor from a missionary order, society or synod, but from a community gathered around the word and sacraments and sent into the world (Bosch 1991: 472)'.

Bosch also argues that, if the entire life of the church is missionary, then it follows that we desperately need a theology of the laity - something of which only the first rudiments are emerging: 'Their ministry (or perhaps we should say their "service", for "ministry" has become to be such a churchy word) is offered in the form of the ongoing life of the Christian community in shops, villages, farms, cities, classrooms, homes, law offices, in counselling, politics, state craft and recreation (Bosch 1991: 473)'. Bosch echoes Lesslie Newbigin's concern: 'the priesthood of the ordained ministry is to enable, not to remove, the priesthood of the whole church (Newbigin 1987: 30; Bosch 1991: 473)'.

Other elements in Bosch's emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm also provide important theological foundations for understanding the significance of the every day working lives of the laity from God's perspective. These include:

**1. 'Mission as the Church-With-Others'** (Bosch 1991: 368-389).

Under this heading Bosch explores different understandings of the relationship between the Kingdom, the Church and the world. He notes the convergence of Catholic and conciliar Protestant views on the inescapable connection between the Church and world, as well as a recognition of God's activities in the world outside the Church (eg. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [Paul VI 1976] and *Mission and Evangelism* [WCC 1982b]). The church is missionary by its very nature. It is both 'called out' of the world and sent back into the world as a pilgrim church. Its members are equipped for their calling in society. The church is called to be a sacrament, sign and instrument of the Kingdom in the world.

This double calling which requires both gathering and dispersing, separation and identification, demands a dual orientation and willingness to embrace a 'redemptive tension' which is difficult to maintain.

The church must be involved in the world and its membership engaged in every aspect of life. Yet at the same time, since it is an eschatological community, the church cannot commit itself without reservation to any social, political or economic project. The church exists only as an organic and integral part of the human community and yet at the same time seeks its identity in, and shapes its life according to, its vision of the Kingdom of God: 'The church is both a theological and sociological entity, an inseparable union of the divine and dusty (Bosch 1991: 389)'. Bosch provides us with a warning that it is dangerous either to separate our vocation from our work or to completely identify our vocation with our work. And certainly a warning about the danger of identifying our vocation completely with our employment. Our vocation is a calling to participate in a mission much bigger than just our job. But it should nevertheless include our job.

## **2. 'Mission as *Missio Dei*' (Bosch 1991: 389-393).**

Our mission has no life of its own but is our participation in the movement of God's love toward people. And since God's concern is for the entire world, this should also be the scope for the *Missio Dei*. It affects all people in all aspects of their existence. Mission is God's turning to the world in respect of creation, care, redemption and consummation. It takes place in ordinary human history, not exclusively in and through the church. The *Missio Dei* is God's activity, which embraces both the church and the world, and in which the church may be privileged to participate. Clearly this understanding of mission as *Missio Dei* is related to the understanding of vocation and daily work as co-creation, service and justice making.

## **3. 'Mission as *Mediating Salvation*' (Bosch 1991: 393-400).**

Recent developments in the interpretation of salvation have challenged the tradition which has tended to limit salvation to the individual and their personal relationship with God:

hatred, injustice, oppression, war and other forms of violence are manifestations of evil; concern for humaneness, for the conquering of famine, illness, and meaninglessness is part of the salvation for which we hope and labour. Christians pray that the reign of God should come and God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Mt.6:10); it follows from this that the earth is the locus of the Christian's calling and sanctification. (Bosch 1991: 397)



Of course this understanding gives rise to a tension. Salvation and well-being do not coincide completely, even if they are closely interlocked. The Christian faith is still a critical factor, the reign of God a critical category and the Christian gospel not identical with the agenda of modern emancipation and liberation movements. We do not claim that final salvation will be wrought by human hands, not even by Christian hands. It is dangerous for Christians to identify any particular project with the fullness of the reign of God. Instead we are called to erect bridgeheads for the reign of God. For we still hold on to the transcendent character of salvation and to the need of calling people to faith in God through Christ. Nevertheless, the integral character of salvation demands that the scope of the church's mission be more comprehensive than has traditionally been the case.

So we must affirm that redemption is never salvation 'out of the world' but always salvation 'of this world'. Salvation in Christ is salvation in the context of human society en route to a whole and healed world. This is why in missionary circles today numerous attempts have been made to overcome the inherent dualism of past models of salvation in the search for an approach which emphasises the purpose of mission as the mediating of 'comprehensive', 'integral', 'total', or 'universal' salvation: 'there is a strong desire to find a way beyond every schizophrenic position and minister to people in their total need, that we should involve individual as well as society, soul and body, present and future in our ministry of salvation (Bosch 1991: 399)'. Bosch concludes:

salvation is as coherent, broad, and deep as the needs and exigencies of human existence. Mission therefore means being involved in the ongoing dialogue between God, who offers his salvation, and the world, which - emmeshed in all kinds of evil - craves that salvation ... those who know that God will one day wipe away all tears will not accept with resignation the tears of those who suffer and are oppressed now. Anyone who knows that one day there will be no more disease can and must actively anticipate the conquest of disease in individuals and society now. And anyone who believes that the enemy of God and humans will be vanquished will already oppose him now in his machinations in family and society. For all this has to do with salvation. (Bosch 1991: 400)

#### **4. 'Mission and the Quest for Justice'** (Bosch 1991: 400-408)

Bosch recognises that in the words of the Wheaton '83 Statement, 'evil is not only in the human heart but also in the social structures ... the mission of the church includes both the proclamation of the Gospel and its demonstration. We must therefore evangelise, respond to immediate human needs, and press for social transformation (Wheaton '83 Statement: para.26 in Samuel and Sugden 1987)'. Mission is the church sent into the

world to love, to serve, to preach, to teach, to heal, to liberate. These elements are part of our Christian calling and designed to be expressed through our daily work.

**5. 'Mission as Evangelism'** (Bosch 1991: 409-420).

Bosch emphasises that evangelism is not only an important part of mission, but it is also calling people to mission. An evangelistic invitation 'will include a call to join the living Lord in the work of his kingdom. It will direct attention to the aspirations of ordinary men and women in society, their dreams of justice, security, full stomachs, human dignity, and opportunities for their children. It will forthrightly name the "principalities and powers" opposed to the Kingdom (Scott 1980: 212)'. This is also part of our daily work.

**6. 'Mission as Liberation'** (Bosch 1991: 432-447)

Bosch asserts that solidarity with the poor and oppressed is a central and crucial priority in Christian mission. How our life and work impacts on the life of the poor is not just a social ethical question, it is a gospel question. To recognise God's preferential option for the poor does not preclude God's love for the non-poor. In their case, however, a different kind of conversion is called for, which includes admitting complicity in the oppression of the poor, and a turning from the idols of money, race and self-interest. As Moltmann says, 'mission embraces all activities that serve to liberate ... from slavery in the presence of the coming God, slavery which extends from economic necessity to God forsakenness (Moltmann 1977: 10)'. The recognition of mission as liberation is a plea for Christianity to retain its counter-cultural and world-transforming role. It is to keep alive that vision which will direct our action within history. Indifference to this vision is a denial of the God who links his presence to the elimination of all exploitation, pain and poverty. As Bosch concludes:

we have to turn our backs resolutely on our traditional dualistic thinking, of setting up alternatives between the body and soul, society and the church, the eschaton and the present, and rekindle an all-embracing faith, hope and love in the ultimate triumph of God casting its rays into the present. (Bosch 1991: 447)

**7. 'Mission as Theology'** (Bosch 1991: 489-498).

The growing recognition during this century that mission is no longer merely an activity of the church, but an expression of the very being of the church has also resulted in a shift in thinking about theology. Originally the search was for a theology of mission. Now the quest is for a missionary theology. We are in need of a missiological agenda for theology rather than just a theological agenda for mission. Mission should be the theme for all theology. For when the church is perceived not primarily as being over against the world but rather as sent into the world and existing for the sake of the world, then

mission is the primary subject theology has to deal with. Hence all theological questions should be examined from the point of view of the theology of mission; to widen our perspective to one of world concern.

Of course this also raises the question 'who will do the theologising?' Most of the theologies of work we have examined have been produced by academic theologians. But, if mission and ministry belong to the whole people of God, then surely all God's people will need to be appropriately equipped for this challenge. Bosch talks about the need for a new level of partnership to grow between missiologists, missionaries and the people among whom they labour (Bosch 1991: 497). And although Bosch doesn't elaborate on this, others do (see Chapter 5.1). Amirtham, for example, describes how in recent years we have been witnessing a new phenomenon. People are not only eager to learn theology. They are creating theology:

This is happening all over the world - in basic Christian communities, house church groups, parish Bible study groups and in rural and urban groups committed to promoting justice, peace, freedom and human dignity. Christians who have never had access to formal theology are learning afresh to relate faith to life, worship to work, prayer to action, and proclamation to protest in new creative ways. They discover in that process that they are doing theology, and that they need theology in their search for new forms of Christian obedience ... people need theology and, more particularly, theology needs people. (Amirtham and Pobebe 1986: ix)

Clearly any theology of work that is going to preserve its vitality and wholeness needs the reflection of ordinary believers who are committed to Christian practice in their daily work. This insight and vision is embodied in the concept 'theology by the people'. It seeks new ways of doing theology in community. It also seeks to see that a strong commitment to Christian social action becomes an integral concern of the theological enterprise. Hence any truly representative theology of work will seek to connect the insights of academics with the real lived experience of people's daily work at the 'grass-roots'.

It is the breadth of sources that Bosch surveys and his desire to work towards a synthesis of thinking from disparate streams of contemporary Christianity that make his contribution so valuable for our purposes. And it is striking how often the major elements in Bosch's 'emerging ecumenical missionary paradigm', compiled for quite a different purpose, connect with themes of calling, ministry and mission as they relate to the faith and work issues that are the focus for our study.

Clearly developments in the theology of mission and ministry are beginning to take much more seriously the everyday calling of the whole people of God. At least in theory!

### **4.3 CHRISTIFIDELES LAICI**

We have already noted in Chapter 2.7 how Vatican II gave expression to a new awareness of the central role of the laity in the church, particularly in respect to the church's missionary calling: 'The laity, by their very vocation, seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God (Paul VI 1964: section 31). The same document goes on: 'the apostolate of the laity is a sharing in the salvific mission of the Church. Through Baptism and Confirmation all are appointed to this apostolate by the Lord himself ... the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and active in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth (Paul VI 1964: section 33)'. Section 34 of *Lumen Gentium* (hereafter *LG*) then goes far beyond any previous Papal document to explain how the laity participate in the prophetic, priestly and royal offices of Christ in their daily occupation. According to *LG*, the laity discharge these functions not only by contributing to the moral improvement of human kind through their involvement in secular affairs, but also by assisting the advance of culture and civilisation.

This marks a very significant shift in Catholic thinking. Previously the lay apostolate had been limited to the cooperation of the laity in apostolic tasks proper to the hierarchy. Now it is recognised that the laity have a certain freedom and autonomy within the secular sphere and terms such as apostolate, mission, vocation, calling and even priestly functions are related to the daily occupations of the laity in the world. This thinking had been pushed along by the earlier work of Yves Congar who had pressed for renewed understanding of the call and dignity of lay people (Congar 1957; 1960). It was developed through other documents from the Fathers of Vatican II, especially the *Decree on the Church's Missionary Activity* (Paul VI 1965c), the *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* (Paul VI 1965b) and the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity* (Paul VI 1965a). The latter document emphasises that Christ's redemptive work involves not only the salvation of people, but also the renewal of the whole temporal order. The laity are urged to take on the renewal of the temporal order as their own special obligation. This temporal order includes

the good things of life and the prosperity of the family, culture, economic affairs, the arts and professions, political institutions, international relations ... as well as their development and progress ... it is the task of the whole church to

labour vigorously so that men may become capable of constructing the temporal order rightly and erecting it to God through Christ. (Paul VI 1965a: section 7)

It is on this foundation that the encyclical *Christifideles Laici* (hereafter *CL*) (John Paul II 1989) builds. *CL* is focussed particularly on the vocation and the mission of the lay faithful in the Church and in the world. Hence we meet here a connection between vocation and mission and daily work.

The encyclical states that in the field of a 'commonly shared' lay vocation 'special' lay vocations flourish. Thus within the lay state diverse 'vocations' are given, that is, there are different paths in the spiritual life and the apostolate which are taken by individual members of the lay faithful (John Paul II 1989: 56). The prime and fundamental vocation assigned to the lay faithful is 'the vocation to holiness that is the perfection of charity (John Paul II 1989: 16)'. This is the call to follow and imitate Christ and

neither family concerns nor other secular spheres should be excluded from their religious programme of life ... to respond to their vocation the lay faithful must see their daily activities an occasion to join themselves to God, fulfill His will, serve other people and lead them to communion with God in Christ. (John Paul II 1989: 17)

Aumann (1990) in his discussion of *CL* distinguishes between the concepts of vocation, apostolate and mission. Aumann maintains vocation is a broader concept than apostolate or mission, because the vocation or calling of every Christian is first and above all to strive for the perfection of charity, as Christ taught; to love the Lord their God with all their heart, mind and strength and secondly, to love their neighbour and to express this love through the corporal or spiritual works of mercy. Therefore,

the vocation to mission or apostolate should flow from one's vocation to holiness ... hence although the terms "vocation" and "apostolate" are not interchangeable they are closely related since it is through the performance of their ordinary daily tasks that the faithful can most effectively strive for the perfection of charity and increase the intimacy of their union with God. (Aumann 1990: 104)

The apostolate is defined as any activity that promotes the mission that Christ gave to all the members of the Church: the redemption and sanctification of humankind. It is the sanctification of the world and the temporal order which is specific to the lay 'apostolate'. Hence the lay apostolate is the role of the laity in the mission of the Church which is primarily and normally in the temporal order (Aumann 1990: 113). The word apostolate applies to any demonstrated activity by which the mission of the Church is

promoted. Vatican documents are much more reluctant to use the word 'ministry' with relation to the life of the laity in the world. Ministry signifies primarily those functions which normally belong to the clergy; ministry of the word and ministry of the sacraments. 'Lay ministries' refer to special cases of lay participation in the priestly and prophetic functions of the clergy such as preaching, teaching, liturgy or administering the sacraments. While in Protestant circles the distinction is drawn between the ministry of the laity (which includes the clergy) and the ordained ministry, in Catholic circles the distinction is drawn between the apostolate of the laity (which does not include those who are in holy orders) and the ministry of those who are in holy orders, the ministerial priesthood. Thus in official Catholic thinking while the word ministry is not generally applied to the life of the laity in the world, the vocation, mission and apostolate of the laity are closely related to the daily work of the Christian in the world. And although these concepts are subtly differentiated they are also closely intertwined.

The overall thrust of *CL* is to push for the recognition that the fundamental objective of the formation of the lay faithful is an ever-clearer discovery of one's vocation and the ever-greater willingness to live it so as to fulfil one's mission. It is asserted that 'this personal vocation and mission defines the dignity and responsibility of each member of the lay faithful'. It is also recognised that 'in the life of each member of the lay faithful there are particularly significant and decisive moments for discerning God's call and embracing the mission entrusted by Him (John Paul II 1989: section 58)'. It is for this reason that the last section of the encyclical is devoted to exploring the process of the formation of the lay faithful with particular emphasis on the importance of helping adolescents and young adults discover and live their vocation and mission in the context of their work in the world.

## **CONCLUSION.**

The disappointment that Ted Peck lived with, that we highlighted at the beginning of this chapter, arose because his view of ministry was never big enough to embrace his own very effective ministry. And his church never challenged, nor worked to expand, that view.

Because the church so often defines what it counts important in terms of mission and ministry, it is essential to understand the relationship between these and the vocation and daily work of the people of God. This is easily done in theory, because the theology of most major Christian groups has been moving in this direction for some time. It is not a

matter of diminishing the status of the work of the clergy, but rather enhancing the status of the everyday work of the laity.

Both Catholic and Protestant understandings have moved a long way in this direction. And although some subtle differences still exist in terminology, it is the close convergence of understandings that is most remarkable. While significant denominational differences still exist when it comes to defining the leadership roles lay people may assume in the church, when it comes to the vocation of the laity in the world and the work place, there is amazing unanimity.

It is recognised that most of the laity will invest most of their lives, either consciously or unconsciously, in service in and to the world outside church structures. Their vocation is to seek the Kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the purposes of God. At the same time as these developments have taken place the missionary nature of the church has also been rediscovered. The church's call is to mobilise all its members in mission; to equip and support them for active participation in God's mission in the world. Daily work is an important sphere through which this mission is furthered. Thus the vocation of the laity expressed through their daily work is a participation in the ministry of Jesus Christ and the mission of God.

It is most encouraging to see an ecumenical consensus emerging which establishes such clear connection between vocation, ministry, mission and daily work. The important need that we identified in Chapter Three for a theological framework that connects faith and everyday life has been addressed. It still needs to be expressed in more compelling and more popular forms. But much of the homework has been done.

The only other problem is that this theoretical understanding has usually proceeded much further and faster than the practice of the churches. But we will pick up this point when we examine the shape of church life in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: PASTORAL IMPLICATIONS.**

If the church recognises the need, and has the will to help its members recover a sense of vocation, how can it use its resources to assist with this task? In the final section of this thesis we examine how some pastoral resources might be utilized, under four headings....

1. The everyday experience of people in their workplaces.
2. Biblical and theological resources.
3. Life planning resources.
4. The faith community.

### **5.1 THE EVERYDAY EXPERIENCE OF PEOPLE IN THEIR WORKPLACES.**

Most of the resources referred to in this study have been produced by professional theologians. But there are also many books and papers written about faith in the marketplace from the point of view of business people and other participants (eg. Diehl 1976; 1982; 1987; 1991; Banks 1983; 1993; Horrill 1995; Nash 1994). It is interesting to compare the different starting points and approaches of examples from these two sources. The former seem to be dominated by more academic and abstract theological reflections, while the latter tend to focus more on very practical ethical and faith issues. In fact, very few books provide a true meeting place between these two different sets of concerns. And the struggle of the few that do, illustrates how difficult it is. How difficult, but also how essential, for this separation between theology and practice is crippling the church and rendering it impotent. It is reinforcing the growing perception that religion is merely a private leisure-time activity that should no longer intrude into the public weekday arena.

At the same time, awareness has been growing among Christians of the need to be doing theology in community. Practitioners and theologians need to be working together in partnership, with each understanding and taking into account the concerns of the other. Richard Mouw calls for an end to ‘the Cold War between theologians and lay people (Mouw 1994a: 26).’ According to Mouw it is time for *Consulting the Faithful* (Mouw 1994b). There is a pressing need for scholars to start trusting lay people even if their theology is sometimes ‘tacky’, and to get reconnected with those expressions of popular religion which arise out of the deepest hopes and fears we all share. We need a better theology of everyday life: ‘I want a theology that connects with my *own* “popular religion” (Mouw 1994b: 42).’



Phipps (1966) and Kane (1975) also plead for the essential involvement of the laity in the process of theologising, out of their experience of industrial mission. Bosch (1991) says that the recognition of the ministry and mission of the whole people of God in the world must inevitably lead to this. This thinking is developed more fully in Amirtham (1986), Banks (1987), Fraser (1988) and Darragh (1995). Banks argues his case for the involvement of all Christians in the development of a theology of everyday life by emphasising four elements:

1. Ordinary Christians can best identify their everyday concerns.
2. Ordinary Christians already have some elements of an everyday theology.
3. Everyday theology is a co-operative effort between ordinary Christians and professional theologians.
4. A workable theology of everyday life requires practical testing by ordinary Christians (Banks 1987: 119-131).

For Banks, only a theology forged in the cut and thrust of everyday life will have vitality and relevance. And only by emphasising these elements can we ensure that whatever emerges will have a sharp cutting edge and become a genuine force for change:

if a Christian theology of everyday life allows its agenda to arise from the concrete dilemmas that ordinary people confront, if it builds on the best features of the rudimentary theology that some Christians have already developed, if it arises from discussion involving a wide range of people wrestling with a common problem, and if it is also tested by such people for its practical value, it will have much to offer. (Banks 1987: 131)

Joshuah Kudadjie from Ghana, highlights three ways in which the everyday experience of Christians is often shared with others in the church, beyond normal informal conversations. These include personal testimony in the context of worship or a prayer meeting, the content of prayer itself and the contributions made in small group discussions. Kudadjie suggests that 'to harness these the professional theologian must go and learn from the people and do his or her theology with the people (Kudadjie 1986: 35)'. The opportunity for Christians to share the stories of their working lives and the issues raised for them there is an essential starting point. It probably happens best and most easily in the context of involvement in small groups, but also needs endorsing through reinforcement when the worshipping community gathers together. If a theology of everyday life and work is to grow then this needs to be encouraged by the stories of everyday life being told whenever Christians gather together.

The importance of churches establishing forums for discussion of work-related issues is also emphasized in a special Report presented to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York (Archbishops' Commission 1990: 183).

Specific examples of local churches encouraging such a process are found in Peck (1984: 161-171), Crabtree (1989), Stevens (1992: 105-111), and Diehl (1996). Harris (1992) and Pierce (1991) have also produced two books which explore the relationship between daily work and Christian calling built around the story telling approach. Another example of this approach based on biographical sketches of contemporary New Zealand Christian women is provided by Beulah Wood (1989).

Another approach is for small groups of people involved in similar professions to gather together to share and compare their experience and address common concerns. Such a process, embarked on by Public servants in Canberra, Australia, is described by Robert Banks (Banks 1983: 6-12). This approach is further developed by Banks, along with a related approach for exploring industrial issues developed by the Department of Mission at Selly Oak College in Birmingham, England, in a later book (Banks 1987: 100-104). In this latter book Banks suggests a number of other practical resources and methods that may be useful in pursuing such a process (Banks 1987: 109-118).

One useful resource for encouraging people to explore the faith-work connection in discussion with others is *Linking Faith and Daily Life*, a retreat and six week group study programme, designed for lay people by Robert Reber (Reber 1991). Included in the *Participant's Packet* for this programme is Reber's own story of exploring these issues with lay people and church leaders and the struggles involved and the questions raised (Reber 1991: 160-166). According to Reber the questions most often asked are

- Why do I get the feeling of Sunday versus the rest of the week?:
- When and where do we get the information and time to deal with the real dilemmas in our work place?
- Why do we spend so much time and energy in the church on things that don't have much to do with what I face at work and at home?
- How do I juggle all the demands of family, job, community and church?
- Why do my faith and church life seem so distant so much of the time from the nagging problems of everyday?

(Reber 1991: 161)

Seton Horrill, in his history of the Inter-Church Trade and Industry Mission (ITIM) in New Zealand, highlights another source of work place stories which have not been collected or analysed yet. In the course of discussing the second of ITIM's four primary

objectives, 'To promote the training of the Christian laity in relating their faith to their work situation', Horrill notes that,

the chaplains' statistical returns show hundreds of indepth conversations on faith/work concerns everyday ... ITIM through its chaplaincy team is making a vital contribution in "coal face" theology. However, this massive exposure and experience in faith and work dialogue has not been taken further than a one-to-one encounter. Nor has it been the seed bed for growth into the formal Christian education programme of the Mission's member churches. In fact I am not aware of any suggestions or attempts to do so. (Horrill 1995: 218)

Horrill asks, 'Is there a future challenge for ITIM and the Church here? Such an initiative would certainly be earthed in the realities of workplace experience and could be a welcome and useful addition to more theoretical theological theses on work (Horrill 1995: 217-218)'. An analysis of the stories told to and by industrial chaplains would seem to provide a very worthwhile resource for exploring the everyday experience of people in at least a certain selection of workplaces.

It would also be foolish for us to ignore the stories of those who share the same workplaces with us, but who are not Christians. It was Studs Terkel's (1974) who pioneered the biographical approach to describing life in the workplace. But this has also been done in New Zealand by Roy McLennan and David Gilbertson in their book on *Work in New Zealand* (McLennan and Gilbertson 1984). The two books *The Smith Women* (Barrington 1981) and *The Jones Men* (Gray 1983) also contain snippets of different people's experience. A more recent study of the workplace experience of working class people in New Zealand is *New Zealand Working People 1890-1990* (Eldred-Grigg 1990). Another rapidly expanding source of workplace stories comes from the written reflections of New Zealand women in recent years. These offer what is becoming a very well documented account of women's experience of daily work in Aotearoa-New Zealand during a period of rapidly changing work roles. They include *Head and Shoulders* (Myers 1986); *Beyond Expectations* (Clark 1986); *Ladies a Plate* (Park 1991), and *Minding Children, Managing Men* (May 1992). *Women and Change* (Bell 1985) also offers some revealing insights into the experience of women in New Zealand through a mixture of survey results, personal reflections and case studies.

Another exercise in story telling is required to recover an historical perspective on the connection between faith and daily work. Recently challenges from feminists and liberation theologians in particular have caused Christians to re-examine the biased way the history of the Church has been reported. Feminists have challenged us to begin to tell the untold stories of women and to re-examine our history from the perspective of

women. Similarly, liberation theologians have challenged us to re-examine history from the point of view of the poor and oppressed and marginalised. This is because history is most often reported from the point of view of those who are relatively privileged and powerful, and theirs is a perspective that also leaves a significant part of the story untold. In the light of these, another important challenge is the retelling of the story of the people of God from the perspective of the laity and especially from the perspective of those people of God whose primary ministry has been in and to the world. This is because Church history is generally the story of those people who have most profoundly influenced the life of the Church. It is not the story of ordinary Christians living out their life in the workplace. It is dominated by the figures of leading clergy men (they have been mostly men!), theologians and missionaries. The stories of some kings and politicians are told, but generally only because of the way their lives have been involved with, or have impacted on, the life of the Church. Even the admirable and unique attempt of Neill and Weber (1963) to tell the story of *The Layman in Christian History* is still a very church-oriented perspective. We are left with the impression that it is a very few leading figures in each generation, mostly ordained, who have decided the future of Christianity. We fail to gain any sense of the significance of the everyday discipleship of ordinary Christians in preserving the essence of the Christian movement. If ordinary believers are to rediscover a sense of the importance of their role in deciding the future of Christianity, then this perspective needs to be regained. There are other stories of the Church, stories from the grassroots, which still remain to be told.

## **5.2 BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL RESOURCES.**

In this study we have already explored in some depth a number of biblical and theological themes that need to accompany any attempt to relate the issues of faith and daily work. We note below three of those which we have ready explored in some detail, plus two additional sets of biblical sources which may prove useful.

### **5.21 The Christian doctrine of vocation with particular reference to the calling of ordinary Christians and the implications of this calling for their daily work.**

The history of the development of this doctrine can be fairly easily summarised by showing how views have oscillated between two extremes; work has nothing to do with our calling as Christians and work is our calling. An intermediate position is, our primary calling is to live as disciples of Jesus and daily work is part of that calling. Helping people to locate and discuss where they see their work fitting, both practically and ideally, in that continuum is a helpful exercise. Another similar approach developed by Moynagh (1995) distinguishes five different historical models for explaining God's call in relation to work:

- a) Vocation is outside of work (e.g. medieval view).
- b) Vocation equals work (e.g. Luther and other Reformers).
- c) Vocation within work (e.g. Karl Barth).
- d) Vocation reforms work (e.g. 'social gospel' Christians).
- e) Vocation judges work (e.g. Jacques Ellul).

After briefly examining the strengths and weaknesses of each of these models Moynagh concludes each of them contains insights which should be held together for a rounded doctrine of vocation.

An example of a simple historical summary produced by the present writer can be found in Appendix 2 (other examples are Mackenzie 1996a and 1996b).

### **5.22 The Theology of Work.**

Perhaps this would be better designated theologies of work, to recognize that a number of different biblical starting points have been used as foundations to build a theology of work on, as well as the same biblical starting points being used to develop different lines of thought. This variety of biblical resources leaves a number of options still unexplored and there is the possibility of coming up with some very creative combinations to address new work issues in a context of rapidly changing work patterns. A range of different approaches has been covered in this study. This presents a challenge when it comes to producing a popular presentation which does justice to this variety of perspectives. The most helpful schemes suggested by our study for more simplified introductions to these issues would include:

- a. **Bible Survey:** An introduction to some of the key biblical texts upon which theologies of work have been built. Richardson (1952) provides a useful survey of the biblical material, which Westzott (1996: 17-47) and Ryken (1978: 119-179) both develop biblical themes in ways that provide a good resource for more popular exposition. When it comes to helping others catch a glimpse of the different ways different theologians have interpreted these texts, Graeme Smith's summary of different approaches to the biblical data could be useful (See Appendix 1).
  
- b. **Theology:** A view of work from the perspective of the great Christian themes of God, Creation, Humanity, Fall, Incarnation, The Cross, Resurrection, The Spirit, Redemption/Liberation and Eschatology. Much of the material explored in this study could be summarised and presented in such a format. Higginson (1994: 153-164) adopts this approach built around five themes - God the Trinity, Creation, Fall, Redemption and Eschatology. Westzott's survey of the biblical view of work follows four distinct but closely connected paths - God as worker, men and women made in the image of God, the

consequences of the Fall and Jesus and work (Westzott 1996: 17-47). Jonathan Boston has used a similar approach in preaching (Boston 1995).

c. **The Trinity:** The Trinitarian view of work and vocation developed by Gordon Preece (in Banks 1993: 160-170) lends itself to further development.

d. **Themes:** It is possible to pick up major themes developed by different theologies of work and use them as the basis for people exploring their own experience of work. These could either be developed singly at length, or together as a checklist against which a person could evaluate which elements have meaning for their present work. These themes could include:

- work as co-creation
- work as conservation
- work as stewardship
- work as duty
- work as necessity
- work as curse
- work as calling
- work as service
- work as truth-telling
- work as justice-making
- work as peace-making
- work as witness
- work as redeeming
- work as worship
- work as anticipation

### **5.23 The Theology of the Laity, Ministry and Mission.**

This could summarise and further develop the work of Kraemer and other sources referred to in Chapter 4. It could also use some of the titles referred to at the end of Chapter 5.42 as a basis for discussion. Another helpful approach is to use a person's story which highlights some of these issues as a basis for reflection and discussion. The present writer has frequently used the story of Ted Peck in this way, by simply reading George Peck's story of his father and inviting listeners to talk about their responses (Peck and Hoffmann 1984: 13-14 see also abbreviated version used as introduction to Chapter Four in this thesis).

### **5.24 Biblical narratives that revolve around daily work.**

Most of the classical theologies of work fail to refer to workplace stories in scripture. A few refer fleetingly to references about Jesus the carpenter and Paul the tentmaker. Yet many other leading figures in the Bible story were not professional religious people, but people God spoke to and through in the midst of their everyday working lives. Clearly most believers were not required to leave their workplaces in order to follow God's leading. Hence, many of the most useful sources to highlight workplace perspectives, issues and ethical dilemmas are to be found in the narrative portions of scripture. The stories of Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah and Esther are some obvious examples. But to explore these stories from a workplace perspective may involve bringing to them new questions and understanding them in new ways, because this is seldom the perspective from which they are normally explored in our teaching and preaching. Nehemiah for example, is extolled as the example of a prayerful person, a dynamic and effective leader and sometimes as justice-maker, but rarely is it made plain that these attributes belong to a man whose primary role was to manage a very difficult and demanding building project and whatever else he was had to be integrated within the pressures of his construction deadlines. The workplaces of Joseph, Daniel and Esther were all environments where foreign gods were worshipped and they were misunderstood representatives of a religious minority. Isn't this how many Christians feel today? Bringing to life familiar biblical characters with a new sense of how their faith and daily work were integrated offers us a rich fund of important resources to be exploited more fully, and the possibility that they will become much more powerful models of faith at work for ordinary Christian people who can identify with their struggles.

One example, which is described by Parrott and Parrott (1995: 70-86) is a ten week course designed to help participants solve vocational dilemmas through gaining familiarity with the stories of Abraham, Jacob, Joseph and Moses. Each Old Testament narrative is examined in depth with some key questions in mind that are designed to extract some enduring vocational lessons, and then participants are invited to apply these lessons to their own career journeys. This method has been widely used by a group named *Interchristo* and has proved very effective.

### **5.25 Biblical images drawn from daily work.**

Many pictures drawn from daily work are used analogously or metaphorically in the Bible to illustrate other realities. However, even in this process, such pictures can end up suggesting some strong messages about the nature of work and life in the workplace and its spiritual significance. In fact, the first glimpses of work we get in the Bible are pictures of God at work. And the Bible draws many of its descriptions of God from the world of human work. Robert Banks has explored a number of these images creatively in a way that connects with human work. Banks looks at the images of God as

Shepherd/Pastoralist (Psalm 23:1-4; Isaiah 40:11), Potter/Craftworker (Jeremiah 18:1-4; Romans 9:19-21), Builder/Architect (Proverbs 8:27-31; Isaiah 28:16-17), Weaver/Clothier (Psalm 139:13-16), Gardener/Farmer (Genesis 2:8-9, 3: 8; John 15:1-2, 4-6, 8), and Muscian/Artist (Deuteronomy 31:19; Job 35:10; Zephaniah 3:14, 17). Banks is concerned that talk of God's work generally has a more religious, less everyday, flavour than these images suggest. Also, that if each of these occupations reflects, literally or figuratively, some aspect of God, should we not begin to see them as extensions of God's work in the world? And, if we begin to see them as such how would this change our attitude toward them? (Banks and Preece 1992: 21-31; Banks 1992). Another source of many images drawn from the workplace are biblical parables: most obviously, the parables of Jesus. Jesus was an acute observer of everyday life. His parables draw on a variety of images relating to daily work - from weddings, funerals and parties, to building construction, buying and selling etc. These are all stories of daily work which are used to illustrate faith principles. This is not to suggest that they all provide simple and straightforward examples of how the life of faith and daily work are connected. The history of interpretation warns us that it is easy to try and read far too much into parables. Nevertheless such a rich fund of illustrations drawn from everyday work must suggest some connections between faith and daily work.

Three books of inductive Bible studies for small groups which are useful for people wanting to explore a number of the themes introduced above are Banks and Preece (1989); Stevens and Schoberg (1989) and Patterson (1994). Other collections of small group studies which explore work-related themes include Coddington (1989); Coleman (1994); Cusack (1987); Grigor (1985), Sherman and Hendricks (1988) and Nelson (1994). Thomas Nelson publishers have also produced *The Word in Life Study Bible* (Nelson 1993) which includes numerous articles and indexes that explore work-related themes in scripture.

### **5.3 LIFE PLANNING RESOURCES.**

A person's vocation is worked out in the context of a variety of different elements which interact. These include:

1. A person's unique makeup, personality and gifts.
2. Sociological factors which limit or shape choices.
3. The home and faith community which shapes a person's early understanding.
4. Bio-social development.
5. Changing family circumstances.
6. Career stage.
7. Faith development.



During the course of this century a lot of study has been done on career development theories. The roots of this work can be traced to Frank Parsons who started the Vocation Bureau in Boston in 1908 to help workers choose jobs that matched their abilities and interests. Since then pioneers of career development have included differential psychologists, developmental psychologists, personality theorists, and sociologists. This work is surveyed in *Career Choice and Development* by Duane Brown, Linda Brooks and Associates (1990 and 1996) and summarised in *Career and Life Planning* (Edwards 1992: 89-97). Paul Stevens also provides a concise introduction to some of the different sources contributing to career development theory in his book *A Passion for Work* (Stevens 1993: 42-52). As Brown et al. conclude, 'some theories have been more influential than others, but none have emerged as "finished products"... future theorising will ... involve collapsing current theories into more comprehensive theoretical statements (Brown 1990: 360)'. As we refer to some of the more easily accessible practical resources which explore the factors named above it is important to understand that these interact and any wholistic view of vocation will seek a comprehensive understanding of how these factors work together to shape a person's life.

### **5.31 A person's unique make-up, personality and gifts.**

Most of the more popular life planning and career development tools that have been developed tend to use a mixture of the trait and factor, and personality approaches. Probably best known and most widely used is the work of Richard Bolles including *What Color is Your Parachute?* (1988 - updated every year), *How to Create a Picture of Your Ideal Job or Next Career* (1991b) and *The Three Boxes of Life* (1981). Bolles invites the job-hunter and/or life planner to participate in exercises designed to identify skills and abilities, preferences and values.

Richard Bolles is a Christian and in recent versions of *What Color is Your Parachute?* he has provided as an appendix an explanation of how to find your mission in life (eg Bolles 1988: 291-311, also published separately as Bolles 1991a). Although Bolles uses the word 'mission' he explains that 'vocation' and 'calling' are the historical synonyms. Bolles identifies three parts to a person's Mission on Earth. The first two apply to all people. The third relates to a person's uniqueness:

1. To seek out and find in daily - even hourly - communication, the One from whom your mission is derived.
2. To do what you can, moment by moment, to make this world a better place - following the leading and guidance of God's Spirit within you and around you.
- 3 (a) To exercise that talent....your greatest gift, which you most delight to use.

(b) In the place(s) or setting(s) which God has cause to appeal to you the most.

(c) And for those purposes which God needs to have done in the world.

(Bolles 1988: 295-296)

Bolles quotes Frederick Buechner:

there are all different kinds of voices calling you to all different kinds of work and the problem is to find the voice of God rather than that of society, say, or the super-ego, or self-interest. By and large a good rule for finding out is this: the kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work a) that you need most to do and b) the world most needs to have done ... The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet. (Bolles 1988: 309)

This approach of Bolles fits with the thinking of Hardy (1990) and Volf (1990) that we have noted earlier, and with others who emphasise that discerning the gifts God has given us provides us with some very good pointers towards helping us discern how our vocation is best worked out. The aim of working through such a process is to help a person draw up a personal profile that captures a glimpse of the person God created them to be, along with a description of their life experiences.

Graham Tucker, who developed a programme for unemployed business people in Canada, was surprised at the high percentage who, even in their 50's, had not yet decided what they wanted to be when they 'grew up'. Tucker writes:

in the program we learned that the most effective way to arrive at a sense of life and career direction is first of all to clarify one's self-identity, one's gifts and strengths and one's sense of vocation. Then a personal profile is drawn which states, "this is who I am and the kind of person I am, this is what I enjoy doing and am good at, and this is what I feel called to do with my life". By the time one has sorted out these criteria, the life and career direction usually becomes clear. (Tucker 1987: 142)

A lot of resources are now available to help a person construct such a personal profile. Helpful annotated bibliographies of some of these resources can be found in Jones (1991: 128-131), Nydam (1994: 1-42) and Ward (1981: 221-235). Another useful resource specifically designed to help a person construct a comprehensive personal profile using a variety of different tools is the *Career and Life Planning* course developed by Denise Edwards at the Bible College of New Zealand (Edwards 1992). Covey and Merrill describe a series of exercises designed to help a person prepare a personal mission

statement in their book *First Things First* (Covey 1994: 307-321). And Boldt's *How To Find the Work You Love* (1996) proposes that one's true vocation is found by addressing four questions to do with Integrity (What speaks to me?), Service (What touches me?), Enjoyment (What turns me on?) and Excellence (What draws out my best?).

### **5.32 Sociological factors.**

It has been claimed that once a person's work is known, 'we can broadly estimate the range of his income, the size of his family, where he lives, where he works, how he spends his leisure time, [and] what clubs he belongs to (quoted in Brown et al. 1990: 263)'. This suggests that more than just innate personal preference decides our circumstances and choices. It is clear that sociological factors also significantly impact career choices and may limit the range of choices that are considered. These sociological elements include

- socio-economic status of parents
- father's career choice
- mother's career choice
- culture
- race
- gender
- geography
- status attainment variables (what career at a certain prestige level is desirable)

Sociologists have explored status barriers to occupational mobility (Brown 1990: 358). This work does not imply that individuals are helpless against overwhelming inequities and rigidities, but only that very real restraints do operate. Those offering vocational guidance consequently need to emphasise that if such barriers are to be surmounted then individuals have to act energetically on their own behalf and need to learn coping strategies to help them deal with the resistance they will encounter (Brown 1990: 307).

The most profound example of this sort of movement in recent years is the increasing involvement of women in the work force and particularly the movement to take up jobs which have been traditionally exclusively identified with men. Another example is the push in New Zealand to see more maori involved in what have been traditionally pakeha dominated professions. Young people need both encouragement and preparation to face the challenges that pursuing such options involves.

Many of the more popular career and life planning courses are built on the 'positive thinking' approaches, such as 'Positive Mental Attitude' (PMA) philosophy of Napoleon Hill (1990; 1996), who coined the phrase 'whatever the mind conceives and the heart

believes, I can achieve'. These courses promote the idea 'you can be whatever you want to be'. All you need is a positive mental attitude, a clear focus and plenty of determination. While this may support 'The American Dream', it is not true. On the one hand it can leave people for whom there are many options open, confused and panicking as they rack their brains to decide what they really want to do with their lives. They are told that the world is open, but they cannot decide in which direction to head. The decision appears critical because they quickly need to devote their full-time, attention and energy to its pursuit. But often the end is not clear and we do best understanding our natural talents and realising we will go further and waste less energy using them. The PMA approach also ignores sociological factors which limit and shape our choices. Of course, it does so deliberately to encourage people to break out of unnecessarily narrow mind sets which hold them captive, and to this extent it may prove helpful. But it may also encourage blindness to reality and set up the examples of exceptional people suggesting that this should be the norm we can all aspire to and follow. It is important that we be realistic about the sociological pressures we confront in working out our vocational choices. And people who are inspired to challenge the status quo will need special encouragement and support from our communities of faith.

### **5.33 The home and faith community which shapes a person's early understanding.**

Another very important set of influences are those that come from the faith community which shapes a person's early understanding and home life. This is often complicated where family members have only a nominal association with a particular faith community, or where there is clearly a significant discrepancy between the values proclaimed in theory on Sunday and those lived out in practice on Monday. But where faith and home and work life are, to some extent anyway, integrated and undergirded by a particular theological understanding, this will be influential in a person's life. Whether these influences are adopted, or adapted, or rejected, they need to be understood. Because both explicitly and implicitly, in theory and in practice, these influences will shape our understanding of vocation. And even if we are moving toward new understandings it is important to examine the place from where we have come and the road we have travelled and the various influences that have impacted on us. The more the dialogue and interaction between old and new understandings can be brought to consciousness and worked through to a resolution, the more likely it is that whatever vocational understanding results will be adopted and embedded deeply as part of a person's core values. This can help to reduce what is otherwise experienced as an ongoing conflict between inherited values and new understandings. It can also help us to clarify and evaluate more carefully the vocational understandings we have grown up with, which otherwise often remain vague and unexamined.

### **5.34 Bio-social development, family circumstances and career stages.**

These three factors are dealt with together because we want to look at ways they interact to shape the way a person's vocation is lived out.

In recent years researchers have begun to identify the major developmental stages that people go through in some form or another (see Peterson 1989: 40-57). Among other things, these researchers have attempted to pinpoint specific transitions, often called 'crises', which reflect particularly difficult life tasks. More recently 'adult' stages of development have been specifically pinpointed (eg. Sheehy 1976; 1981; 1995). Edgar Schein in his book *Career Dynamics* (1978) provides a very useful summary of the major life-cycle issues that a person is usually confronted with and relates these to developments in a person's working life and their vocational choices. Schein attempts to provide a synthesis of the work of many other theorists and along the way provides a brief introduction to their work (Schein 1978: 27-35).

Schein develops the concept of cycles and stages. According to Schein people should be thought of as existing in a world where there are always multiple issues and problems to be dealt with. He maintains that for most of us in Western society these issues can be divided into three basic categories: biological forces and the accompanying age-related social or cultural expectations that make up the bio-social cycle; the family cycle in which first our family of origin and then our spouse and children put various demands and constraints on us as well as providing opportunities for nurture and pleasure and growth; and a work/career cycle that involves early occupational images, education and training, a working life with many sub stages and ultimately retirement and/or new work or career issues.

Schein goes on to identify the major stages that are identified with each cycle and the general issues and specific tasks that are associated with each stage. What he ends up producing are three detailed check lists, one for each cycle, that can be used to help a person identify the specific issues they might find themselves working through at any particular stage and to locate these issues in an overall pattern of development. Schein makes plain that each cycle contains smooth, even stretches as well as bumpy, obstruction filled stretches. And each cycle is marked by milestones indicating where a person is and what they have accomplished, as well as choice points where a person must decide which way to head. A person may drift or stagnate, but there is basically no stopping or turning back. The movement of life is always forward, linked to the biological clock and cultural norms. Not that these factors are unchanging. In fact, one of the most dramatic examples of changing work patterns is the situation of women, who

until very recently were generally forced to choose either family or career, because cultural norms demanded maximum involvement in one or the other during the decade from age 25 to 35.

However, recent developments have made it possible for far more women to pursue both options, family and career. However, this also highlights the way these cycles overlap and interact and Schein portrays this diagrammatically (see next page).

## **EXTERNALLY DEFINED CYCLES IN A GIVEN SOCIETY**

### **Figure 1. A model of life/career/family cycle interaction .**

Schein's major hypothesis is that individual effectiveness is lowest when total difficulty of tasks is highest, but greater difficulty also produces greater opportunity for radical growth. (From Schein 1978: 24)

The diagram pictures the three cycles in terms of peaks and valleys. A valley is a smooth, but routinely functioning section of the cycle; a peak signifies either an obstacle or a choice point and this poses a task which a person must deal with. As we have already noted, Schein provides a detailed identification of these tasks and choices for each cycle.

If the tasks involve the expenditure of a lot of emotional energy or confronting a crisis, it will make a lot of difference to the individual whether these are spaced out or come simultaneously. For example, if a person marries and takes a first job at the same time, as many university graduates do, he or she is taking on two major life tasks - one in the work/career cycle and one in the family cycle - both of which require significant investments of time and energy. These steps may also be accompanied by the need to set up home in a new city and make decisions about having children. If the investment of time and energy required is beyond what the individual can muster, they may cope by reducing involvement in one or the other cycle, creating a more stressful work or marriage situation, or by finding a new and radically different resolution of the work/family conflict. It is easy to see how a similar convergence of stressful factors from all three cycles might occur for a person working through mid-life issues, attempting to cope with an aging body, more realistic career expectations or a desire to change jobs, and adolescent children or children leaving home.

According to Schein, individuals cope differently with the tasks posed by the various life cycles according to their biological make-up, early childhood experiences, socialisation, accumulated experience up to that point and family relationships (Schein 1978: 24). It is not possible to predict with certainty how people will respond. People who have experienced difficulty making adjustments earlier in life may have a more difficult time adjusting later. Yet at the same time many people find in later stages of their lives that they have creative urges and talents they never exercised before. The opportunity to develop new areas of skill, new values and new personality traits is an important part of each life. Schein concludes: 'we must develop systems of education and training for adults which not only enable people to accurately diagnose their opportunities for growth, but also teach coping skills which make it possible for them to take advantage of those opportunities once they arise (Schein 1978: 26)'.

It would seem to be people who are working through difficult transition times who are most open to re-examining the direction of their lives and the commitments and values that have shaped their choices. The issues come into sharper focus and can be seen more clearly at such times. Also such times arise because the status quo that has ruled the past is proving itself inadequate to decide the future. New commitments, new values and a different balance is required. It is important that Christian churches understand the sorts of issues that people at different stages are likely to be working through and that they make available resources to help provide encouragement and guidance to people who are negotiating demanding transition times. These can be very important times for re-examining vocational understandings and making new vocational choices. The most helpful popular introduction to these issues written from a Christian perspective is *The*



*Career Counselor* (Parrott and Parrott 1995). William Bridges (1980; 1991; 1994) and Paul Stevens (1993a; 1993b) also provide useful insights and resources for managing work life transitions.

### **5.35 Faith Development**

In addition to the recent research that Edgar Schein has pulled together relating to bio-social, family and career development cycles, there has also been another movement researching faith development. James Fowler has been prominent in pioneering this work, as we have already noted in Chapter 3.3. Fowler uses the concept of vocation as an integrating factor in his understanding of faith development. He maintains that a revived notion of vocation is just what is needed to give rise to a sense of partnership with the action of God that will serve as an integrating principle to orchestrate our changing adult life structures (Fowler 1984: 105).

Fowler's concept of faith development is built on two processes, conversion and development, which taken together constitute, what he calls the 'dance of faith development' in our lives. Conversion involves radical and dramatic changes in our centres of value, power and master story (Fowler 1992: 16). Development involves a less radical, maturing evolving, similar to the biological process of maturation. Fowler clearly distinguishes between conversion and stage transition. Conversion is principally about the 'contents' of faith; where stage transition is about the 'operations' of faith (i.e. the operations of knowing, valuing, and committing).

Drawing on the developmental theories of Piaget, Kohlberg, Erickson and others, Fowler proposes a six-staged progression for faith development which begins at around the second year of a child's life, although he does recognise the significance of primal faith learned prior to this age. Fowler warns that his is a 'descriptive' rather than 'prescriptive' theory. While he does describe a generalised faith journey he does not wish to imply that a particular stage needs to be reached or attained. The goal of faith development is not to get everyone to reach the universalising stage of faith, his last stage. Adults equilibrate at various stages, and it is quite clear that people located at each stage can experience a fulfillment of faith. Fowler does not mean to imply that people described at one stage are in some way better or more advanced than those of previous stages. Throughout his writings he is at pains to clarify that each stage has its own integrity, strengths and weaknesses (Fowler 1987: 57). Fowler describes the goal of faith development as being for each person or group to open themselves, as radically as possible - within the structures of their present stage or transition - to synergy with spirit (his later work is more explicitly Christian than his earlier writing).

At the same time Fowler also makes plain that for each individual there are a number of significant changes that occur in the faith journey. The development of faith is not a gentle undemanding stroll through life, involving gradual imperceptible maturing, but a series of growth stages followed by radical upheavals in our faith operations. These upheavals that may result in a person moving to another stage of faith development do not necessarily involve a change in the content of one's beliefs. However, it is clear that the transition between stages is a difficult and often painful process; 'it frequently involves living with a deep sense of alienation for considerable periods (Fowler 1987: 57)'. People may spend long periods of time and energy 'transitioning'. Because of the difficulty of the transition process, 'it is understandable why we defend, shore up and cling to our constructions of the ultimate environment (faith) even when these prove constricting, self-destructive, or distorted (Fowler 1987: 57)'. In fact, Fowler suggests that many people revert to a previous stage rather than face the difficulty, or uncertainty, of the transition. Fowler's denial that he understands stages of faith as a progression on to more advanced stages would seem to be strained by these remarks, especially as he also refers to people at less developed and more developed stages (Fowler 1987: 57).

Fowler also links his stages of faith with what he calls the optimal correlation with the seasons of our lives. He has done this by linking his work with that of Robert Kegan on stages of selfhood. The correlations he makes are as follows

Infancy	Primal faith, incorporative self.
Preschool age	Intuitive-projective faith, impulsive self.
Mid-childhood	Mythic-literal faith, imperial self.
Adolescence	Synthetic-conventional faith, interpersonal self.
Young adulthood	Individuative-reflective faith, institutional self.
Middle adulthood	Conjunctive faith, inter-individual self.
Middle adulthood and Beyond.	Universalising faith, God-grounded self.

Fowler maintains that when transition between stages is delayed beyond its normal optimum correlation with the season of a person's life it becomes increasingly more difficult to make such a transition (Fowler 1987: 96-97).

However, it is important to emphasise again that the goal of pastoral care that employs developmental perspectives is not to try to propel or impel persons from one stage to another. Certainly people should be supported and encouraged to engage the issues of their lives and vocations in such a way that development will be a likely result. But development takes time. Transitions cannot and should not be rushed. Pastoral care will seek to involve people in disciplines and actions, in struggle and reflection, that will keep

their faith and vocations responsive to the ongoing call of God. The aim is to help people extend the operations of a given stage to the full range of their experiences and interactions. Integration and reconfiguration of memories, beliefs and relationships in the light of the operations which a new stage makes possible are every bit as important as supporting, encouraging and pacing people in the move from one stage to another (Fowler 1987: 81).

Fowler also explores how this view of vocation and partnership with God can be enhanced for people at each stage of development (Fowler 1987: 79-99). He highlights the challenges for pastoral care at each stage as well as for preaching, Christian education and counselling. He challenges churches to learn to operate in a way that embraces people at different stages of faith so that no one development mode dominates in a way that makes people exploring other modes feel deviant. In order to do this however Fowler suggests that the church itself must have a stage level of aspiration of conjunctive faith. This encourages us to begin exploring the strengths, weaknesses and characteristics of churches of each adult modal development level (see Jamieson 1995: 38-41).

Fowler also explores the relationship between faith and the dynamics of change (Fowler 1987: 99-111). He acknowledges that challenges to our faith are often precipitated by other events: developmental events, reconstructive events or intrusive market events. As Fowler explores the nature of the changes such events give rise to, the breaking free from old connections or understandings, the disorientation, and the process of reconstruction and growing new understandings, we begin to see how the faith journey that Fowler describes is intertwined with the interaction of the bio-social, career and family development cycles that we noted in Schein's description previously. Although they do not correspond exactly, they are clearly inter-related and further investigation of this relationship would seem to provide fertile ground for further study. Fowler's *Becoming Adult, Becoming Christian* (1984) does begin this exploration for us. In particular, Fowler's concluding section which isolates the crucial questions about vocation that are posed in young adulthood, middle adulthood and older adulthood. He talks about youth exploring the formation of a vocational dream, the purifying and deepening of vocation in mid-life, and the importance of older people acting as witnesses and guarantors of vocation. This latter concern is also explored by Wiebe as she probes to find 'what God has in mind for the older adult (Wiebe 1995: 12)'. Fowler provides a useful description of the way our understanding of vocation needs reprocessing at different stages of development (Fowler 1984: 142-147).

It is essential that the pastoral resources of churches be made available to people who are working through such stages. Times of transition are full of new and important possibilities for growth and for the development of fresh understandings of faith and vocation. Yet most churches have not deliberately equipped themselves for such ministry in any purposeful way.

Parrott and Parrott (1995) devote seven chapters to some particular struggles and the specific responses these invite. These include

- teenagers and career exploration
- young adults and career decision-making
- mid-career change
- post-retirement adjustment
- surviving a career crisis
- women and career development
- special populations and career development

The Parrotts recognise the important roles that pastors, counsellors and the faith community can play in offering support and guidance for people wrestling with vocational questions.

James F. Cobble also provides a popular introduction to some of these issues in his book *Faith and Crisis in the Stages of Life* (Cobble 1985). Cobble explores the relationship between faith and career, family life and aging by describing issues people typically face in each decade from their teens to their 70's and beyond. Cobble is aware of Fowler's work but takes an approach which could be more easily integrated as an additional faith development cycle within the overall scheme that Schein adopts to describe his bio-social, career and family cycle. Others are certain to consider this too simplistic, but it offers possibilities if not pushed too hard and too far. Whatever conclusions are reached about details, Cobble's work again highlights the importance of the faith dimension in a person's life interacting with other dimensions of life including daily work: 'faith is not an abstract quality separated from the rest of life. It is directly related to life events. Life transitions play a prominent role in the development and expression of faith (Cobble 1985: 145)'.

Another recent attempt to explore the connection between faith and work is provided by Janet Hagberg. Hagberg has explored the process of faith development with Robert Guelich in *The Critical Journey* (Hagberg and Guelich 1995). Hagberg and Guelich, like Fowler, whose work they are aware of, also describe six stages of faith, but follow a slightly different pattern (a helpful comparison in diagrammatic form is provided in Drane

1994: 202). Hagberg and Guelich develop the idea of faith as a journey: ‘the word journey suggests an image of travel with no instant goal, perhaps meandering, stopping along the way, learning as we go. In my experience, and listening to others’ journey stories this is an apt description of the journey of faith (Hagberg 1995: 173)’.

The stages identified by Hagberg and Guelich include

Stage One	The Recognition of God
Stage Two	The Life of Discipleship
Stage Three	The Productive Life
Stage Four	The Journey Inward - and The Wall
Stage Five	The Journey Outward
Stage Six	The Life of Love

Hagberg has subsequently explored in more depth the relationship between these faith stages and the experience of daily work in an article entitled ‘The Faith-Work Journey: Developing and Deepening the Connection Between Faith and Work’ (Hagberg 1993: 172-183). Hagberg sees faith and work as part of an organic whole: ‘where we are now on our faith journey determines how we behave at work, what our motives are, and how we live our vocational call,’ and ‘we can strengthen the connection between faith and work by consciously applying the skills and talents we use at work to promote our spiritual growth (Hagberg 1993: 172)’. Hagberg goes on to discuss each stage of faith and gives examples of the sort of connections a person living at this stage of faith is likely to make with his or her work, along with the advantages and disadvantages the stage offers. According to Hagberg’s scheme a person can recycle to any of the stages over and over again, and also be in more than one stage at the same time. Hagberg offers a more dynamic understanding of the faith-work connection that is less easy to tabulate than Cobble’s in terms of age groupings. It provides for twists and turns, as well as a linear progression, developing the idea that the faith journey is fluid and flexible, meandering, mysterious and unpredictable. We can move back and forth and all around. We can be in more than one stage at a time in different parts of our lives (Hagberg 1993: 181).

For Hagberg the primary usefulness of the stage model is to help people gain an understanding and appreciation of where they are on the faith journey and an appreciation of where others are whose lives seem to be posing different questions and coming out with different answers.

In his conclusion to *Faith Development and Pastoral Care* Fowler (1987) encourages churches to become environments of development expectation. He says we must begin

to ‘draw on the rich process imagery our tradition offers in the themes of journey, pilgrimage, wilderness, ship wreck, struggle, rescue, growth from being milk eaters to being meat eaters, healing, the new being in Christ, and the promised land (Fowler 1987: 116)’. He suggests we need to offer more dynamic images of faith and calling in our preaching and teaching. Building on the work of William Willimon and John Westerhoff on liturgy and the life cycle (Westerhoff and Willimon 1980), Fowler urges churches to begin developing liturgical celebrations of rites of passage and to recognize and encourage the development of faith and vocation. Fowler suggests some specific ways in which the forming and renewal and regrounding of vocations can be celebrated by the community of faith for people at different ages and stages. Fowler also proposes that churches begin to offer periodic faith development inventories or checkups. These could be offered in a retreat or spiritual direction format for individuals or groups. Fowler even offers a worksheet for this latter exercise called ‘The Unfolding Tapestry of My Life’ (Fowler 1987: 122-125). This tool could be usefully employed alongside Schein’s checklists exploring bio-social, career and family development.

### **5.36 The Balanced Life**

One of the most difficult practical challenges that people face in their daily work is maintaining a healthy balance. It is usually a case of how to juggle home and family responsibilities, plus voluntary and church work and leisure pursuits, around the demands of a career in a context where economic restructuring is pressing for more productivity, and often longer hours, from fewer employees. The questions this gives rise to are ‘how can I fulfill all these claims on my time? how do I clarify my priorities? what matters most and what must I let go?’. These are questions that a clear sense of vocation should help to answer.

These pressures have increased in recent times with the growth of a more aggressively competitive free-market environment. An international survey of 5,000 office workers in 16 countries, including New Zealand, confirms the common belief that work is the biggest cause of stress in people’s lives (Press 1994). According to Anne Else (1996) people, and especially women, are being crushed by the economy. This is because the entrance of many more women into the paid work force, combined with the expectation that they are still responsible for most of the unpaid work as well, means they simply have too much work, and it is snowballing on both fronts, paid and unpaid. People are struggling to get their lives into better balance inside and outside the home.

The experience of many of these women has begun to be documented and makes fascinating reading, particularly in the way that it challenges traditional understandings of vocational roles, identity and the relationship between private and public lives. Several

noticable trends have been documented. These include, a decline in religious beliefs and practices for women who have entered employment (De Vaus 1985), recognition that many women enter the workforce as reluctant conscriptees who would rather be at home with their families (Bastick 1990), and the withdrawal from the workforce of women who have pursued career options (but not out of economic necessity) and now find these much less attractive than they first thought (Albert 1992; Anderson 1994). But women are also deeply aware of other pressures, including the problem of reconciling and integrating public and private lives. Shelagh Cox explains:

in order to live well at home I did things and thought in a certain way. In order to do well in the outside world I became a different person. As long as I kept my two selves separate, I got by. But whatever means I developed for reconciling the two, there was a hidden complexity. The half of my life I was failing to acknowledge was present in the other. Sometimes its presence distracted or disturbed me and sometimes it nourished me. Aware as I was of this double existence, I could make little sense of it and felt I could do nothing about it. I wondered if other people fared better and, if so, how they managed it. (Cox 1987: vii)

A book that explores the re-weaving of women's public and private lives by developing the idea of Christian vocation is *Loving and Working* by Rosemary Barciauskas and Debra Hull (Barciauskas and Hull 1989). Barciauskas and Hull note that even in evangelical and Roman Catholic circles the tide has turned. Women's public vocation is no longer being denied. Yet such affirmations mean little if women's traditional domestic responsibilities remain exactly the same - that is, if some of those responsibilities are not assumed by men and by society at large. They discuss 'the shared human need we all have to live lives in which we are able to define our uniqueness through our work and affirm our connectedness through our intimate, nurturing relationships' and conclude 'when women are denied work and when men are denied intimacy, both women and men fail to achieve their full human potential and all of us are diminished' (Barciauskas and Hull 1989: 159).

For Barciauskas and Hull the answer is to rediscover a view of vocation which provides for both loving and working. However, this is not just an individual, but a societal task. In the mostly 'feminine' private world of the home, the primary virtue is self-sacrificing care for others. In the mostly 'masculine' public world of work the ethic of individual achievement dominates. Both family and workplace changes are needed to integrate the virtues of individualism and self-sacrifice into a new society. These changes are not only social but spiritual. Only by more fully realising the Judeo-Christian ideal of Agape love

will we be able to forge a future equally committed to loving relationships, family nurturance and humane, productive work. Barciauskas and Hull conclude:

in the end, we are faced with a task that is often a lonely one.....And yet these private tasks are being multiplied by the millions. If the sharing of these personal struggles can lead to solidarity among women and men, the re-creation of a balance of work and family life will be genuinely possible. Values of intimacy and connectedness can become public virtues. (Barciauskas and Hull 1989: 177)

Barciauskas and Hull explore how these principles can be worked out in marriages, in family life and developing new patterns of work.

Shelagh Cox (1987) develops the idea that men's and women's lives too, are separated. That men belong primarily to the public and women to the private sphere. But the dualism that undergirds this division is now being questioned by women who have found their identities bound up in a new analysis. Cox identifies four different ways the division between public and private spheres has been dealt with:

1. allowing women to enter the public sphere.
2. rethinking and remaking the private sphere.
3. abolition of the private sphere.
4. challenging the divisions between the public and the private.

The first two rest on the assumption that private and public worlds are fundamental and unalterable divisions. Cox favours the fourth approach. She proposes that we explore the border land between public and private life where inconsistencies in the ideology of separate spheres is revealed and where the contradiction in men's and women's lives can be identified. Rosemary Novitz, in the same book, looks at 'Bridging the Gap' between paid and unpaid work (Novitz 1987: 23-52). According to Novitz, the division between public and private worlds grew in the 19th century against the background of the development of capitalism, industrialisation and the increasing tendency for paid work to be located outside the home. The idea that men 'go out' to do paid work while women engage in unpaid work at home was brought to New Zealand by British settlers. And this still persists, for despite the fact that more men are becoming convinced that they should increase the time they spend in child care and domestic work, the burdens of trying to juggle time between the spheres of paid and unpaid work are still primarily borne by women. According to Anne Oakley, women have not been able to develop an alternative model of involvement in both paid and unpaid work which does not carry with it substantial penalties, traps and pitfalls:



for them [women], the problem since the present social structure was established in the 18th and 19th centuries, has always been to reconcile the conflicting demands of home and work in such a way that they appear to be conforming either to the feminine housewife model or to the male career model. An acceptable alternative pattern has yet to be established - either for women or for men. (Quoted in Novitz 1987: 51)

Women's experience of the double burden of paid and unpaid work, and the realisation by many men that they do not, and will not, earn a 'family wage', lie behind increasing questioning of the inevitability of female domesticity. They also challenge traditional ways of organising employment and family life. As Novitz concludes:

many of us have developed individual strategies for combining paid and unpaid work that daily test our ingenuity and our energy. Through these strategies we try to accommodate demands on us as parents, and as the children of our parents, as well as employees, husbands, wives, lovers and friends. Changes to the way paid work is organised and the division of work between women and men (in the home and outside it) are necessary if we are ever to bridge more creatively the gaps between our private and public worlds. (Novitz 1987: 51-52)

Elizabeth McKenna is another writer who explores the complexities of women's relationship with their work. She looks at questions of identity, success, money, meaning and balance. She then goes further than most other women writers to also explore the relationship between work and identity for men. According to McKenna powerful forces are at work changing circumstances for women and men that will take at least another generation for us to work through, and even then only as women and men are able to establish new patterns of partnership.

These writers highlight the search for something that will help to integrate and provide a sense of balance in lives that are made up of a variety of disparate activities. This is why something like the doctrine of vocation is so necessary. But the difficulty of combining paid and unpaid work, public and private lives, that we have already noted, makes plain that this is easier said than done.

And more complications are added through the work of Christena Nippert-Eng (1996). Nippert-Eng explores home and work issues from the perspective of a sociological study of boundary negotiation in everyday life. According to Nippert-Eng

Everyone actively and passively makes numerous decisions about whether and how they bring "work" into "home" and "home" into "work". These decisions repeatedly push us toward either end of the integration/segmentation continuum,

reflecting, reinforcing and challenging the boundaries we place around each realm. (Nippert-Eng 1996: 98)

The more we integrate, the more overlap is evident between 'home' and 'work'. The more we segment, the larger the mutually exclusive territory of each realm becomes. This is expressed in the clothing we wear and the artifacts, such as photos and mementos, we associate with each place, the extent to which vacations and leisure activities include both home and work places and people, what we read and where it is read and where it is stored, and whether we discuss work matters at home or personal matters at work. The extent to which associates, artifacts and activities originating in one realm are found in the other is a good indication of the strength of our tendency towards integration or segmentation. Individuals opt for different degrees of integration and segmentation:

Through trial and error, spousal threats, children's demands, extended family's expectations, and the pleasing and disappointing of one's self, colleagues and bosses, we each learn where to draw the lines around home and work, and who we when we're in a certain place. (Nippert-Eng 1996: 100)

When we add to Nippert-Eng's home and work categories the additional spheres of community, church, personal and leisure pursuits, and start pondering how we define our vocation in relation to each and all of these, numerous complicating questions arise. Do we see a single integrated vocation being worked out through a combination of these, or different callings being worked out in different spheres? Is each of equal significance or is it the strong pull of one calling that dictates the shape of the other aspects of our lives? Are the boundaries sharp between different spheres of activity or are they quite blurred? We are forced to clarify what we understand to be primary and secondary callings for us. Primary callings give overall shape to our lives. They usually operate in an integrating way, giving expression to what we understand to be the most important elements of our true vocation, in a fashion that is so much a part of us that it will almost inevitably spill over into all other aspects of our lives. At the same time, we may still choose to pursue other secondary callings in what may be a more segmented way.

There is no simple universal formula. The mix and extent of overlap is different for each person and also different at different stages of life. But it is important that in times of confusion and struggle we do consciously examine that mix, and that we understand the nature and degree of integration and segmentation that we have arrived at. Also that we evaluate the extent to which our primary and secondary callings, as we understand them, have led us to establish a healthy balance that reflects our true priorities at this particular stage of life. This is a process of vocational scrutiny that is likely to result in different

decisions at different stages and that regularly needs re-examining and re-negotiating to maintain a good balance.

The aim of Robert Reber's *Linking Faith and Daily Life* programme (Reber 1991) is to help women and men gain a glimpse of how the different aspects of their lives fit together in God's purposes - particularly family, work and church. It invites participants to identify their life issues, explore the faith dimension, identify gifts, clarify their vision, choose their priorities, name the people and resources they need to assist and encourage them on their journey and consider options for continuing this exploration. There is a pressing need for more resources like this.

#### **5.4 THE FAITH COMMUNITY.**

Hendrick Kraemer made plain in 1958 that it is impossible to seriously pursue a theology of the laity without also addressing questions of ecclesiology and structural issues (Kraemer 1958: 125-176). We have already noted how our theologising has outdistanced the practice of most churches. Now we devote attention to investigate how our conclusions might influence the shape of church life.

##### **5.41 Changed Priorities.**

Much of the time and energy in most churches is spent in internal administration and maintenance. When it becomes understood that one important priority of the church is to equip people in order that they might be released for ministry in the world, it seems unreasonable to expect the laity to invest much time and effort on maintaining church institutions which fail to support this purpose. To restore a healthy balance the church must move from an emphasis on the importance of 'coming' to the importance of 'going'. This may mean growing a leaner church that places less maintenance demands on the laity and the creation of new structures that will support and equip and sustain people for following their vocations in their daily work. James Fowler maintains,

public churches try to free their members from many of the tasks of institutional maintenance and internal ministry for the sake of strengthening their vocations as Christians in the marketplace, the school, the law office, the legislative halls, the hospital and the corridors and committees of peace-making and ecological healing. (Fowler 1991: 159)

According to Loren Mead (1991) a new church is in the process of being born around us. We are being challenged to let go of the 'Christendom Paradigm' and begin reinventing the congregation for a new mission frontier. One very significant factor that will

determine the shape of the future church is that it will take seriously the ministry of the laity (Mead 1991: 24).

At this point confusion arises because undoubtedly a new emphasis on the important role of the laity in the life of the church is being expressed. The difficulty is that most often this is a movement to get lay people more involved within the church. While this is to be applauded it may also lead unwittingly to the unfortunate consequence of devaluing the unique ministry of Christian women and men in the world. It may also result in less energy being devoted to encouraging and arousing lay responsibility for the world. Initially this writer thought there may be a significant difference between Protestant and Catholic approaches in this regard. Non-conformist churches with their emphasis on the priesthood of all believers appeared to emphasise the participation of the laity in church life but not in the life of the world. At the same time it appeared the Catholic church, which did not offer lay people the same opportunities in church, was emphasising strongly in its post-Vatican II theology the importance of the apostolate of the laity in the world. However, further examination since then suggests that despite theological statements to the contrary, each stream falls into the same trap as practical preoccupation with the church's structures and processes undermine its ability to focus its gaze and training efforts outwards. This is reflected in the nature of both Protestant and Catholic lay training materials. They are almost all focussed on equipping people for ministries in the church or through church programmes. Some address issues related to home life, but very few make any more than a fleeting reference to life in the work place. In some evangelical training materials the work place is mentioned but is primarily viewed as an opportunity for contacting non-christians and sharing one's faith in a narrowly evangelistic way.

Perhaps it is not surprising then that the American Catholic document 'A Chicago Declaration of Christian Concern' concludes:

we fear that almost obsessive preoccupation with the Church's structures and processes has diverted its attention from the essential question: reform for what purpose? It would be one of the great ironies of history if the era of Vatican II which opened the windows of the Church to the world, were to close with a Church turned in upon herself. (Quoted in Diehl 1991: 180)

It would seem that the strong initiatives towards the development of a lay theology and provision of training for the laity through the WCC and its agencies in the 1940's to 1960's has experienced a similar fate, although some of these concerns are now reflected elsewhere in the drive to grow a 'theology by the people'. But the conferences and publications sponsored by the Department on the Laity and the lay institutes started by

this movement did not have the profound effect hoped for. Konrad Raiser, General Secretary of the WCC has recently lamented;

‘ “the laity” has almost disappeared from ecumenical discussion. This is all the more striking because “laity” was an ecumenical keyword only a generation ago. Since then the passionate enthusiasm of the early ecumenical movement - which in several important respects saw itself as a lay movement - has somewhat abated. (Raiser 1993: 375)

Other leaders in the ecumenical movement have made similar statements (e.g. Mayland 1991: 38; Ruppell 1993: 392). David Gaines in his 1966 review of the history of the WCC expressed concern that the work of the Department on the Laity was generally far too theoretical and academic to address the sort of practical concerns that might otherwise provide momentum to the movement. According to Gaines, the reports from the Department in these years

bore few indications that a programme of real interest to rank-and-file laymen was in the shaping. They lacked the sure sense of what had relevance and at the same time practicability. Wanting were a genuine understanding of human need, a clear perception of the spiritual quickening of which average people in an encounter with God are capable, a down-to-earth stance in the actual involvement in the social process which gave inspiration and zest (Gaines 1966: 962)

Gaines also documents how the representation of lay people, especially women, remained well below the third of delegates the WCC intended to be allotted and that, in spite of the fine rhetoric about the importance of lay ministry and participation, it was the influence of ordained ministers that grew most rapidly in setting the agenda for the ecumenical movement (Gaines 1966: 1075-1077).

More recently Joan Delaney (1996) in an article on the four ecumenical institutes makes plain that they no longer target the training of lay people in the way the original institutes sought to. For example, ‘While Bossey’s original emphasis was on the laity, the Institute now concerns itself primarily with the ecumenical formation of church leaders (Delaney 1996: 83)’. Delaney also quotes from a report on ‘The Ecumenical Institute of Bossey’ prepared by Jacques Nicole in 1992 that ‘the churches tend to send a majority of ordained people or theological students to the various seminars or Graduate School’, although it is encouraging to note that, ‘perhaps to offset its heavy emphasis on ordained leadership, the Institute recently began exploring plans for an Ecumenical School for Lay Leadership Training’ (Delaney 1996: 83).

It is also interesting to see how the Theological Education by Extension (TEE) movement has developed in many places away from its original concern to provide theological education for the laity, towards providing an alternative in-service programme of theological education for clergy and lay people moving towards ordination. Where this has occurred it runs the danger of becoming dominated by church concerns and perspectives. Kinsler recognises that such developments invite some hard questions (Kinsler 1983: 18). Certainly courses listed in the *Prospectus* of the Extension Studies Department of the Bible College of New Zealand reflect the shape of a traditional seminary programme rather than a serious attempt to address the everyday concerns of lay people. The Brethren BILD programme which also focusses on lay training would seem to have a similar, fairly traditional, church-focussed bias, in spite of its origins. Also a number of attempts by evangelicals overseas to provide lay training of a theological nature seem to bear more resemblance to traditional church and seminary perspectives and styles than uniquely lay and workplace-focussed approaches e.g. Regent College in Vancouver (Banks 1987: 161) and the London Institute for the Study of Contemporary Christianity (Stone 1989a; 1989b). Obviously there is a very strong tendency in the church for attempts to move outwards and downwards to become overwhelmed by internal and hierarchical concerns, inspite of other intentions.

At the same time, there is a widespread awareness of the problem and a desire to redress the imbalance. We have already noted numerous strong statements about the need for the church to marshall its resources in a way that does express the priority of preparing and supporting the laity for life in the world and workplace. It is recognised that if congregations are to affirm, equip and support the laity for ministry in and to the world then theologians, church leaders and lay members must operate as partners in making this happen and it must be made a priority.

However, at this stage the rhetoric has still not been translated into practice. Nor have most of the promising theological pronouncements been heard, much less understood, by most lay people or even local church leaders for that matter. In New Zealand the Christian Education departments of most denominations have shrunk in recent years and none of the theological institutions are making a priority of lay training. It is hard to see where the energy and enthusiasm required to launch these new initiatives will come from at this stage.

So where do we go from here?

One interesting line of questioning would be to examine more closely ‘where are the blocks?’ What needs to be overcome for a change in focus and priorities and the

allocation of resources to occur? Is it clerical domination and preoccupation with the church as an institution? Is it that theologising has been left to professional academics? Is it that faith has become so spiritualised and privatised it cannot be related to life in the public realm anymore? Is it that the church is struggling and, preoccupied with its own survival, is afraid to use its resources in an outward-looking way?

One recent New Zealand example which raises these questions is the attempt by some Anglican dioceses to implement a model for 'Total Ministry', based on principles that come from a programme implemented in Nevada and northern Michigan. This programme recognises the important ministry of Christians both inside and outside the church. It also makes plain that training, encouragement and support are required for both roles. Yet one gets the uncomfortable feeling that, in practice, concern for the former will exclude much meaningful focus on the latter. Fear has been expressed that this programme is being primarily driven by the need for more lay involvement in parishes that are struggling to support ordained clergy. Reverend Jenny Dawson has said 'Unfortunately, we have sold Total Ministry short because generally it has been adopted in parishes which are desperate (Dawson 1997a: 16)'. It will be tragic if a programme that potentially offers so much to enhance the vocations of Christians in their daily work ends up like so many others only focussing on time and effort invested in growing and maintaining churches.

#### **5.42 The crucial role of pastoral leadership.**

James Fowler, building on the work of Roozen, McKinney and Carroll (1984), maintains that

in the development and continuing vitality of public church communities the role of effective and committed pastoral leadership is fundamental. Pastors, priests and other professional leaders in the community cannot create a public church commitment by themselves: the studies make this very clear. But it is clearly a necessary ... condition for the forming and sustaining of a public church community that there be imaginative and generative pastoral leadership... We also found, as did Roozen, McKinney and Carroll, that the pastoral leadership and patterns of lay leadership that joined with it must balance the channelling of energy they commit to the empowering and supporting of the laity in their public locations, with an equal attention to the nurturing and supporting of persons in their personal pilgrimages of faith. (Fowler 1987: 114)

William Diehl develops a similar theme:

the key to bringing the workplace into the worship place is the pastor. If he or she has to have tight control over everything, it will not happen. There are two

reasons why the pastor should not totally try to control: very few pastors have the breadth of knowledge of workplace issues to be able to design educational programmes of relevance. Secondly, lay leadership must be involved in both the planning and presentation of programmes in order to give them credibility in the eyes of the rest of the congregation. The pastor must be willing to let people experiment with ways to bring the workplace into the worship place. The pastor's role then becomes one of affirming and supporting the efforts of the members of the congregation, providing them with good biblical and theological help, and ensuring that the congregational worship experience will nurture and inspire the people. (Diehl 1993: 158)

Diehl expands on this description of 'The Pastor's Role' in *Ministry in Daily Life: A Practical Guide for Congregations* (Diehl 1996: 61-71). Further explanations of what a more facilitative model of leadership involves are offered by R. Paul Stevens and Paul Collins in *The Equipping Pastor* (1993) and by Laughlan Sofield and Donald H. Kuhn in *The Collaborative Leader* (1995) which describes the sort of partnership between church leaders and laity which works best to facilitate ministry in the world. Another very helpful perspective is provided by Steve Jacobsen who writes as a pastor seeking to help pastors connect spirituality to the everyday work of their parishioners (Jacobsen 1997). Jacobsen's book concludes with a helpful appendix that lists 'Twenty-Five Ways to Serve People Who Work' (see Appendix 3 in this thesis).

Loren Mead (1996) maintains that one of the five most significant challenges the church faces in this generation is to transfer the ownership of the church. According to Mead, 'In America the church is owned by its clergy (Mead 1996: 1)'. Mead describes the characteristics and bad consequences of this 'clericalism' (1996: 5-14). For Mead this 'clericalism' should not be replaced by 'anticlericalism', but rather there must be

'a new dialogue between clergy and laity, a dialogue in which neither seeks to lord it over the other, neither defers to the other, but both give their best to the relationship ... It will be a relationship in which those we now call laity will see themselves as fully functioning colleagues, standing on their own feet and assured of the authenticity of their witness and work. (Mead 1996: 14-15)

Mead concludes, 'the task of the next generations will be to shift the power and ownership structures of the churches to allow lay people to fulfil their apostolic ministries and, in so doing, free the clergy to be the catalysts of religious authority (Mead 1996: 15)'. Lesslie Newbigin maintains that, if congregations are to become places where members are trained, supported and nourished for their priestly ministry in the world, traditional training patterns for pastors have to change. Ministerial training with a



much stronger orientation toward the missionary calling is essential (Newbigin 1989: 230-231).

Of course these are not new calls. Many voices were raised in the 1960's and early 1970's calling for changes in models of church leadership that would better facilitate the ministry of the laity, in Britain (Wickham 1957; Blatherwick 1959; Robinson et al. 1963; Gibbs and Morton 1964; 1971), in America (Trueblood 1952; 1961; 1967; Ayres 1962; Harkness 1962; O'Connor 1963; 1968; Haney 1972; 1973; 1974; 1978; Bucy 1978), in Europe (Weber 1963; Symanowski 1966) and in Japan and other lands (Braun 1971). But the concerns announced by the Evanstown Assembly of the WCC (WCC 1954) and later developed by Kraemer (1958) and these other writers appear to have been overwhelmed by other, internal, church concerns. Only now is similar pressure for change building.

This is apparent in the titles of recent books. For example *The Hour of the Laity* (Coughlan 1989), *The Calling of the Laity* (Dozier 1988), *The Authority of the Laity* (Dozier 1982), *The Liberation of the Laity* (Rowthorn 1986), *The New Reformation: Returning the Ministry to the People of God* (Ogden 1990), *The Forgotten Factor: The Story of Lay People in the Church* (Barnes 1991), *All God's People are Ministers* (Page 1993), *The Emerging Laity* (Whitehead 1988), *Liberating the Laity* (Stevens 1985), *Ministry of the Laity* (Anderson and Jones 1986), *The Lay-Centered Church* (Doohan 1984), *The Lay Ministry Revolution* (Hall and Morsch 1995), *Laity Stirring the Church* (Leckey 1987), *The Empowering Church* (Crabtree 1989), *The Open Church* (Rutz 1992), *Church Without Walls* (Petersen 1992), *The Laity in Ministry: The Whole People of God for the Whole World* (Peck and Hoffman eds. 1984), *Christians in the Marketplace* (Hybels 1993), *Set My People Free: A Lay Challenge to the Churches* (Etchells 1995), *Confident and Competent: A Challenge for the Lay Church* (Droel and Pierce 1987), *Where In The World Are You?: Connecting Faith and Daily Life* (Everist and Vos 1996), *God's Partners: Lay Christians At Work* (Menking and Wendland 1993), *Ministry in Daily Life* (Diehl 1996) and *The Lay Driven Church* (Steinbron 1997). Only time will tell us whether these voices are heeded this time around.

### **5.43 A Sponsoring Community**

This concept is drawn from James Fowler who borrows the idea of a sponsor from the early church, where a convert and candidate for baptism had a sponsor to guide him or her through the one-two-three year process of conversion and formation in the catechumenate. A sponsor is one who has gone before us and who knows the terrain: 'The sponsor and sponsoring community have maps and models to offer pilgrims. They

know how to walk alongside, to encourage, and to help pace the movement of the pilgrim (Fowler 1987: 115)'. A faith community can offer support for people in times of crisis and change. It can also offer people images to understand what they are undergoing and help them avoid panic or premature foreclosing of a developmental tradition. It offers biblical and theological resources in the form of stories and images which can help people make sense of what they are going through in the light of the Christian memory and hope. It provides disciplines and guidance in prayer and in the contemplative study of scripture. Evelyn and James Whitehead describe how a healthy community of faith shapes the vocations of its members by inviting them to pursue a shared dream shaped by the kingdom of God: 'our personal hopes meet God's dream in the context of a particular community. When the dream of a community is lively, it helps us link our lives and hopes to God's dream of a world healed of its poverty, violence and injustice (Whitehead and Whitehead 1992: 83)'. This happens through the influence of preaching, teaching, liturgy and testimony in the congregational setting, through the more intimate sharing of lives in a small group setting, through seminars and guided retreats and through more personal mentoring and informal relationships. All these are ways the church can give expression to its role as a sponsoring community. Of course, it is easy for such sponsorship to focus less on the world of work and more on personal pilgrimages of faith. We have already noted in Chapter 5.41 that this is a tendency which must be resisted quite intentionally. It is interesting to note the development in Fowler's thinking in this regard, as his later works (1991; 1997) move beyond the personal faith development emphasis that dominates his earlier writings to a call for faith communities to become 'public churches'; 'Public churches work at shaping a pattern [formation] for children, youth and adults, that aims toward combining Christian commitment with vocation in public (Fowler 1991: 162)'. For Fowler this 'public' focus is expressed in social ministry and political and economic involvement rather than the specific faith and work concerns that we are discussing. However in many ways what is required is the development of faith communities with a similar orientation. Fowler describes three such churches and examines some key principles and processes that have worked to produce these 'public churches' (Fowler 1991: 162-170). According to Fowler, any re-orientation of a church along these lines is a long-term project (seven to fifteen years), requires expanding lay participation in leadership, demands clear and powerful symbolic statements of identity and purpose, and inevitably involves conflict and struggle (Fowler 1991: 167-169). This suggests that the establishment of faith communities that are seriously committed to assist members to explore the connection between faith and their work is likely to be equally demanding and difficult and long-term. It is as much about the establishment of a prevailing climate and ethos that routinely gives expression and support to these concerns as it is about the more intensive mentoring of individuals or the programming of special events that highlight faith and work issues. Sponsorship through

the personal mentoring of individuals or small groups in a way that deliberately seeks to address daily work and market place issues will operate best in a setting where the whole climate of church life is supportive and reflects these concerns.

#### **5.44 Liturgy**

##### **a. Testimony, Prayers, Litanies, Readings and Hymns.**

The most personal way of encouraging people to bring aspects of their working lives into worship is by inviting them to tell their own stories, write their own hymns and prayers, and construct liturgies around their own concerns and aspirations. The creativity that such opportunities give rise to often amazes.

The most comprehensive anthology of worship resources that relate to daily work is *Work in Worship* compiled by Cameron Butland (1985). This includes prayers, litanies, readings: biblical and non-biblical, sentences, hymns and songs, suggested service plans and even a daily manual of prayers and readings for personal use. Of course, many other collections of prayers and service orders also contain some similar resources. Something similar to Joy Cowley's two collections of contemporary Psalms (Cowley and Coles 1989; 1996), with a stronger emphasis on work themes, but still distinctively earthed in Aotearoa, would be an excellent resource.

*In And For The World: Bringing The Contemporary Into Christian Worship* (Brown 1992) asserts that the church's worship should reflect the church's purpose and engage with everyday realities in a redemptive way. Although not specifically focussed on daily work, some of the principles explored in this book are relevant to our quest.

We also note here the importance of music in Christian education. Long after people have forgotten the words of a sermon they may still be found singing a hymn or popular song. The connection of words with music helps to maximise the chance that messages will be retained. So why do we not put more effort into communicating our theology through songs?

##### **b. Celebrating Vocational Rites of Passage.**

We have already noted elsewhere (Chapter 5.3 section 5 ) the suggestion of James Fowler (1987), following William Willimon and John Westerhoff (1980), that we begin to develop liturgical celebrations of rites of passage in the life cycle and in the development of faith and vocation. Fowler sees confirmation as a time for recognising a young person's assumption of responsibility for baptismal vows made earlier by parents. It should be

an occasion for celebrating the young person's new intentionality in deepening her relationship with God in Christ, and embracing full membership in the people of God, and in building on the awakening and shaping of vocation in and beyond the community. The covenant community, in response, should confirm its trust and support of the youth in his quest for deepened faith in the forming of vocation and should confirm its anticipation of celebration when the young adult is ready in the community to declare how he is finding a purpose for his life that is part of the purposes of God. (Fowler 1987: 117)

Fowler also suggests there should be a time for young adults in their 20s or 30s to share with the congregation their vocational directions as a culmination and completion of the promises of their confirmation. And similarly we should consider developing liturgical celebrations of the regrounding and renewal of vocation as part of a person's completing a midlife transition or as they begin retirement (Fowler 1987: 117).

**c. Ordination to Daily Work**

Elizabeth O'Connor devotes the eighth chapter of her story of the Church of the Saviour in Washington D.C. (O'Connor 1963: 101-107) to describing how that community implemented their understanding of the ministry of the laity by introducing a service of ordination to daily work. It is used as part of Sunday worship and challenges participants to see their work grow out of their worship and their worship grow out of their work. It is built on the assumption that everyone is called to be a minister and the service explains how this calling is to be expressed through our daily work. This act of ordination means that the individual's sense of call is confirmed by their own Christian community. So often the only ministries that are recognised by a congregation with any act of prayer or ordination are those related to leadership functions within the church.

Elsewhere, Jim Stockard describes the profound effect that such a 'commissioning' ceremony had on him and can have on others as they help to integrate the worshipping and vocational aspects of our lives (in Peck 1984: 71-79). Stockard also helpfully identifies five important aspects of the commissioning process and five blocks to commissioning. Another example of such a commissioning service is provided by Graham Tucker in his book *The Faith-Work Connection* (Tucker 1987: 212-213).

**d. Special Services**

Some congregations have a practice of devoting worship on a specific Sunday to ministry in one's occupation. Frequently people are asked to come to church dressed as they would be at work. All the elements of the service develop this theme. Even the Offertory can be used for this purpose by inviting people to come prepared to make an

offering of symbols of their work. Such things as tools, computers, stethoscopes, chalk, books and domestic utensils may be included in that offering. Of course such gestures in themselves do not get into the issues of the workplace and how our faith connects with them. But at least they provide some recognition of the connection between worship and ministry and daily work.

William Diehl suggests larger churches could feature different categories of work on different Sundays and then encourage people belonging to those categories to meet mid-week with the aim of helping each other become more intentional and effective in their Christian ministries in the workplace. He invites us to imagine how profoundly the church's mission could be advanced by such a major commitment to affirm, support and equip the laity for their ministry in the world (Diehl 1993: 153).

**e. Preaching.**

Preaching is an obvious place for linking faith and daily life. And the themes we have developed earlier including vocation, the theology of work, ministry, mission, the apostolate of the laity, God's work and our work, all need to be preached. Also those biblical narratives that revolve around daily work (Chapter 5.24) and biblical images that are drawn from the world of daily work (Chapter 5.25). A rich load of biblical and theological resources still waits to be mined. Two very useful resource books for preachers and study group leaders are Nelson (1993) and Banks and Stevens (1997).

William Diehl has some suggestions to make about preaching that will connect more strongly with people's lived experience in the work place (Diehl 1996: 22-23). Steve Jacobsen also makes some helpful suggestions about designing a strategy for preaching about work (Jacobsen 1997: 29-40).

**f. Benedictions and Dismissals.**

Even brief references to the world of work, introduced creatively and with conviction, can provide encouragement and inspire greater confidence for Christians who venture back out into their week day worlds. Books of prayers, such as David Adams' *Power Lines: Celtic Prayers About Work* (1992), can provide inspiration.

**g. Other Tools.**

William Diehl highlights the use of a number of other tools for affirming everyday ministry including banners, bulletins, the parish directory, bulletin boards, newsletters, signs and recognition events (Diehl 1996: 27-32). Crabtree (1991) and Jacobsen (1997) make other helpful suggestions.

### **5.45 Spiritual Formation**

Traditional approaches to Spiritual Formation with their patterns of prayer, daily offices and retreats are difficult for most contemporary working people to relate to. But this is not because they have been replaced by more helpful models of spirituality. Most contemporary approaches to making Christian disciples tend to emphasise the importance of growing intellectual understanding of the faith, but seem weak on developing the spiritual formation of the whole person. This is strange at a time when widespread interest in alternative spirituality is evident among the wider population in New Zealand. New Age literature is common in most bookstores and newspapers and magazines promote a host of different spiritual self-development courses and experiences. This is a diverse grassroots movement made up of many different streams and not associated with any dominant institutional forms. By and large it is also a movement that has few links with established Christian churches in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Where are the Christian models and mentors for a lay spirituality that will feed and sustain a person's faith in the workplace as we move toward the 21st century?

Within the Church there is a growing awareness of the need to be deepening the spiritual experience of people beyond just the intellectual dimension. There is also a growing awareness of the need to be carrying out this exploration by drawing on the traditions of different streams of the church. The rapid growth and ecumenical roots of Spiritual Growth Ministries in New Zealand is evidence of this. But this is still a movement that has yet to give expression to a form of the spiritual life that the majority of ordinary Christian people can take with them into the world of everyday work. There remains an unsatisfied hunger, often accompanied by a frustration or even desperation, for a living expression that will help bridge the gap that exists between a person's experience of the spiritual life that is celebrated in church on Sunday and the spiritual life that is designed to be lived in Monday's world. With economic restructuring placing pressure on many people to work even harder and longer, discovering such a spirituality becomes important not only to enrich a life, but even for survival. But also to provide the foundations for a virtuous life in the midst of a world that is struggling to retain the sort of ethical commitment that is required to enable us to function as a community.

Fortunately some Christians are beginning to explore these issues. On the one hand there are some pilgrims who are steeped in the spiritual traditions of the church who are making moves toward the marketplace (e.g. Green 1981, 1988; Huggett 1993; Dreyer 1994). On the other hand, there are those whose experience in the marketplace is pushing them to explore more deeply the spiritual traditions of the church. The books of William Diehl illustrate this (Diehl 1976, 1982, 1987, 1991, 1993, 1996). We can only hope that these two quests will give rise to a meeting that will inspire a much more

creative partnership in the search for a more meaningful everyday spirituality. Of course there are also historical resources for us to draw on in this search for an everyday spirituality. *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence (Lawrence [1693] 1989) and Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life* (Francis [1619] 1962) are two classic Catholic books. We note with regret that many Protestant Christians are unaware of the down-to-earth spirituality of their forebears. The Reformers did not only rediscover the vocation of the laity in theory, but also sought to cultivate and nurture it in practice. One of the earliest examples is Martin Luther's *A Simple Way to Pray For Master Peter, The Barber* (in Doberstein 1964: 437-460). Alister McGrath introduces us to some other early Protestant sources in his book *Roots That Refresh: A Celebration of Reformation Spirituality* (McGrath 1991).

Thomas Moore and Fredric and Mary Ann Brussat have authored recent works designed to encourage the development of a more thorough-going everyday spirituality (Moore 1992, 1996; Brussat and Brussat 1994, 1996). Also one issue of *Weavings Magazine* has been devoted to contributors exploring ways in which our work is our participation in the activity of God (*Weavings* 1993). However, it is John Haughey who most deliberately seeks to introduce us to a 'Spirituality of Everyday Work', even to the extent of introducing us to a method that individuals or small groups can adopt to promote attentiveness to God in our work circumstances in a way that encourages more discernment and more considered responses from us (Haughey 1989: 138-157).

In preparation for his book *In Search of Faithfulness* (1987) William Diehl surveyed almost two hundred Christian CEOs in the U.S.A. His aim was to identify what made some of these people more effective and integrated Christians than others. He discovered that the decisive factor was the individual's sense of vocation. Those CEOs with a sense of vocation consistently scored higher on all the indices of Christian faithfulness, for example, prayer and meditation, involvement in the church, personal maturity, financial generosity, and seeking justice in the workplace. However, like Diehl himself, these people did not possess any dramatic sense of God's call. For Diehl 'faithfulness is acknowledging God's graceful relationship with us by striving to grow more Christlike in our daily lives (Diehl 1987: 20)'. Diehl concludes his book by examining the barriers to faithfulness. He says it will come as no surprise that in the world of business, as well as in many other sectors of society today, there is no encouragement for people to grow more Christlike in their daily lives. But what is surprising and shocking is the way in which the church has erected so many barriers to faith development among the people of God.

Diehl concludes 'surely the church cannot be against its people growing more Christlike in their daily lives. Yet the responses in this study indicate that not only is there little support coming from churches for this development in the faith, but also that there are powerful forces at work within the churches which sever the connection between faith and daily life (Diehl 1987: 112)'. According to Diehl it was apparent from his interviews that much faith development occurs apart from the institutional church. It is self-initiated. But it doesn't have to be that way. And Diehl offers a number of practical suggestions about ways the church can work to recover its role in the spiritual formation of the laity. Diehl ends his book with this challenge:

what has happened to Christianity as found in mainstream Protestant churches today? The answer is clear. By not connecting the teachings of the faith to the experiences of the faithful, our churches have become increasingly irrelevant in the shaping of American life and culture. Yet the faithful are out there. Faithfulness can be found and the marks of the faithful can be observed. What glorious potential still awaits the Christian church if it can truly affirm, equip, and support all its members for all their ministries in all the world. (Diehl 1987: 123)

## **CONCLUSION**

We have traced the evolution of the concept of vocation from a highly spiritualised interpretation to a secularised view. The Protestant Reformers sought to elevate the status of the daily work of believers by identifying it as a spiritual exercise and an essential aspect of Christian discipleship, through their re-interpretation of vocation. The sudden emergence of a variety of theologies of work in the second half of the twentieth century suggests a similar process of re-interpretation is underway now. The concept of vocation is only one element in this new quest. It is a quest to connect worship, discipleship, ministry and mission with the everyday life and work of ordinary believers. The focus on work is because it is here links with the life of faith are most difficult. The world of daily work, particularly the market place and factory floor, feel separated and remote from church. Worship, discipleship, ministry and mission are what the church promotes as most important. Yet these categories are seldom applied to the daily work of ordinary Christians. We could understand this if there was a clear gap between sacred and secular aspects of life. But this is not the Christian perspective. In fact, as we have seen, worship, discipleship, ministry and mission are designed to be expressed through the ordinary events of everyday life. And perhaps most importantly



through daily work because it consumes so much of most people's lives. And the trend is for work to consume more rather than less time. Therefore the church either helps its members to make more connections between their faith and everyday work or it conveys the message that most of what we do counts for nothing in God's economy. If only church related activities count and these are relegated more and more to the private and leisure parts of our lives, we will fail to encourage and equip the largest ministry and mission force the church has, which is the people the God who penetrate almost every aspect of life of the world every day in the course of their work.

Through the sort of developments we have traced in the doctrines of vocation, ministry and mission and the theology of work we have good theoretical foundations on which to build a more positive and assertive approach to faith and work. If these are to be made more freely available to most Christians and understood by them, it will need to be in more simplified and popular forms. It will also need to connect theology and ethics and spirituality in a down-to-earth way. And in a way that also connects with people's current experience of work - the real points of struggle and pain and confusion. For this to happen more opportunities for people to encounter one another and share their stories is essential. And Christian leaders will need to listen carefully to understand the issues these stories are bringing to light. It is also essential for us to recognise those choice points or transition times in people's lives when they are most open to seek outside assistance and learn new lessons. It is at these moments that vocations are re-examined and intensified or re-designed. It is at these moments that the resources of the church are most needed and must be more readily accessible. Childhood and adolescence, graduation, and mid-life and retirement are examples of some more obvious stages of openness. Christian Education and Spiritual Formation are essentially about growing vocations. About helping people discern who they are in God and how their work can be related to God's work. Nothing matters more than this. It is from this perspective we must examine the shape of church life. Are the resources of the church being mobilised in a way that maximises the opportunity for its members both individually and corporately to discern their vocations?

A struggle is going on in the church. Some want it to provide a form of Christian escapism which enables them to leave the struggles of the world behind them for a while. They do not want Monday invading Sunday. Church provides an opportunity to escape to another place which makes Monday more bearable. But others seek encouragement for a much more significant engagement between the church and the surrounding culture. They know that if Christians are to move with more freedom and relevance into the world we must also be open to let the needs of the world enter more freely into the life of the church. It can still be in a context of celebration and solidarity and hope, but it will

also be touched with pain and grief and struggle. Escapism or engagement? Most of us want it both ways. Certainly no effective connection of faith and work concerns will take place without a more serious commitment to engagement and any rediscovery of true Christian vocation cannot point in any other direction.

# **APPENDIXES**

## **APPENDIX 1.**

### **WORK AND THE BIBLE**

In Section 2:15 it was noted that scholars who have developed theologies of work during the last fifty years have approached the Bible in different ways and employed a variety of different hermeneutical principles. Graeme Smith has identified some of the areas of doctrine in which these divergencies are particularly pronounced. This section is a summary of Smith's conclusions (Smith 1990: Chapter 5.2 - 5.12).

#### **a. Different views of Creation.**

Conservative theologians tend to adhere to the view that creation was completed at the beginning, thus debarring any human involvement in the creation process. Co-creationists on the other hand view creation as a continuous activity to which humanity contributes. Some, such as Paul Marshall, waver between the two positions.

#### **b. Different Evaluations of the Importance of Work before the Fall.**

Many theologies of work make much of the significance of the Divine charge in Genesis 1 to 'have dominion' and 'subdue the earth'. This commission is linked with what it means to be made in 'the image of God'. This is of particular importance to co-creationists and leads Smith to suggest that there has been an over-emphasis on the early chapters of Genesis in recent theologies of work and the notion of 'the image of God' has wider significance than most of these works suggest. He also notes how the dominant view contrasts with that of Ellul who argues that work before the Fall was of a totally different character.

#### **c. Differences in Understanding the Impact of the Fall.**

The way writers interpret the significance and enduring relevance of the Fall follows largely from their understanding of creation and work prior to the Fall. Most agree that while the Fall has made human work less comfortable, it does not overwhelm its primary purpose as the means by which humanity contributes to God's continuing activity. In opposition to this Ellul maintains that the Fall impacts upon all human work and means all work is 'under the curse'. Marshall's assessment results in ambiguous conclusions.

#### **d. Genesis 1-3 is overemphasised at the expense of Genesis 4-11.**

The theologians of work tend to weight their analysis very heavily towards Genesis 1-3 to the exclusion of other important segments of Genesis 4-11, such as the Tower of Babel story. Smith notes the failure to provide a more comprehensive exegesis and interpretation. He also questions whether the narratives condensed and smoothed by centuries of oral tradition provide a sufficient foundation on which to build a detailed interpretative edifice.

e. **The Diversity of Work Traditions in the Old Testament is Ignored.**

Recent scholarship maintains that there are diverse traditions with distinct emphases in the Old Testament. For example, Agrell comments in relation to Genesis 2-3 that this is 'a fine portrayal of the two-sided nature of work' (Agrell 1976: 15). It has 'a positive base, by which "work" is service to God, independent of the struggle for maintenance, and free of suffering. It has as its base the Lord. But it has as well a negative side, by which work is bound up with disobedience towards God, the necessity of producing sustenance, and where it is synonymous with suffering (Agrell 1976: 15). He goes on to argue that this dualistic outlook is the basic model of work throughout the Old Testament: 'we find here approximately the same tension as in Genesis 2-3, between work on the one hand as God-given, joyful and good, and, on the other, as hard, necessary, meeting with failure, and capable of leading to idolatry (Agrell 1976: 31).' Theologians of work clearly experience great difficulty in embracing the dualism or ambivalence of Old Testament teachings on work. For conservative scholars who adhere to the unity of scriptural teaching on such matters this provides a stumbling block. But less conservative scholars also fall into the trap of selectively using only those texts or interpretations which support their view and hence fail to express the diversity of traditions which are apparent. We do well to heed Chenu's warning, that

the books of the OT provide the most disparate judgements on man's work. It is impossible to give an abstract classification of these teachings; it is better ... to point to the various social settings in which they evolved ... almost any conclusion can be drawn from these texts; in fact, Judaeo-Christian thought throughout the ages reveals the relativity of the conclusions and prescriptions that theologians, catechists and teachers have drawn from them. (Chenu 1970: 369)

f. **The fact that Jesus worked is over-emphasised whereas His relevant parallel teachings are under-emphasised.**

There is a tendency to expand upon the scanty references to Jesus' work. Ellul is opposed to this. Other Biblical scholars are also hesitant about this. Westerman in discussing Luke 12:13-41 points out that Jesus rejects the undue importance given to work (Westerman 1980: 90). Others point out that Jesus called his disciples away from their occupations and he himself left the carpenter's shop to pursue unpaid work. Agrell in his summary of the teaching of the synoptic Gospels also concludes that the ambivalence evident in Genesis and the rest of the Old Testament persists. For Agrell, work has secondary significance for Jesus and his disciples; it may be necessary for most in this age, but one should not get too involved in it. And toil will cease in God's kingdom. The teaching of Matthew 6:25-34 is regarded as representative (Agrell 1976 :92-94).

**g. Variation in Understanding the Relationships between Human Work and Soteriology.**

The link between human work and salvation in Jesus is evident in Catholicism since the Middle Ages, partly through the Catholic doctrine of recapitulation. This tradition which continues in *Laborem Exercens* (John Paul II 1981), is anathema to conservative Protestants for whom divine action and human action are clearly distinct. However Moltmann has recently explored the interplay between human work and divine redemptive action. He concludes, 'human beings through work and self-giving participate in the Lordship of Christ in the world and thereby become co-workers in God's kingdom which completes creation and renews heaven and earth....all work is filled with the hope of the Kingdom of God ... it receives through faith a 'messianic meaning' (Moltmann 1985: 44-45)'. And despite his vigorous opposition to co-creationism, even Ellul late in his life was drawn through his study of the book of Revelation to conclude that human work is linked to God's work in some way and there is some degree of continuity between work in this life and in the coming age.

**h. Paul's Attitude to Work is under-emphasised.**

Contemporary debate has tended to focus on the question to what extent can human work be seen as an extension of God's creativity? Smith suggests that this is why Paul's teaching has tended to be ignored, because Paul's emphasis on duty and obligation fits more comfortably into the traditional schema as a corollary of the curse and the divine command. But even for those who do discuss Paul, quite different conclusions are drawn. Barth concludes that Paul has a negative view of work; 'Paul has no positive interest either in work itself or in its achievements (Barth 1961: 600).' Agrell, on the other hand, sees in Paul a more realistic approach to labour than he sees in Jesus. Paul accepts the necessity of such labour and combines it with his apostolic task (Agrell 1976: 114). Paul's view of manual labour is still negative, but he is able to incorporate it into his life in Christ. Smith concludes that Paul esteems the economic independence which

comes from work. He also adds that this may have been more to do with Paul's desire to avoid criticism than with any theology of work. Paul accepts the necessity of work, and seeks to apply the Gospel to the work setting that he sees around him. It is suggested that Paul could not envisage any alternative structure of work. What we get from Paul is not a theology of work, but an example of the limited application of the Gospel to a particular structure of work.

i. **The Link Between Human and Divine Creativity is Interpreted Differently and Generally Inadequately.**

The co-creationist position depends on maintaining the link between human and divine creativity. Smith maintains that recent theologies of work tend to examine God's physical creativity only, but ignore the work of God in

Fashioning a people for himself ... God is the builder of personhood and community. The "new creation" of the New Testament is new personhood in community with others. By focussing only on God's physical work, the major thrust of God's creative work in the world is overlooked. Co-creation would take on a richer and more radical meaning if the link was drawn with these wider dimensions of God's work. (Smith 1990: 100)

j. **The Rest Tradition is Under-emphasised by the Co-creationists.**

There is a separate 'rest' tradition in the Bible. Some argue that it is a more prominent theme than work. Co-creationists tend to minimise the relative importance of this tradition. Marshall seeks to give it an equal footing with work, even though this attempt is not completely successful. Ellul uses it to oppose the work tradition. Moltmann argues that 'the Sabbath does not simply interrupt work. Rather, work is understood and defined through the Sabbath (Moltmann 1984: 40).' A proper assessment of the biblical picture of rest will qualify or moderate some of the co-creationist conclusions regarding work.

## **APPENDIX 2.**

### **VOCATION**

#### **Historical Survey.**

The idea of vocation has carried a variety of different understandings in Christian history. I want to try to describe some of these to you, with a brief overview. Basically these different views are all attempts to explain "What is the meaning and purpose of everyday work for Christians?"

If we start back just before the Christian era we find 2 sharply contrasting views of everyday work among the Greeks and the Jews.

#### **1. Greeks.**

In the Greek world work was considered to be a curse. Aristotle said that to be unemployed was good fortune because it allowed a person to participate in political life and contemplation. Today its probably politics that enjoys the low reputation. Anyway for the Greeks, society was organised so that a few could enjoy the blessing of "leisure" while work was done by slaves. Everyday work was a demeaning occupation that one should try to avoid. Certainly there was nothing spiritually meaningful or uplifting about everyday work.

#### **2. Jews.**

The opportunity to think about issues and engage in contemplation was also valued by Jews. And when Jesus came on the scene he was only one of many Jewish rabbis or teachers on the block. However, it is very significant to note that Jewish teachers were not expected to live off the contributions of their students, but were all expected to have a trade through which they could support themselves. Far from being avoided, as far as possible work was to be embraced as part of God's purposes in creation and theological reflection would be engaged in by people who were daily engaged in everyday life in the world.

#### **3. Early Christianity.**

Jesus was known as a carpenter and the son of a carpenter, although there is no example of him continuing this trade during the period of his public ministry. He called some of his inner circle of disciples to leave their fishing nets to follow him. But there are also examples of them continuing to fish at times. Certainly he gave no general call for all Christians to give up everyday work and much of his teaching drew on themes from the world of everyday work without any self-consciousness or apologies. Paul emphasizes a positive view of work, commending all Christians to continue in their work and to work well. And he plainly continued in his trade as a tentmaker during his church planting ministry. This would seem to be the general Christian pattern for the first century after the Apostles.

#### **4. Distorted Christianity!**

Gradually the Church Fathers began to draw more heavily on Greek and Roman motifs in their theology and the more positive view of work gave way to a much lower view.

This is reflected in the view of Eusebius who wrote about his doctrine of 2 lives about AD300. He says:

"Two ways of life were thus given by the law of Christ to His Church. The one is above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, child-bearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone...such then is the perfect form of the Christian life. And the other, more humble, more human, permits man to join in pure nuptials, and to produce children....it allows them to have minds for farming, for trade, and the other more secular interests as well as for religion....a kind of secondary grade of piety is attributed to them"

In a similar way Augustine distinguished between the 'active life' and the 'contemplative life'. While both kinds of life were good and Augustine had praise for the work of farmers and craftspeople and merchants, the contemplative life was clearly of a higher order. While at times it may be necessary to follow the active life, wherever possible one should choose the other. The one life is loved, the other endured. Very soon it was this view that dominated Christian thinking, until only those people pursuing the contemplative life or a priestly role in the church were said to have a truly 'religious' vocation.

### **5. Restoring the Balance.**

It was initially through the work of Martin Luther that the 16th century reformers recovered a sense that all of life, including daily work, could be understood as a calling from God. According to Luther we respond to the call to love our neighbour by fulfilling the duties that are associated with our everyday work. Work is our call to serve. This work includes domestic and civic duties as well as our employment. In fact Luther said we can only truly serve God in the midst of everyday circumstances and attempts to elevate the significance of the contemplative life are false. In fact it is the monastic life that has no true calling. It is an escape from the true obedience that God calls us to. Luther's view tended to defend the status quo socially and he had a fairly negative view of working for profit. Whereas John Calvin developed a more dynamic view which encouraged a greater degree of urban enterprise and the possibility of changing vocations. He identified a person's vocation more closely with their job. And this Calvinistic view was further developed by the Puritans who also encouraged enterprise and thrift with a strong ethic emphasizing the importance of stewardship and service but this was soon overtaken by the development of industrialisation.

### **6. A New Distortion!**

How much the "spirit of capitalism" was a true product of the Protestant work ethic or a corruption of it is still debated. Whatever the case, it is clear that with the passing of time the concept of vocation became so closely associated with a person's occupation or career that these words became synonymous and secularised without any reference to the calling of God. So the pursuit of a vocation became an end in itself. This is true for both capitalism and Marxism. Both encourage us to look for personal fulfilment through the work of our own hands. Once people worked to live now they are living to work. Marxism became attractive when the lack of a social ethic accompanying the Protestant understanding of vocation gave rise to a church that was afraid of conflict and sided with the status quo rather than exploited workers, following the industrial revolution. Whereas once the medieval church threatened to divorce faith from work, now they are so closely



fused that work has become idolised. It is this distortion that deprives the unemployed person, or the person engaged in unpaid domestic or voluntary work of status, security and satisfaction, by emphasizing that these are primarily associated with employment. Work once degraded, is now worshipped, and demands great sacrifices.

## **7. The Destructive Consequences.**

Today we end up with a mixture of destructive consequences resulting from the ways these influences have impacted on our understanding. 5 of these are...

- (a) Ordained pastoral ministry or missionary service is elevated by Christians above other vocations and they feel the need to pursue these even when they don't seem to fit (medieval monasticism)
- (b) The Sunday-Monday Gap: The world of the marketplace is seen as "secular" and depraved: the world of the church as "spiritual" and divine. They are 2 unconnected worlds (Greek dualism). Another development is the way faith has become a private and personal leisure time pursuit that is considered out of place in the public sphere of a pluralistic and secular society.
- (c) Workaholism and the devastating consequences of unemployment-employment is seen as necessary for a true vocation and the source of fulfilment (Marxism and a distortion of the Protestant work ethic)
- (d) An inflexible view of vocation that is not adequate to cope with changes in work patterns and career paths and gender roles, etc...
- (e) A view of Christian vocation which seems to foster either a strong personal spirituality or a strong social concern, but doesn't often combine these two essential elements effectively.

## **8. So What Is Needed?**

We need to find a path that will lead us between the twin heresies of divorcing faith from work and idolising work. We must rediscover that our primary vocation is the call to follow Jesus. But we must also emphasize that this call embraces the whole of our lives , including our everyday work. It needs to effectively combine both the personal and social dimensions of the gospel and nurture a lively everyday spirituality. We need to see ways in which our work is connected to the creating, sustaining and transforming work of God. This will not be a quietist view of Christian vocation that surrenders to the status quo, but one that will contest corruption and exploitation and work to name and resist what is evil and to transform bad circumstances. We must also strive to maintain a broad definition of work that encompasses not only paid employment but also domestic work and voluntary work. In this way we can seek to live a more radical yet also more balanced discipleship through the whole of our lives. The balance will be different for different people and different at different stages in our lives. Therefore we need a view of our vocation which includes some constant elements but is also flexible enough to help us make sense of lives in which the nature and mix of work that we do is regularly changing. Employment remains an important part of life through which we express our Christian discipleship. But it is only one part of a multi-faceted life of discipleship. Unemployed people, home makers and voluntary workers have a vocation too! Our vocation as Christians does not

depend on paid employment, but it must be expressed through our employment. We also need to understand that living out our vocation was never meant to be a solitary task and we need the encouragement of committed companions and the community of faith to assist us

Alistair Mackenzie  
June 1997

**APPENDIX 3.**

**TWENTY -FIVE WAYS TO SERVE PEOPLE WHO WORK**

(According to Jacobsen 1997: 77-78)

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