

EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ
EQ

Evangelical Quarterly

**An International Review
of Bible and Theology**
in Defence of the Historic Christian Faith

Vol. LXXXIII No. 2 April 2011

Editors: I Howard Marshall, John-Paul Lotz,
John G F Wilks



Paternoster:
thinking faith

British Evangelicals and the problem of work

Stuart Weir

The author is a PhD student at the University of Edinburgh, where he is investigating a theology of work.

KEY WORDS: Work(s); eschatology; pneumatology; Spirit; temporal; material; physical; eternal; world; agency.

British Evangelicals normally make Christ-followers their sole focus when considering the subject of human work. That is to say, evangelical theologians concentrate upon the importance of work for the Christian life. If Christ has come to holistically redeem lives, this affects the way ordinary work should be performed, coupled with the types of work Christians should or should not be involved in.

Just as evangelicals concentrate upon the work of Christians, some salient Protestant reflections have identified the work of those outside the Church for theological analysis. Such thinking has also identified the Spirit's agency in cooperation with selective human works outside the Church. This agency is typically known as *common* or *prevenient grace*. *Good* works are actualised by those who do not yet follow Christ only because of the Spirit's empowering. For, '[i]f God is not at work in history, then, ... one has to credit the development of society to the work of Satan or humans.'¹ These works are deemed unsalvific by the evangelical tradition because the human agents concerned do not have faith in Christ. This lack of Christian faith renders such *good* works as merely temporal in nature. Unsalvific, temporal good work is precisely that – work which has no eschatological value in and of itself. Thus the salvific value of *good* work in evangelical theology always hinges upon the Christian faith of the agent.² A close and almost undifferentiated connection between work and its worker is in operation here.

What is required instead is a theological account that shows how all works which co-operate with the agency of the Spirit, regardless of an agent's faith, will be redeemed for the new creation. Any work performed in cooperation with the Spirit is one that will be eschatologically redeemed by virtue of its divine empowerment. Because of the divinity of the Holy Spirit, pneumatology should indeed take theological primacy in such discussions about human work.³ However, this paper is not intended to provide an account of this. Instead, a synopsis

1 Vincent E. Bacote, *The Spirit In Public Theology: Appropriating the Legacy of Abraham Kuyper* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2005), 101-2.

2 For an account of this see: Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Carlisle: Paternoster 2004); Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2006).

3 My forthcoming doctoral research aims to provide an account for this claim.

of the lay of the land of British evangelicals and ordinary work will be offered. Setting the scene in this way clears some ground and gives the subject its due context. From here some constructive suggestions can be put forth.

British Evangelicalism

What is *British Evangelicalism*? It is essential that this strand of Protestantism be defined because its expressions are multifarious and its history complicated.⁴ The word *Evangelical*, too, can cause confusion in this context. *Evangelical* will not be used as a synonym for 'Protestant', like the original and classical meaning of the term. Steadily, this original Protestant definition of *Evangelicalism* in Britain was replaced by anything that referred to the British revival movement of the 18th century and its doctrine, both exemplified by Methodism.⁵ Church Historian David Bebbington ably encapsulates the meaning of Evangelicalism as understood in many Protestant groups in Britain and North America today. He does this in an historical, sociological and theological way:

There are four qualities that have been the special marks of Evangelical religion: conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross. Together they form a quadrilateral of priorities that is the basis of Evangelicalism.⁶

I will assume this succinct definition throughout this paper as Bebbington's summation has become the best possible consensus among evangelicals.⁷

There is a generous overlap of influence between British evangelicalism and its bigger cousin in North America. However, the British tradition has not shown the same eagerness to address the theological subject of work like that of their larger counterpart.⁸ There is not yet a thoroughgoing and critical account of Brit-

4 Mark A. Noll, 'Introduction to Modern Protestantism' in John Witte Jr. & Frank S. Alexander (eds.), *The Teachings of Modern Christianity: On Law, Politics, and Human Nature Vol. 1* (New York: Columbia University Press 2006), 261.

5 David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 1992), 1.

6 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 15.

7 Derek J. Tidball, *Who Are The Evangelicals?: Tracing the Roots of Today's Movement* (London: Marshall Pickering 1994), 14.

8 For some recent North American examples, see: Cosden, *Work*; Cosden, *Heavenly*; R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective*, Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2000; R. Paul Stevens, *Doing God's Business: Meaning and Motivation for the Marketplace* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2006); David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York: OUP 2007); David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville, KY – London, UK: Westminster John Knox Press 2006); Steve Rundle & Tom Steffen (eds.), *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP 2003).

ish evangelical theologies of work by a British evangelical. By extension, therefore, there is no theology of work within the tradition that has sought to expound the spiritual meaning and theological significance of the work of 'the world'.

Because evangelicals have only given eschatological significance to the work of Christ-followers, an inherent *sectarian* duality in evangelical theology starkly distinguishes between the Church and all others.⁹ This duality demonstrates an insurmountable cleavage between what is viewed as sacred and what is secular in the world. Although the Church is sectarianly distinguished from all outside her, the differentiation between the creator and his creation is maintained.¹⁰

Such a duality, Lesslie Newbigin has correctly observed, has stemmed from pietists, many of whom, if not most, are British evangelicals today. At the time of the Reformation, by making a sharp distinction between the world of *corpus christianum* and an internal relationship with Christ, pietists disturbingly widened this divide that prohibited a true interaction with the world.¹¹ Sir Fred Catherwood concurs with Newbigin's interpretation when he criticises pietism for not acknowledging 'the legitimacy of government' as part of the divine order on earth.¹² Such a sectarian duality leaves work as an ambiguous task.

This duality serves to reveal an intrinsic danger in the evangelical mind with respect to work. As long as the interior life of faith in Christ is actualised and fostered, 'the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace', as the hymn expresses it. Work, in other words, is only of importance as it relates directly to the new creation. Ultimate salvation takes pride of place in evangelical theology and the subject of work, like all others, is perceived through its visor. Typically, then, work is deemed significant only as it initiates and creates opportunities for evangelism, for the positive results of evangelism have a direct link to ultimate salvation.

The intrinsic duality here illuminates that whenever there is faith in Christ, this is of ultimate significance and any work is merely a vehicle toward this end. Whenever any form of work enables a direct sharing of Christ, such a work is of value, but only as a means. Thus, a worker can manufacture weapons of mass destruction with a clear moral conscience because such work is a platform to potentially share Christ. An evangelical capitalist might discover a limited fuel called *lignite*, which when extracted would provide immediate capital and fuel, but only at the expense of permanently destroyed farmland. Short-term wealth creation would be at the permanent expense of productive farmland. Inwardly, the evangelical capitalist has grown wealthy; outwardly he has contributed to the earth's destruction, which ironically and inevitably will affect him also.¹³

9 N. T. Wright delineates the different views of duality in, *The New Testament and the People of God: Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London: SPCK 1992), 254.

10 Wright, *People*, 253.

11 Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (London: SCM 1969), 134.

12 Fred Catherwood, 'The Christian in Politics' in D. A. Carson & John D. Woodbridge (eds.), *God and Culture: Essays in Honor of Carl F. H. Henry* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 1993), 196-7.

13 http://www.geographyinaction.co.uk/Issues/Lignite_anti.html.

Although these examples are extreme, they serve to highlight the problematic indifference of evangelicals to honourable forms of shaping and reshaping the earth. Problematically, the evangelical worker can mutilate the earth while using it as a platform for faith sharing. In the evangelical psyche, potential opportunities for faith sharing uncritically govern reflections of work. Many forms of work are baptised and accepted regardless of the consequences for the earth. Hence, it is essential that evangelicals consider both the morality of specific types of work and their ethical effects. Without such moral deliberation the evangelical's work becomes truly secular. To 'love' Christ inwardly while simultaneously defacing the planet is so counterproductive as to nullify the interior faith. Such a duality highlights an intrinsic problem in evangelical theology.

The world

Currently, British evangelicalism and ordinary work are uncomfortable bedfellows. This is due to evangelicalism's discontented relationship with 'the world.' So what is 'the world'? In the New Testament 'the world' (*kosmos*) is created by God (John 1.3) and so loved by him that the Father sent his Son into it as a man to bring *shalom* (John 3.16). All humanity, therefore, is often represented by the term 'the world'. Moreover, 'the world' can also refer to both heaven and earth in their entirety, as the Apostle Paul says: 'The God who made the world and everything in it' (Acts 17.24). 'The world' refers, then, to all material life, as Paul again shows, 'Ever since the creation of the world his eternal power and divine nature, invisible though they are, have been understood and seen through the things he has made' (Rom. 1.20). The full range of intelligent life is also included within the concept of *kosmos*: 'we have become a spectacle to the world,' Paul says of himself and his fellow apostles, 'to angels and to mortals' (1 Cor. 4.9).¹⁴ In other words, 'the world' encompasses the entirety of God's creation.

However, 'the world', its authority and glory 'has been given over to' Satan (Luke 4.6), who is also known as 'the ruler of *this world*' (John 16.11). Human culture is marred by sin and is destructively swayed by demonic impulses. Thus, the Apostle John remarks that 'the world' is defined by 'the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride of riches', which consequently ensures that '*the world* and its desire are passing away' (1 John 2.16 -17). When used in this sense, 'the world' counters the plans of the kingdom of God.

The world is to be resisted yet simultaneously lived in. Jesus sends his followers into the world (John 17.18) while also issuing a warning in case they become enamoured by it (1 John 2.15 ff.). Consequently, 'the world' as a category, which at one stage represented redeemed creation, steadily began to disappear among biblical authors and was exchanged for the term 'the kingdom of God'. The association of 'the world' with those who deviously guaranteed Christ's crucifixion

14 E. F. Harrison, 'World' in Walter A. Elwell (ed.), *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2009), 1297.

gradually inclined New Testament authors away from the original positivity of the term ‘the world’.¹⁵

Nonetheless, the overriding definition of ‘the world’ in the New Testament, despite its alienation, is that it is primarily dealt with by divine love.¹⁶ This overriding concept of ‘the world’ does not differentiate between the Church and those outside of it. When scripture declares that God loves ‘the world’ it asserts that all humanity plus all non-human creation are included in his sovereign, providential and eschatological purposes. Also to be noted in this concept is the theological or cosmological duality between the creation and its creator.¹⁷ ‘The world’ is not being used here as a way of dualising *sectarianly* between the Church and all others. Instead, this project will demonstrate a *theological* and *cosmological* perspective of ‘the world’.

Having briefly shown what I mean by ‘the world’, I will now diagnose the key symptoms that have left British evangelical theology and ordinary work in an awkward state of discord. In doing this, I wish to provide cursory suggestions of repair of evangelical views of work. The following subheadings have been adapted from John Stott’s assessment of British evangelicalism’s trend towards asocial, if not antisocial, living in the world.¹⁸

Rejecting Liberalism

Despite the marvellous evangelical heritage of social engagement in Great Britain in the 18th and 19th centuries (i.e. Wesley, Whitefield and Chalmers), suspicion of responsibility for the world became widespread from mid-19th century to the present day. In the 19th century, American evangelicalism reacted against a form of liberalism – the social gospel, a reaction that subsequently was transferred to British evangelical circles. In John Stott’s assessment of this, the social gospel movement betrayed the *true* gospel, a movement identified primarily with Walter Rauschenbusch’s work.¹⁹ Ironically, the social gospel movement contained the same powers of social and personal reform as that of evangelicalism’s origins. In fact, the social gospel has its ground in evangelicalism.²⁰ Despite this, claims Stott, betrayal of the true gospel is manifest in Rauschenbusch’s rationale for the movement: ‘We have a social gospel. We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it.’ Further, it is necessary

15 Craig M. Gay, *The Way of the (Modern) World: Or Why It’s Tempting to Live as if God Doesn’t Exist* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 1998), 8.

16 Stephen C. Barton, ‘Johannine Dualism and Contemporary Pluralism’ in Richard Bauckham & Carl Mosser (eds.), *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans 2008), 8-9.

17 Wright, *People*, 253.

18 John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today: New Perspectives on Social & Moral Dilemmas* (London: Collins Marshall Pickering 1990), 6-10.

19 Stott, *Issues*, 7.

20 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 211.

to ‘furnish an adequate intellectual basis for the social gospel.’²¹ In averring this, Stott contends, Rauschenbusch ensures the social gospel is solely a philanthropic project which requires theological justification as an afterward for its credibility.²² Coupled with this was Rauschenbusch’s open rejection of a penal substitutionary understanding of the atonement and his suspicion of the biblical accounts of the miraculous. By contrast, penal substitutionary interpretations of the atonement had become quasi-orthodox in British evangelicalism.²³ Thus, all the social gospel movement did for evangelicals was to create anxiety over its perceived scriptural inaccuracy, and thus its Christian authenticity. Bebbington summarises this well,

The liberals were rightly perceived at the time to be innovators. They wished to modify received theology and churchmanship in the light of current thought. Inevitably their ideas were swept along by the Romantic currents that had already been flowing powerfully in the later nineteenth century. Biblical inspiration, for example, was reinterpreted as of a piece with the uplifting power of the arts.²⁴

As far as evangelicals were concerned, the social gospel’s understanding of scripture was heterodox as was its bibliology and biblical hermeneutics. This all amounted to an attack on biblical truth, which made the movement erroneous by default; to challenge the divine inspiration of scripture is strictly forbidden for evangelicals.²⁵ The social gospel’s societal responsibility and focus on work suffered a deliberate neglect in evangelical circles from the 19th century onwards, therefore, because of its association with its liberal approach to scripture and theology.²⁶

No grounds for hope

Concurrent with this raging debate, the optimism of life in 19th and early 20th centuries was rapidly quashed with the Great War. There was a grim realisation that humanity was capable of the most heinous evils due to the nature of global politics and technologies. A great pessimism and disquiet in human potential blanketed not only over evangelicals, but the whole planet. How could the confidence of human progress lead to so much savagery and destruction? Social programmes subsequently failed and the doctrine of total depravity regained a newfound credence among evangelicals. Reflecting upon this period in history,

21 Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: Macmillan 1918), 1.

22 Stott, *Issues*, 7.

23 Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker 1984), 2:815; Robert S. Paul, *The Atonement and Sacraments* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon 1960), 109.

24 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 183.

25 Stanley J. Grenz, *Renewing the Center: Evangelical Theology in a Post-Theological Era* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2000), 79-80.

26 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 264.

and in critique of the dissolute view of humankind at the time, Stott correctly enquires why there was no evangelical voice propounding the doctrine of common grace.²⁷ Instead, what gained popularity was that all 'righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth' (Isa. 64.6). This interpretation of works was particularly pertinent in Brethren theology. Due to the silent (and deliberate?) omission of common grace theology among evangelicals, work itself was perceived to be theologically irrelevant and dangerous in light of the human condition.

Millenarianism

This pessimism was contemporaneous with the influence of John Nelson Darby's theological millenarianism. His apocalyptic and premillennial views did much to take 19th century evangelical focus away from the world, which in turn resolutely resisted cultural advancement. In other words, he interpreted 'the world' as an enemy of God and his purposes. This view is guided by a particular view of the eschaton:

In the millennial reign of Christ, all the Old Testament promises to the Jewish people would have literal fulfillment, while the Church, the 'saints' of the dispensation of grace, would have no part in that 'earthly' reign. In contrast to these 'earthly' hopes of the Jewish remnant, the promises to the Church were essentially 'heavenly' in character.²⁸

The church was to avoid engagement with the world, except when evangelism was involved, and wait for Christ's *parousia*. Curiously, when this end was to take place, the Church would be transported to an otherworldly, immaterial dimension called heaven, not on a transformed physical earth with Israel.

In the 20th century, contemporary versions of Darby's premillennial eschatology made a big impact on the evangelical movement, particularly among Brethren, Pentecostal and other independent groups. Hal Lindsey and Carole Carlson's *The Late, Great Planet Earth* and Tim LaHaye's *Left Behind* series exemplify modern interpretations of ultimate escape from this material world. The future of redeemed humanity, according to most premillennialists, will not include this physical planet. The world will be destroyed (*annihilatio mundi*) and the Church will be extracted from its impending doom to a heavenly home.

It is difficult to view the material world with any seriousness if the kingdom of heaven is to be a destiny that is otherworldly and distinct from it. Work and other social engagement has very little relevance in light of such a future. This is shown by Philip Blair when he states, 'The kingdom which Jesus was calling upon men to enter was therefore not to be an outward or political kingdom. It was a kingdom which was to exist solely in the hearts of its members. It was, in

²⁷ Stott, *Issues*, 8.

²⁸ F. Roy Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement: Its Origins, its Worldwide Development and its Significance for the Present Day* (Exeter: Paternoster 1968), 129.

other words, to be a spiritual kingdom.²⁹ 'Spiritual' here refers to an immaterial reality.

Except for obedience to an elected government, and only then in cases that do not contravene kingdom values, Brethren boycotted social engagement, in such forms as political voting and involvement with Co-operative societies, due to distain for the earth and its doomed future.³⁰ The Brethren prohibited participation with any society or group; even the YMCA and temperance movement were to be shunned because they were perceived to be part of the antichrist's preparatory rule.³¹ Curiously, ordinary work is not understood as social engagement among the Scottish Brethren. Work is simply viewed as an instrumental necessity, and despite their distain for the physical world, the Brethren are renowned for their business success and savvy. Business is not to be undertaken with unbelievers however, so that 'unyoked' partnerships are prevented.³² Despite the obvious point that work is a civic necessity, Brethren groups in Scotland conveniently ignored the importance of such engagement.

Such quietism among the Brethren movement is on the extreme end of evangelical responses to work, but it highlights a worrying attitude. Some evangelicals emphasize an inward attitude of faith in Christ but an outward disregard for the world, as Blair's earlier comment reveals. As this pertains to work, souls can be saved by the cross of Christ and yet, outwardly, the world can simultaneously be mistreated, and in some cases raped, by ordinary work. The evangelical worker works in an evil world prior to ethereal heavenly bliss. The work of the material world is a 'secular' realm, whereas work that nourishes the immaterial soul of humankind becomes 'sacred'. Alan Storkey correctly remarks upon this interpretation of the sacred and secular in evangelical thinking,

The concepts [of sacred/secular] are not biblical, nor is it possible to identify the ideas in the teaching of Christ and the apostles. Christians are called to be holy, but there is no area of their lives which can then be labelled secular. There is a clear distinction between love of the world and love of God, but again this has a completely different meaning from that which secular and sacred have come to carry.³³

Looking to the heavenly Christ from the interiority of the soul takes a primary place in the evangelical heart. The only legitimate place left for work is when it becomes a place of witness and a training ground for the holiness of the soul. In this schema, the secular is a realm that is a holding pattern for a greater immaterial life in the future. Work itself, subsequently, is nothing more than a superflu-

29 Philip Blair, *What on Earth?: The Church in the World and the Call of Christ* (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press 1993), 57-8.

30 Neil T. R. Dickson, *Brethren in Scotland 1838-2000: A Social Study of an Evangelical Movement* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster 2002), 310.

31 Dickson, *Brethren*, 310-11.

32 Dickson, *Brethren*, 311.

33 Alan Storkey, *A Christian Social Perspective* (Leicester: IVP 1979), 116.

ous activity to keep our hands and minds busy until Christ's second coming. Blair summarises: 'Jesus' teaching about life's meaning continues the theme – that outward and material welfare and success are, though not inherently bad, to be counted as secondary, and of no ultimate significance.'³⁴

In terms of Bebbington's earlier definition of evangelicalism, the Scottish Brethren movement, and others groups which subscribe to such an asocial posture towards the world, end up deliberately ignoring the *activist* pillar of evangelical tradition. In the end, these groups rule themselves out from being truly evangelical by not engaging the world wholeheartedly.

Ultimacy

Combined with millenarian eschatology, the question of the heavenly worth of earthly life is continually enquired after among evangelicals. Such ultimate questions are common as evangelicals prioritise specific aspects of life in light of a heavenly destiny.

One consequence of such questioning, in light of Billy Graham's evangelistic efforts, was a global evangelical attempt to clarify the issue of mission at the *Lausanne International Congress* of 1974. A covenant was drafted which was agreed to by representatives of 150 nations. In that covenant an apology was made for the lack of evangelical social awareness and activity. Moreover, in light of a shared evangelical theology, the following statement (paragraph 5) was given as motivation for social engagement:

We affirm that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all people. We therefore should share his concern for justice and reconciliation throughout human society and for the liberation of men and women from every kind of oppression. Because men and women are made in the image of God, every person, regardless of race, religion, colour, culture, class, sex or age, has an intrinsic dignity because of which he or she should be respected and served, not exploited.³⁵

Notable by its absence in this statement is non-human creation. Humans are naturally accepted by evangelical thinkers, but the material earth does not often feature in such discussions. Much work in the world is done with, by and for human beings. However, there is also much work that seeks to shape and reshape the non-human physical world. This Lausanne statement reveals that social engagement exists for the needs of humans alone, even if social responsibility was included in the covenant.

Stott also chaired Lausanne's 21st occasional report in 1983 on *Evangelism and Social Responsibility*. In this more detailed elaboration of the *Lausanne Covenant* (paragraph 5), definitions of evangelism and social responsibility plus an

³⁴ Blair, *What?*, 58.

³⁵ Lausanne Occasional Paper 21: *Evangelism and Social Responsibility: An Evangelical Commitment*, 5.

attempt to explain their interrelation were set out. Evangelism without social responsibility, the report maintains, leaves the gospel of Jesus Christ handicapped. Both are to be interlinking partners. Social responsibility is seen as a platform for evangelism and subsequent proof of an active life of faith flowing from prior evangelism.

Critically, the report contends that, 'in the church's mission of sacrificial service evangelism is primary'.³⁶ In the end, social engagement, which necessarily includes ordinary work, although this is not made explicit in the report, is not deemed as salient as the eschatological telos of evangelism.

Even though work is only given temporal significance,³⁷ it is typically assumed that material human work does not have the same telos as evangelism, hence work's importance radically decreases. At most, the inner, immaterial benefits of work upon the human soul might be eschatologically valuable, like that of the positive results of evangelism. But the materiality of work itself, as it forms the world through human stewardship, is of little or no value in British evangelical theologies of work.

Consequently, evangelicals frequently deduce that the *vita activa* has no eschatological future and is relatively insignificant for temporal life too. The *vita contemplativa* is elevated as the 'better part' (Luke 10.42) because the future of this world is divine destruction (*annihilatio mundi*). If evangelism is of heavenly good, it takes theological priority and quickly becomes the Church's main enterprise. If material work is of no heavenly worth, the *vita contemplativa* gains mass popularity, which it has.

If Bebbington's quadrilateral definition of a true British evangelical is to be held fast, much of current day evangelicalism lacks an activist spirit, thus rendering much of current evangelical praxis unevangelical. At the very least, activism becomes a utility to enable evangelism, as Lausanne's occasional report reveals. This aversion to the importance of work among British evangelicals is not wholesale however. There have been very thin shafts of light breaking through over five decades in places.

From the 1960s to the present, Sir Fred Catherwood published vigorously on workplace issues. Tackling topics that pertained to the last half of the 20th century, this former president of the Evangelical Alliance engaged with issues such as: Christian's relationship to money, Christians and party politics, a Christian vision of social order, Christian mission in an industrial society, the Church and secularisation, and a Christian understanding of work itself. His most significant work is *The Creation of Wealth*.³⁸ Despite his being a prolific writer at an ecclesial level, Catherwood's message has largely gone unheeded by British evangelicals.

36 LOP 21, *Evangelism*, 6.

37 Richard Higginson, *Called to Account: Adding Value in God's World: Integrating Christianity and Business Effectively* (Guildford: Eagle 1993), 67-78.

38 Fred Catherwood, *The Creation of Wealth: Recovering a Christian Understanding of Money, Work, and Ethics* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books 2002).

More recently, through the influence of Joel Edwards (the former director of the Evangelical Alliance UK), Mark Greene, Ian Coffey and the London Institute of Contemporary Christianity (LICC) have begun to reverse this general ignorance of faith and work at an ecclesial level.³⁹ Seeking also to have scholarship inform the Church more directly, Richard Higginson has provided an ongoing interaction between the Christian faith and the private sector of business.⁴⁰ Higginson spearheads these interactions through Faith in Business Quarterly, which provides regular resources for both the Church and academy as they interact with a capitalist economy.⁴¹ The Jubilee Centre and The Cambridge Papers Group have also taken up the task of theologically evaluating social issues in light of an evangelical heritage.⁴² Although this group has not sought to define and draw implications from a theology of work, they engage with issues of economics and to what extent the Church should engage the state.

Two mandates⁴³

Anxiety over the competing biblical injunctions, ‘till [the garden] and keep it’ (Gen. 2.15) and ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations’ (Matt. 28.18) can manifest itself among evangelical theologians when considering work’s importance. Ranald MacAuley, however, does not believe there is an either/or decision to be made, when he states, ‘The two commissions are equally important, first because they are equally *divine and universal commands*.’⁴⁴ However, following the logic from the brief excursus about ultimacy above, the latter mandate is usually given priority because it is interpreted to have a more direct link with salvation; the latter mandate is frequently viewed as a superior dispensation to the former.

Furthermore, if the cultural mandate remains a divine command to humanity, why does the New Testament have so few references to it? And yet these references themselves are unmistakable: ‘For we are what he [God] has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life’ (Eph. 2.10); ‘He [Christ] it is who gave himself for us that he might

39 Mark Greene, *Thank God it's Monday: Ministry in the Workplace* (Bletchley: Scripture Union 2005); Ian Coffey, *Working it Out: God, You and the Work You Do* (Leicester: IVP 2008); <http://www.licc.org.uk/engaging-with-work/>.

40 Richard Higginson, *Questions of Business Life: Exploring Workplace Issues from a Christian Perspective* (Carlisle: Authentic Media 2002); Higginson, *Called*.

41 <http://www.fibq.org/>.

42 http://www.jubilee-centre.org/engage/cambridge_papers; Michael Schluter (ed.), *Christianity in a Changing World: Biblical Insight on Contemporary Issues* (London: Marshall Pickering 2000).

43 This sub-heading is not among Stott's considerations.

44 Ranald MacAuley, ‘The Great Commissions’ in Michael Schluter (ed.), *Christianity in a Changing World: Biblical Insight on Contemporary Issues* (London: Marshall Pickering 2000), 44.

redeem us from all iniquity and purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds' (Titus 2.14).

Do the two mandates belong together? MacAuley believes that the two are equally important despite the cultural mandate's subordination 'to the exigencies of salvation.'⁴⁵ Because both mandates are divinely given, while assuming the cultural mandate is still binding, the two must work inseparably. Paul Marshall concurs when he avers that, 'we must see these two mandates as essentially two aspects of the same thing – that we are servants and followers of God through Jesus Christ in whatever we think or feel or do in any and every area of God's creation.'⁴⁶ Critical to holding both together, though, is perceiving not only that salvation impacts belief and adherence to Jesus according to the Matthaean mandate, but also that salvation is a rescue mission to enable the stewards of creation to steward it once more in accordance with the values of the kingdom.⁴⁷ As mentioned earlier in evangelical attitudes towards ethical work, this is greatly required in the evangelical psyche today.

The eschatological spirit of work

In light of the gradual reconciliation between British evangelical theology and the value of everyday work, Stott wishes to reinvigorate serious reflection on human works with a focus upon the doctrine of God, theological anthropology, christology, soteriology and ecclesiology. Striking by their absence in this list of theological repairs are pneumatology and eschatology.

But the provision of a pneumatology of works is essential. Such an account would open the door to discuss how some of the world's works which might be included in the new creation. God himself will bring the new creation into being through a transformation of *this* world. Such a hope for this world stems from what Jesus taught his followers to pray: 'Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6.10). The kingdom will not be a distinct place from the world, but will eventually spread throughout *this world* like yeast does in bread. Finally, through the purifying fires of Christ's judgement, a transformation of *this* creation will emerge.

An account which shows that the agency of the Spirit in cooperation with human works should, and must, take primacy in discussing the world's work if common grace theologies are accepted. This pneumatological emphasis must draw eschatology into play because pneumatology is automatically an eschatological matter. Not only does the Spirit presently encourage and empower eschatological anticipations of the new creation (Rom. 8.18-25), but he is also the one who will bring the fulness of the new creation into being at Christ's second

45 MacAuley, 'The Great Commissions', 44.

46 Paul Marshall, *Thine is the Kingdom: A Biblical Perspective on the Nature of Government and Politics Today* (Basingstoke: Marshalls 1984), 20.

47 Stevens, *Other*, 90.

coming.⁴⁸ If the world can periodically work ‘in the Spirit’, then particular works might be caught up in the purposes of God for ultimate redemption.

Abstract

British evangelicals and ordinary work have an uncomfortable relationship. This paper seeks to clear some of the ground to not only understand why there is a fractious relationship between British evangelicals and work, but also to point the way from which some repair of the tradition could be constructed. The problems that beset British evangelicals in relation to the subject of work will be outlined. Instead of discussing the meaning of ordinary work solely for Christ-followers, this paper will instead talk of the works of ‘the world’. Having set up the context of these problems, we offer some cursory suggestions towards constructive corrections to the tradition.

48 Volf, *Work*, 102.

The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work

Darrell Cosden

This book develops the idea that Christian belief in the resurrection and new creation lead us to understand that our ordinary ‘work’ is ultimately of a great deal of ‘heavenly good’. It argues that our everyday work actually matters and makes a difference, not just in the here and now but also for eternity. The process of working and the ‘things’ that we produce through work can be valued as ultimately worthwhile precisely because they are bound up with us in our salvation. What follows from this reality is a genuine opportunity to experience a ‘spiritual’ meaning in our working lives directly related to our work itself. This book develops the idea that human work is an integral dimension of our spiritual life and journey not simply because it is a part of being human, but because it affects the ultimate shape of eternity.

Darrell Cosden is Lecturer in Theology and Ethics at the International Christian College in Glasgow.

978-1-84227-262-6 / 216 x 135 mm / 160pp / £8.99

**Paternoster, Authenticmedia Limited, 52 Presley Way, Crownhill,
Milton Keynes, MK8 0ES**