

Christian Institute: Autumn Lectures 2014

Work, wealth and responsibility



Richard Turnbull, November 2014

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Men at work



Men not at work

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Why does work matter?

- The *reality* of work
- The *challenge* of work

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‘In an ideal world capitalist work would be necessary....contrary to a widespread belief among the clergy that good work and capitalist work are inconsistent with each other.’

Deirdre McCloskey,

p462

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Why does work matter?


- The *reality* of work
- The *challenge* of work
- The *integration* of work

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‘There exists a deep hunger amongst Christians for an authentic faith that integrates the whole of life, connecting sincere piety with the complex public reality that people face each day.’

David Kim, in John Bolt, pxi

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Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920)

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‘What is foundational to Kuyper’s presentation of common grace theology is a deep devotion to the notions of God’s sovereignty and our obligation to participate in the divine call to be obedient to the lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of life.’

Richard Mouw, ‘Kuyper on Common Grace,’ in Abraham Kuyper, *Common Grace*, pxxiii

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A theology of work

- The *purpose* of work; to glorify God and serve him
- The *virtue* and *dignity* of work
- The *calling* and *vocation* to work
- The *creation of wealth*: production and exchange

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‘Work is not, primarily, a thing one does to live, but the thing one lives to do’

Dorothy L Sayers, *Why work?*

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‘Whether it’s a symphony or a coal mine, all work is an act of creating and comes from the same source....’

Quoted by Tim Keller, *Every Good Endeavour*, p45

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The virtue and dignity of work

- Work mirrors God’s creative work
- As image bearers of God, our work has dignity
- Work derives significance as undertaken in God’s presence
- The material world belongs to God

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‘It is pure invention that pope, bishops, priests and monks are to be called the "spiritual estate"; princes, lords, artisans, and farmers the "temporal estate"all Christians are truly of the "spiritual estate," and there is among them no difference at all but that of office...’

Martin Luther, Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (1520)

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‘A cobbler, a smith, a farmer, each has the work and office of his trade, and yet they are all alike consecrated priests and bishops, and every one by means of his own work or office must benefit and serve every other, that in this way many kinds of work may be done for the bodily and spiritual welfare of the community, even as all the members of the body serve one another.’

Martin Luther, Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation (1520)

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‘The vocation of the businessperson is a genuine human and Christian calling. Its importance in the life of the Church and in the world economy can hardly be overstated. Business leaders are called to conceive of and develop goods and services for customers and communities through a form of market economy. For such economies to achieve their goal, that is, the promotion of the common good, they should be structured on ideas based on truth, fidelity to commitments, freedom, and creativity.’

Vocation of the Business Leader, Pontifical Council on Justice and Peace

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‘It is the business of the church to recognise that the secular vocation, as such, is sacred...’

Dorothy L Sayers, *Why work?*

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‘...not as necessary drudgery to be undergone for the purpose of making money, but as a way of life in which the nature of man should find its proper exercise and delight and so fulfil itself to the glory of God...[It] should in fact be thought of as a creative activity undertaken for the love of the work itself; and that man, made in God’s image, should make things, as God makes them, for the sake of doing well a thing that is well worth doing.’

Dorothy L Sayers, *Why work?*

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The ethics of work

- Idolatry
- Laziness
- Responsibility and society
- Behaviour

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‘The dignity of our work requires a civil polity that nurtures and supports the liberty and responsibility of moral agents. All forms of indenture and dependency militate against such dignity and thus frustrate human flourishing.’

John Bolt, *Economic Shalom*, p35

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‘we cannot translate beneficence into the statute-book of law, without expunging it from the statute-book of the heart.’

Thomas Chalmers, *Natural Theology*

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“The first act of totalitarianism governments is to abolish the charities through which people help themselves, and which are the main obstacle to creating the total dependence of the citizen to the State.”

Professor Roger Scruton, Conservative Home Thinkers Corner, 2012

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‘The Church's approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours, and to come to church on Sundays. What the Church should be telling him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.’

Dorothy L Sayers, *Why work?*