

Capital Gains or Christians are not Working

Mark Greene

Baptized in the icy waters of Calvinist theology, the business of life, once regarded as perilous to the soul, acquired a new sanctity of life.¹

In the normal working world, personal convictions, along with hats and coats, are to be left at the door.²

1. Genesis

Does the church care about everyday 'secular' work, her members when they're there and the people around them?

Do evangelicals and their leaders?

And is there a connection between the level of Christian concern about 'secular' work and the decline in Christian values and church membership in the UK?

This study considers the interaction between work and church life among UK Christians with a particular focus on the evangelical community, a focus arising out of personal interest and out of evangelicals' historic sense of connection with the reformed theology that in Weber's view contributed so significantly to the rise of capitalism.³ The study shows that, although there has been a body of

1 R.H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1926).

2 O. Guinness, *The Gravedigger File* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1984), 84.

3 M. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Guildford: George Allen & Unwin, 1976 2nd edn.).

***Mission and Meaning
Essays Presented to Peter
Cotterell***

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British Christian work interacting with economic theory at the macro level,⁴ it has not been complemented by any widespread interaction at the micro level nor indeed by a general integration of work, vocation and business in the life of individuals or their church communities. This is not to deny the existence or belittle the variety of initiatives in this area, but simply to set them in the perspective of the overall picture that the research reveals.

2. Ways of Seeing

The theoretical framework for the study arises out of the work of Weber and issues of identity, plausibility and legitimation. In particular, I was interested in two questions:

(1) Have Christian communities created a plausibility structure which legitimates their members' roles in secular work?

(2) Do Christian communities equip individuals to participate wholeheartedly in the existing socio-economic system?

3. Sources

(a) Customised Primary Research Among UK Evangelicals

- 4 self-mounted questionnaires.
- 4 self-mounted video-taped depth interviews (Tony Knight, The Director of Studies, Henley Management College; Martyn Eden, The Director of Public Affairs, The Evangelical Alliance; Ian Lloyd, a Partner in a Christian Law Firm; Denis Cole, evangelical entrepreneur also involved with several major evangelical charities).
- Telephone interviews (David Peacock, The Director of the Music and Worship Consortium; Michael Peat, Lecturer in Apologetics, Oak Hill Theological College; Dr Richard Higginson, Director, The Ridley Hall Foundation).

(b) Published Research

- CIPL's *Christians at Work* (CAW) is the key source.⁵
- Published in 1993, nearly 370 respondents from across all major denominations, including Roman Catholic, completed

4 E.g. B. Griffiths, *Morality and the Marketplace* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982); B. Griffiths, *The Creation of Wealth* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984); D.A. Hay, *Economics Today: A Christian Critique* (Leicester: Apollos, 1989); R.H. Preston, *Religion and the Persistence of Capitalism* (London: SCM, 1979); M. Schluter and D. Lee, *The R Factor* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1993).

5 David Clark, *A Survey of Christians at Work* (Birmingham: Christians in Public Life, 1993).

questionnaires. Importantly, with the exception of the Quakers, there were no significant differences in results across the denominations. This is an interesting finding given the Catholics' greater leadership focus on work issues evident in, for example, *Laborem Exercens*⁶ and *Centesimus Annus*.⁷ There was, however, no way to break down the particular doctrinal emphases of correspondents within their denominations. Nevertheless, the majority of the CAW correspondents were described as 'lay activists', which would be an important psychographic link with the multi-denominational evangelicals I interviewed, allowing for the conclusions of the one study to interact, albeit cautiously, with the findings of the other.

There are a number of methodological weaknesses in the self-mounted pilot research and these have been noted where appropriate, but the work does seem to be indicative, though certainly not definitive, of the overall state of the relationship of evangelicals with the world of work in Britain, and may provide a platform for further study.

4. Weber

Weber proposed that Calvinism and the Puritanism that grew out of it had a particular affinity to contemporary capitalistic needs and that the communities influenced by their thought legitimated particular character traits and behaviour which in turn fuelled vigorous capitalist activity.

The issue of the extent to which there was a causal or a symbiotic relationship between capitalism and Calvinism and Puritanism, or, if causal, which most influenced the other, is not the focus here. This has been well debated elsewhere and summarised by Furnham *et al.*⁸ Few would dispute a relationship⁹ and more importantly few would dispute, as Weber argued, that certain beliefs and attitudes make it far more likely that particular groups will engage in and be successful at particular forms of economic activity. Critical to the process in the development of the so-called Protestant work ethic

6 *Laborem Exercens* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1981).

7 John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 1991).

8 A. Furnham, *The Protestant Work Ethic: The Psychology of Work-Related Beliefs and Behaviours* (London: Routledge, 1990), 11ff. Cf. R.H. Tawney, *The Acquisitive Society* (London: Bell, 1921), 10-11; R. Green (ed.), *The Weber Thesis Controversy* (Lexington: Heath, 1973); G. Marshall, *In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Hutchinson, 1982).

9 E.g. Tawney, *Religion*, 121.

was teaching that related to: (1) the purpose of work;¹⁰ (2) vocation¹¹ and priesthood; (3) interest, profit and the accumulation of personal wealth;¹² (4) predestination and the assurance of election,¹³ and (5) character formation and its suitability¹⁴ to furthering the capitalist process.

Central to Weber's analysis was that particular doctrines and character traits were not only written about, preached and taught by theologians and ministers, but that they had a significant impact on behaviour. He understood that forces both inside and outside the church were likely to make a difference to a Christian's economic behaviour. And that these forces are interactive – 'organismic' in Furness' terms.¹⁵ At one level this is so obvious as hardly to need stating. At another, as we shall see, it could hardly be emphasised enough.

5. Outside In – Christianity Today

The focus of this study is not on the wide range of external factors that have contributed to the overall decline of the church in the UK. These have been well documented elsewhere,¹⁶ and include secularisation, pluralism, urbanisation, privatisation of faith, functional atheism, the rise of individualism, hedonism and narcissism,¹⁷ choice as a dominant ethic,¹⁸ the societal impact of TV replacing the church as the primary cultural glue.¹⁹ What has not been faced with as much rigour are the internal factors that have led to the duality of life that relegates religion to the private sphere, sealing off the workaday world from the scrutiny of biblical

10 Cf. Weber, *Capitalism*, 79ff.; A.E. McGrath, *Roots that Refresh* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1992), 141.

11 McGrath, *Roots that Refresh*, 142.

12 Weber on Franklin, *Capitalism*, 53.

13 Weber, *Capitalism*, 102-15, particularly the distinction between works as a means to salvation versus a sign of election (115).

14 Puritan asceticism setting limits on consumption, activism leading to increased production; cf. K. Fullerton, 'Calvinism and Capitalism', in R.W. Green (ed.), *Protestantism and Capitalism: The Weber Thesis and its Critics* (Boston: Heath, 1959), 18.

15 Furnham, *Ethic*, 11.

16 E.g. O. Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975).

17 C. Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Norton, 1978); D. Zohar, *The Quantum Self* (London: Bloomsbury, 1990), 136ff.; Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (London: SPCK, 1989).

18 Schluter and Lee, *R Factor*, esp. 36-37.

19 E.g. C. Morris, *God in a Box* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1984), 9.

revelation, and isolating the individual Christian worker from the communal, catechistic, liturgical and pastoral support of the community of faith.

Given British evangelicalism's 'sense' of its own continuity with the Reformation and Puritan traditions, and its reference to biblical revelation as the measure of truth and right living, one might have expected the majority of evangelicals to have been taught a basic theology of work and vocation, and to have a considered critique of capitalism. One might have expected a developed framework of business ethics to motivate and constrain behaviour. One might have expected that the communities of faith would be actively supporting their members' calling in the world.²⁰ The situation, as the research reveals, is in fact quite different.

6. The State of Work – The Inside Story

Contemporary Christians do see their work as a Christian vocation:

- 92% in CAW saw their work very much or to some extent as a Christian vocation.
- 84% saw their work as very much or to some extent as part of the mission of the church.²¹

However, the phrasing of the questions would have led almost inevitably to a high affirmative score. How could a Christian not say that their work was part of their Christian life? It is the 'right' answer but does not necessarily relate to the intensity with which respondents feel that vocation to be formative of attitudes and directive of behaviour. Indeed, Clark bewailed the 'do-it-yourself theology' emerging from his respondents' replies, the 'almost total lack of theological concepts' and the predominance of words that revealed a 'values and virtues theology' – 'love, honesty, fairness and respect' within a strongly interpersonal context.²² Faith is privatised and personal, not a platform for interacting with corporate structures and systems.²³ Again this is a significant contrast with Calvin's aim – to bring 'the Geneva bourgeois under

20 Cf. McGrath, *Roots that Refresh*, 147.

21 Clark, CAW, 6.

22 Clark, CAW, 33.

23 'In the normal working world, personal convictions, along with hats and coats, are to be left at the door' (Guinness, *Gravedigger*, 84).

the influence of restraint by blessing his activity',²⁴ shattering Christendom but seeking, in Geneva at least, to found an alternative new society pervaded with biblical principle.

The lack of dynamic substance to contemporary views on work and vocation is confirmed by my research among evangelicals from a wide variety of denominations.²⁵ It revealed a sobering picture of an evangelical community largely bereft of teaching on work and vocation:

	% 1992	% 1993
1. never heard a sermon on work	50	63
2. never been taught a theology of work	75	78
3. never been taught a theology of vocation	75	87

Given that it would be safe to say that well over 75% of the sample would have received teaching on Genesis 1 – no bad place to start for a theology of work²⁶ – this represents an extraordinary omission, an example perhaps of socio-critical hermeneutical selectivity.²⁷ The doctrines are in the text but ignored in the delivery. As Richard Higginson commented:

There is a kind of unconscious conspiracy between clergy and congregation – we won't bother you with work issues, if you don't bring them up.²⁸

This dearth of teaching on work and vocation is critical. Though we may argue about which particular doctrines had most impact on the flourishing of capitalism in the reformed bosom, the theology of vocation is foundational. It is the theology of vocation which releases the Christian from the shackles of a spirituality that taught that *orare* was infinitely superior to *laborare*, that the *vita contemplativa* was more divine than the *vita activa*, whether Augustinian²⁹ or Thomist.³⁰

24 W.F. Graham, *The Constructive Revolutionary: John Calvin and his Socio-Economic Impact* (Richmond: John Knox, 1971), 116.

25 Mark Greene, Questionnaire Research, 1992 and 1993.

26 E.g. L. Ryken, *Work and Leisure* (Portland: Multnomah, 1987), 120; G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Dallas: Word Books, 1987), 67.

27 Cf. A.C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (London: HarperCollins, 1992), 379ff.

28 Telephone Interview with Mark Greene, 23 August 1994.

29 Augustine, *In Ioann. Evangel* 6, 25-26, cited in J. Van Nuis Zylstra (ed.), *Labour of Love* (Toronto: Wedge, 1980), 7.

30 Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* 3, 135, cited in Zylstra, *Labour of Love*, 8.

Furthermore, it liberated the individual from the false hierarchies of holiness inherent in the sacerdotalism of medieval monasticism.³¹ All can please God, giving the worker confidence in the spiritual value of her or his activity.

The lack of teaching is paralleled by the perception by Christians of their ministers as largely uninterested in work and vocational issues didactically, liturgically and pastorally.

CAW revealed:

- Only 3% stated local church educational programmes addressed respondents' faith and work concerns 'very much'.³²
- Only 9% said that pastoral care affirmed them in their work 'very much'.³³

Indeed, a picture of pastoral disinterest emerges with over a third of respondents either wanting the pastor to affirm them in their work or even simply to 'ask about it'.³⁴ Naturally, this may also say something about congregational expectations of ministers – they will not have answers about work issues, so we won't ask them.

Work issues are also largely absent from the corporate worship life of the church. In Clark's survey only 17% of respondents said that worship affirmed them in their work very much.³⁵ 36% of respondents were specifically critical of the separation of Sunday matters from the rest of the week by pastors.

This is further reflected in the paucity of hymns and songs on the subject. For example, David Peacock's 1993 *Hymns for the People* lists six songs under 'Work and leisure: art and science' but, in fact, none of them deals with the subject of work.³⁶ Similarly, *Songs of Fellowship 1-3*, the staple collection for many evangelical churches, contains no songs or choruses on the theme of work or any that contain references to it.³⁷ This is not to say that there are no such songs being written. As Peacock pointed out, the Iona community have produced several.³⁸ Nor is it to say that some denominational

31 McGrath, *Roots that Refresh*, 145.

32 Clark, CAW, 78/79.

33 Clark, CAW, 76/77.

34 Clark, CAW, 78.

35 Clark, CAW, 8.

36 D. Peacock, *Hymns for the People* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1993).

37 *Songs of Fellowship* (Eastbourne: Kingsway, 1987).

38 Cf. *Wild Goose Songs Book 1* (Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications): God on Earth (70); Power stalks the earth (88); The song of the crowd (90); The miraculous catch (102); Blessing and honour (112); *Wild Goose Songs Book 3*

collections do not contain songs on work; but it is to say that there are very few.

Importantly, the dearth of such songs coming from evangelicals suggests not only that work issues are not part of worship but that work is not a source of inspiration and reflection for the songwriters. It also suggests that individuals have been given no religious symbols or language with which to integrate their work with other components of their ritual experience. Harvest³⁹ is an obvious liturgical opportunity, but though most churches probably mark the occasion the absence of material that recontextualises God's provision through non-agricultural work again emphasises the likelihood that the festival is not being seized as an opportunity to legitimate all work as service to God.

Similarly, prayers tend not only to ignore the world of work but often to imply that the world of work is of no particular interest to God. A typical pattern is: 'Lord, we want to set aside all the difficulties and troubles of the week and just focus on you.'⁴⁰ At one level that is an appropriate prayer, encouraging the worshipper to focus on God. At another it is an unhelpful prayer unless the difficulties and troubles of the week are brought to God later in the service. Otherwise God becomes a kind of oasis from the Monday to Saturday world, rather than an ever present help in time of all kinds of trouble.

Work issues are also not a significant component of the way most evangelicals relate to one another, individually or in home groups. My pilot study, admittedly too crude to be definitive, suggested that evangelicals have a relatively low level of knowledge of other people's work and a relatively low incidence of conversational emphasis in home group situations – 50% hardly talk about work issues at all.

Nor are work issues a significant component of ministerial training. Of sixteen theological colleges I surveyed only four teach the theology of work and vocation. Only two had any components directed at preparing people to teach ministry in the workplace.

(Glasgow: Wild Goose Publications): God it was (43); A touching place (67); Take this moment (86).

³⁹ Pace Dow's experiments in the context of regular weekly services. See G. Dow, *A Christian Understanding of Daily Work*, Grove Pastoral Series 57 (Nottingham: Grove, 1994), 22-24. See also R. Higginson, *Called to Account* (Guildford: Eagle, 1993), 241-59, esp. 251.

⁴⁰ Source: Dr J. Weaver, Lecturer in Pastoral Studies, Regent's Park College, Oxford.

Clearly, the research method was too crude to establish accurately the overall thrust of teaching, but respondents from those colleges where material on work was included made it clear that it was not a major or defining component of the curriculum. This is a revealing finding, suggesting as it does, that work, vocation and ministry in the workplace are not issues that potential ministers are expected to address in depth.⁴¹

A further indicator of lack of interest in the area is the fact that there are relatively few books available written by evangelicals on day to day work, vocation and workplace ministry. STL, the largest distributor of books to Christian bookshops, list only fifteen books on work and vocation,⁴² of which no more than four are of UK origin, compared with fifty-three books on spiritual warfare and eighty-two on health and healing. Indeed, only six of the books by evangelicals published in the last two years have emerged from the UK and only two from people actually involved in workplace ministry.

Grove did produce two booklets in 1994, but the fact that they are numbered 57 and 94 in the 'Pastoral and Ethics' series respectively is an index of the relative historical priority of the issues among ministers. Similarly, until the publication of Dow's booklet⁴³ and Patterson's studies⁴⁴ in the second half of 1994 there was not one Bible study guide in the 1993/94 catalogues I surveyed dedicated to work, although there was a plethora of Bible study guides covering a wide variety of subjects.⁴⁵ Interestingly, the books available have not tended to sell well – an indicator perhaps of the divide between avowed interest in the issue and actual motivation to explore it – and an important reason why few are published.

Similarly, the expressed willingness of CAW's respondents to spend up to an evening a month for education/discussion on work⁴⁶ does not seem to be borne out by experience. Seminars and

41 This is further confirmed by a small pilot study I am conducting which seems to be showing that few ministers/leaders can name a book on the general field of work, vocation and ministry at work. Interestingly, only two out of nine had ever been asked for a recommendation.

42 This does not include books on social issues.

43 Dow, *Christian Understanding of Work*.

44 B. Patterson, *Work: Serving God by What We Do* (Leicester: IVP, 1994).

45 A small number do contain some material on work issues, and questions are built into R. Turner, *Working for God* (Milton Keynes: Word Books, 1994), and the study versions of J.R.W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1990 2nd edn) and *The Contemporary Christian* (Leicester: IVP, 1990).

46 Clark, CAW, 80.

conferences on work have not tended to be well patronised at the local or national level. For example:

- Christian Impact: the 1992 one week 'Market Place Ministry' conference was cancelled due to lack of interest.⁴⁷
- Spring Harvest 1994: the attendance (90) at the 'Mainstream' seminars on work was a quarter of what would have been expected from a 'Mainstream' seminar with the calibre of speakers fielded.⁴⁸
- 'The God on Monday' weekends and seminars run from Ridley Hall, Cambridge, average attendance levels at between 7 and 10. These are adequate for their objectives but, as the Director, Richard Higginson, pointed out, they are 'very hard to get'.⁴⁹

In sum, Christians may say that they are interested but in fact many are not. This assertion is reinforced by the number of CAW's respondents who say they would like to belong to a Christian group at work but don't, 36% of the CAW sample.⁵⁰ Given that 96% knew another Christian at work and the average person knew seven⁵¹ this reveals a lack of initiative in seeking to develop support groups.

A similar lack of emphasis applies to teaching evangelism for the workplace context. Leading Anglican evangelist Michael Green's comprehensive *Evangelism through the Local Church* has no material about how to equip Christians for evangelism in the workplace.⁵² In the Baptist arena the LBA⁵³ ran a sixty-six session training series on evangelism which included only a single one-hour session on evangelism in the workplace. This will rise to two in 1994/95, but is a very low emphasis, given the proportion of time people spend at work and the opportunities the context affords.⁵⁴

There is, too, an absence of Christian work heroes and models. A pilot study I conducted among 56 respondents revealed that 77% of evangelicals have no top-of-mind awareness of any Christians at all in the world of business. This contrasts with the fact that over 89% could name Christians in the world of sport and entertainment.

47 Source: Christian Impact.

48 Source: F. Beckett, Speaker.

49 Mark Greene, Telephone Interview, 23 August 1994.

50 Clark, CAW, 74.

51 Clark, CAW, 73.

52 M. Green, *Evangelism through the Local Church* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1985).

53 G. Shattock, Director of Evangelism, London Baptist Association.

54 E.g. Mark Greene, *Thank God it's Monday* (London: Scripture Union, 1994), 10-11.

Indeed, whilst the list of different entertainers mentioned was 18 and the list of sportspeople 20, all current practitioners, the total number of business people mentioned was 10, of whom only 4 were currently involved in business. In sum, Christian business has no heroes. Or to put it another way, evangelicals in work have no conscious models to legitimate their activities and do not for the most part think of their fellow congregational members in terms of models for work.

The absence of contemporary models points also to the absence of either an 'exemplary prophet'⁵⁵ or indeed an 'emissary prophet'⁵⁶ in this area. There are no well known UK evangelicals or churchmen of any denomination actively championing this cause in public. This is not to say that evangelicals have not taken initiatives. The formation of the ICCC (International Christian Chamber of Commerce), of Cornerstone International (1993), of the IBE (Institute of Business Ethics) (1986) are all indicators of interest. In addition, the highly influential John Stott founded the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (1975) specifically to address the relationship between Christian faith and contemporary society – work-related issues included – and has included sections on business ethics in his highselling book, *Issues Facing Christians Today*.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, he has never given to work and business such emphasis as to be identified with the cause, or such stress as to have changed the agenda of local churches.

Not only do Christians have few conscious models of excellence in business there is little consciousness of evangelicals' historical role in business. This is sharply demonstrated in Derek Tidball's *Who are the Evangelicals?*⁵⁸ In this recent survey of evangelical history and concerns, categories like work, vocation, business, capitalism find no place in the index, or any significant mention in the main text within his consideration of doctrine, personal evangelism, mission, evangelical distinctives or key figures. Indeed, there is no mention of nineteenth-century evangelical business enterprise or any of the highly successful innovative Quaker entrepreneurs. Given that Tidball's doctorate is in sociology, and that he has written on work

55 M.B. McGuire, *Religion: The Social Context* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1992 3rd edn), 226, referring to O. Maduro, 'New Marxist Approaches to the Relative Autonomy of Religion', *Sociological Analysis* 38, 4 (1977), 359-67.

56 McGuire, *Religion*, 227.

57 J.R.W. Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1984), 154-66 and 173-86.

58 D. Tidball, *Who are the Evangelicals?* (London: Marshall Pickering, 1994).

elsewhere,⁵⁹ these omissions are particularly interesting. Bebbington's survey of *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (1730s to 1980s) has similar lacunae.⁶⁰ Though containing several references to Quakers, he, like Tidball, does not deal with general evangelical business enterprise or indeed consider explicitly the interplay between evangelical beliefs and practice and capitalism. Business and work issues are not a significant part of the 'tribe's' culture.

There is also the perception that the Christian businesses which do exist are not in general distinctively different from other businesses in the same sector. This is, of course, a gross generalisation but it is surely not without significance that Tony Knight, the Director of Studies of The Henley Management College should say about Christian companies:

I can't think of any that stand out as being particularly Christian in their approach.⁶¹

Similarly, Martyn Eden said that he felt that they were 'modest in number'.⁶²

This marks a radical change from, say, the enterprise of the Quaker business people in the nineteenth century,⁶³ but is not surprising given the church context in which most business people operate. As Eden says:

To be radical, to be questioning about the system, actually calls for more than basic faithfulness. It calls for a willingness to think Christianly, to think about the application of biblical truth at quite a deep level. Now my experience of the church is that it doesn't actually encourage or stimulate that degree of analytical thought about the world. It is pre-occupied with doctrine in an inward looking way.⁶⁴

In fact, there is little teaching at all on capitalism in churches. Only 2 out of my 57 respondents had received any teaching on capitalism from their church. Given that this is the dominant global ideology this is a remarkable omission. Knight goes further and speaks of the

59 D. Tidball, *Contemporary Evangelical Social Thinking: A Review* (Nottingham: Shaftesbury Project Publications, 1977).

60 D. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989).

61 Mark Greene, Interview with Tony Knight, Spring 1994.

62 Mark Greene, Interview with Martyn Eden, Spring 1994.

63 See, e.g., D.B. Windsor, *The Quaker Enterprise* (London: Muller, 1980).

64 Mark Greene, Interview with Martyn Eden.

'demonology of capitalism' in the minds of many contemporary Christians, including in his analysis the very concept of profit.⁶⁵

Indeed, it may be that contemporary church culture is inimical to the kind of qualities required for the contemporary capitalist process. D.J. Jeremy in his study *Capitalists and Christians* (up to 1960) points out that there had not only been a decline of business leaders active in church life but that the type of work lay activists did had shifted markedly away from business towards the professions:

What they, by definition supposedly lacked was the drive of their predecessors.⁶⁶

His view was that the church's operational style contributed to this decline in the character of people involved. Sedgwick argues similarly and brings out, for example, the contrast between the 'religious conservatism and economic and social innovation'⁶⁷ of British Jewry with the historical suspicion and contemporary denouncement of the enterprise culture, tracing this not only to the institutional nature of the Anglican Church but to distorted theologies of wealth, work, the Spirit, and the nature of God, which stress his immutability too strongly over against his freedom and creativity.⁶⁸

Indeed, if we look at much of today's church in terms of Sculley's management paradigms⁶⁹ it seems that they would be much more compatible environments for a 'second wave' person than a 'third wave' person.

Characteristics (abridged)

<i>Second wave</i>	<i>Third wave</i>
Hierarchical	Networking
Institutional	Individual
Structured	Flexible
Likes stability	Likes change
Dogmatic	Inspirational
Affordable best	No compromise
Better sameness	Meaningful differences
To complete	To build

65 A. Knight, 'The Demonology of Capitalism', unpublished London Bible College Lecture, May 1994.

66 D.J. Jeremy, *Capitalists and Christians* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 418.

67 P. Sedgwick, *The Enterprise Culture* (London: SPCK, 1992).

68 Cf. Sedgwick, *Enterprise*, 159ff.

69 J. Sculley, *Odyssey: Pepsi to Apple* (London: HarperCollins, 1987), 95.

Contemporary business, however, needs third wave people. And so do many of the rapidly restructuring government institutions. Capitalism, as we shall discuss later, may not be getting the kind of people it needs, at least not from the ranks of the church.

In sum, the evangelical church is not preaching about work, not teaching, not praying, not singing, not integrating work into the rituals of the church services, nor making it part of its evangelistic strategy. It is not talking about it, discussing it, struggling with the ethical issues it creates, nor aware of its successful practitioners. It is not part of its history or a central component of its culture. It is not legitimating its members roles as workers in the secular world.

If one of the roles of religion is to interpret and evaluate 'the way things are to be done',⁷⁰ then in practice evangelical religion seems hardly to care about the way things are done in the workplace. In contrast to the interactive, 'organismic' relationship between capitalism, evangelical doctrine and overall historical factors that characterised earlier periods, evangelical religion hardly impinges on contemporary capitalist thinking and practice at all. If *Changing Britain*⁷¹ argued for Christians to 'constructively adapt'⁷² to what was already happening, then it seems to have won the argument. Evangelical religion has been relegated to the status of a leisure activity and it has neither socialised its members into wholehearted acceptance of capitalist endeavour nor released them from false guilt about being involved in profit-making processes. Nor indeed has it produced any significant figures who have been identified as models or charismatic champions of contemporary Christian capitalist endeavour. In addition, there is the suggestion that most Christians differ very little in their economic behaviour, suggesting that it has essentially been determined by consumerist capitalism.

Nevertheless, the failure to legitimate or interact with capitalist endeavour at grass-roots level presents problems for both capitalism and the church. For the church, silence runs the risk of leading Christians to an increasing sense of the irrelevance of their work and an inner division which can only corrode active faith. For the capitalistic process, there is the loss of the wholeheartedness that makes for creativity and confidence and risk-taking. In the enterprise culture, capitalism is probably not getting the kind of people it really needs from the Christian community. This, to some extent,

70 McGuire, *Religion*.

71 *Changing Britain: Social Diversity and Moral Unity* (London: Church House, 1987).

72 D. Forrester, *Beliefs, Values and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 42.

undermines functionalist theories that suggest that religion merely provides what the establishment needs. That said, in the UK at least, Christians are sufficiently small in number for any lack of engagement not to be missed within the overall economy. After all, capitalism also needs consumers – and apart from the fact that some Christians do not shop on Sundays, there is no particular evidence that they differ significantly in their consumer behaviour, a marked shift from what Weber termed the ‘worldly Protestant asceticism’⁷³ of the Puritan tradition.

Although working Christians do locate their work within their Christian worldview, the extent that their work has meaning, which in turn links the individuals with the larger church group, is in reality highly limited. The social group is not ‘bestowing meaning’ on the individual’s secular work. Nor, outside the ranks of the prosperity theologians,⁷⁴ is material success in business seen as a sign of God’s favour or of assurance of election, as it was within the framework that evolved from Calvin’s predestinarianism. Far from the days when discipline, thrift, delayed gratification were spiritual qualities that led to success and so, in turn, were reassuring signs of God’s election, today material success may well not be the result of such qualities and, rightly, carries no spiritual kudos. Work is still broadly perceived as a personal vocation but its social meaning is likely to be at best instrumental⁷⁵ – a way to serve society, others and fund church activities – and from the church’s perspective to be part of an overall leisure ethic; work is an unfortunate obligation that gets in the way of non-work activities.

7. The Centripetal Church

How, setting aside external social forces, has this disengagement between Christians and the world of work occurred?

Theologically, evangelicals are ill-equipped in their understanding of work and vocation. This in turn has led to a hierarchical sacerdotalism that further undermines the working person’s sense of the value of their work – the pastor, missionary,

⁷³ Weber, *Capitalism*, 170ff.

⁷⁴ E.g. K. Copeland, *The Laws of Prosperity* (Fort Worth: Kenneth Copeland Publications, 1974); T.L. Osborn, *How to Have the Good Life* (Tulsa: Osborn Foundation, 1977). For mainstream evangelicals prosperity theology is essentially heretical: see Peter Cotterell, *Prosperity Theology* (Leicester: RTSF, 1993).

⁷⁵ Source: Maccoby and Terzi, 1979, cited in Furnham, *Ethic*, 14.

deacon do holy work. Church work is holy work. What I do outside is not holy – it just brings in the money for that work.

There has also been a deficiency in creation theology, as Mahoney points out:

Put more theologically, I sometimes wonder whether Christians really do believe that material creatures are good or whether there is an eternal Manichee in many of us which considers the world and its contents eternally bad; an eternal dualist which considers material things, and their production, marketing and consumption, as not just inferior, but as positively alien to Christians.⁷⁶

Instead the world was too easily seen as the place of contamination, reinforcing the escapist, ghetto tendencies of church life, and fuelled by what some might see as the over-pietistic tendencies of the Keswick movement.⁷⁷ This was further reinforced by the failure of the church to deal with the science bogey. Science seemed to many to be the great threat to faith and, for some, technology was a two-edged sword that wrought alienation and unemployment in the name of advance. Suspicion of science and technology⁷⁸ in a technologically-driven economy cannot but lead to ambivalence at best and a debilitating half-heartedness or, at worst, a withdrawal from the processes.

Historically, the century was initially marked by a dispensationalist pre-millennialism that led to a retreat from the world and a focus on evangelism.⁷⁹ Indeed, this focus on personal evangelism persists – many of the City breakfasts and lunch meetings, not to mention organisations such as FGBMFI are concerned not with the world of work *per se* but with bringing people in the workplace to a saving knowledge of Christ.

The Church Growth movement, with its emphasis on the pastor as prime mover, the church building as the locus of activity and the neighbourhood as the primary catchment area,⁸⁰ has to some extent fed this flight from engagement at work. The Willow Creek

⁷⁶ J. Mahoney S.J., *Christian Approaches to Modern Business Ethics*, The Hugh Kay Memorial Lecture (London: CABE, 1993), 4. Cf. also C. Wright, 'Work, Lifestyle and Gospel', *The Way* 34, 2 (1994), 133ff.

⁷⁷ Cf. I. Randall, 'Spiritual Renewal and Social Reform: Attempts to Develop Social Awareness in the Early Keswick Movement', *VoxEv* 23 (1993), 67ff. Martyn Eden confirmed this in interview.

⁷⁸ Cf. Wright, 'Work, Lifestyle and Gospel', 129.

⁷⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 216-17.

⁸⁰ See e.g. R. Pointer, *How Do Churches Grow?* (Basingstoke: Marshall Pickering, 1984).

principles, unless thoroughly transposed to the UK, may well do the same, once again focusing ministers on church activities and neighbourhood-based strategies rather than the equipping of the saints for a Monday to Friday ministry.

Similarly, the primary issues of the 1980s all tended to turn the church inward rather than outward. The charismatic movement and its attendant controversies focused the church on spiritual gifts, on the individual, and primarily, though not exclusively, on experience within the body of Christ. Wimber *et al.*⁸¹ may have written on power evangelism but it was not power *evangelism* that gripped the UK church but the gamut of other gifts available.

Within the Anglican Communion there were the great debates on revelation and human sexuality and the simmering of the issue of women's ordination, all pointing the church inward. Even Sunday trading, an issue that galvanised many Christians across the denominations was about 'Sunday', the church's day, not about Monday to Friday. In the 1970s and 1980s The Evangelical Alliance was primarily focused on building unity after the Lloyd-Jones/Stott divide of 1966,⁸² and as Eden pointed out has only relatively recently begun to take initiatives in this area.⁸³ In sum, the evangelical church became centripetal rather than centrifugal.

Socio-economically the UK evangelical church was and is middle class. For much of the post-war period the middle classes were insulated from the savage rise in unemployment – the market force had been good to them and so there was little need to question the process. As recession bit deeper the cost of dissent grew. Blowing the whistle in the 1990s with boardroom ethics veering towards the illegal⁸⁴ could lead not only to losing one's job, but being thrown into a cold and largely barren job market.

Indeed, the prosperity of the evangelical community, the rise of general prosperity from the 1950s on, the decline of organised labour and the fact that, unlike the Catholic Church, there was little need to interact with the Marxist liberation ideologies emerging from deeply oppressed communities, also meant that there was little need to

81 J. Wimber with K. Springer, *Power Evangelism* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1982).

82 Bebbington, *Evangelicalism*, 267ff.

83 Mark Greene, Interview with Martyn Eden.

84 T. Burke and A. Rose, *Survey of Boardroom Ethics* (London: University of Westminster, 1993).

respond to the high esteem in which work and the worker were held by Marxists.⁸⁵

That said, there are some indications that the tide may be turning – the slight recent rise in published books, the beginnings of a shift in theological education and the call from some senior denominational leaders for greater interaction with the secular world (Mortimore at the Baptist Union,⁸⁶ Archbishop Carey's encouragement to go into 'the splendid wilderness of the world'⁸⁷) may indicate a long-term change in orientation. It is too soon to analyse the reasons for this but it is certainly not cynical to suggest that it is at least partly the product of the length and depth of the UK recession which has affected the stability and optimism of the church's traditional stronghold – the middle classes, a 'caste down'⁸⁸ as Jacques put it. Capitalism, so long a benevolent deity, has turned out to be a severe taskmaster. Equally, there is the emerging realisation of how marginalised the church and Christian values have become and how much the national church needs to move from a Christendom model for activity to a missiological one. All this is, however, a long way from radically affecting the devotional and working lives of evangelicals in particular and Christians in general. Ultimately, as Calvin understood, this is a task for those who teach and preach and care for God's people, in the context, as Northcott points out, of an 'overarching theological grounding of human values and social order'.⁸⁹ The church needs both. Today we have neither.

85 This, however, did begin to change with the international interaction that Lausanne 1 and 2 brought (Mark Greene, Interview with Martyn Eden).

86 P. Mortimore, BU Church Life Office; cf. unpublished internal paper, 'The Worldly Church' (1993).

87 Quoted in Y. Craig, *Learning for Life* (London: Mowbray, 1994), 1.

88 M. Jacques, 'Caste Down', *Sunday Times Culture Section*, 12 June, 1994, 8-10.

89 M. Northcott, 'Preston and Hauerwas on Centesimus Annus', *Theology* (Jan/Feb 1993), 34.