

Draft: Do not quote without the author's permission. This is a version of a chapter from a forthcoming book by Helen Alford and Michael Naughton tentatively titled *The Integrity of Work: The Public Role of Christian Faith in the Modern Corporation*.

*Faith, Hope and Charity:
Authentic Habits of a
Christian
Spirituality of Work*

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Abstract: Because we can never be reduced to our biological parts, most people recognize their own spiritual *nature*. Because people express this spiritual experience in a social way, and because of God's self revelation to people, spirituality is *religious*. And finally because the ultimate end of all spirituality is friendship with God, spirituality must be *prayer*, a practice that establishes a communion and dialogue between the human and the divine. This paper develops a Christian spirituality of work by integrating these three dimensions of spirituality to three core spiritual questions: Where do we come from? (origin); Where are we going? (future) and Who am I? (present).

Whatever our human function may be, whether artist or working-man or scholar, we can, if we are Christians, rush towards the object of our work as though along the path of

*the supreme fulfilment of our beings. Indeed, without exaggeration or excessive fervour in thought or expression—and simply by confronting the fundamental truths of our faith with the truths of experience—we are led to the following conclusion: God is inexhaustibly attainable in the **totality** of our action.*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, S.J.

There is deep within us a joy and hope that our lives are imbued with great purpose. We catch glimpses, experience moments, where our actions participate in meaning that floods and overwhelms our comprehension. We sense, as de Chardin indicates above, the inexhaustibility of God's presence in our lives. This sense of mission and purpose of our activity has been particularly revived through a silent revolution among people at work. Springing up throughout the country are faith-and-work-breakfasts, a cottage industry of new books on the spirituality of work, courses on faith and work at universities and colleges, and conferences and workshops exploring spirituality and work. People are asking with greater frequency from all sorts of faith traditions, "What is the meaning of my work? How is my faith expressed through my work?" How does God's inexhaustibility become operative in my day? Answers to these ultimate life-meaning questions must encompass deeply spiritual answers or not at all.

There is also deep within us a loneliness and anxiety that our lives are empty, drifting from one experience to another with no thread of unity or transcendence. Modern life may have brought technological conveniences, scientific progress and financial security, but we feel it has done so at a cost of increasing personal fragmentation and loss of community. T.S. Eliot captures this problem well with several questions:

'What is the meaning of this city?

Do you huddle close together because you love each other?'

What will you answer? 'We all dwell together

To make money from each other?' or 'This is a community?'

This absence of meaning of modern life has been particularly acute for "Generation Xers," that generation of young people from college age to mid-twenties. Seeing himself as an example of this generation, Douglas Coupland, in his book *Life After God*, confesses that his own journey has led him to the inadequacy in his own self-sufficiency:

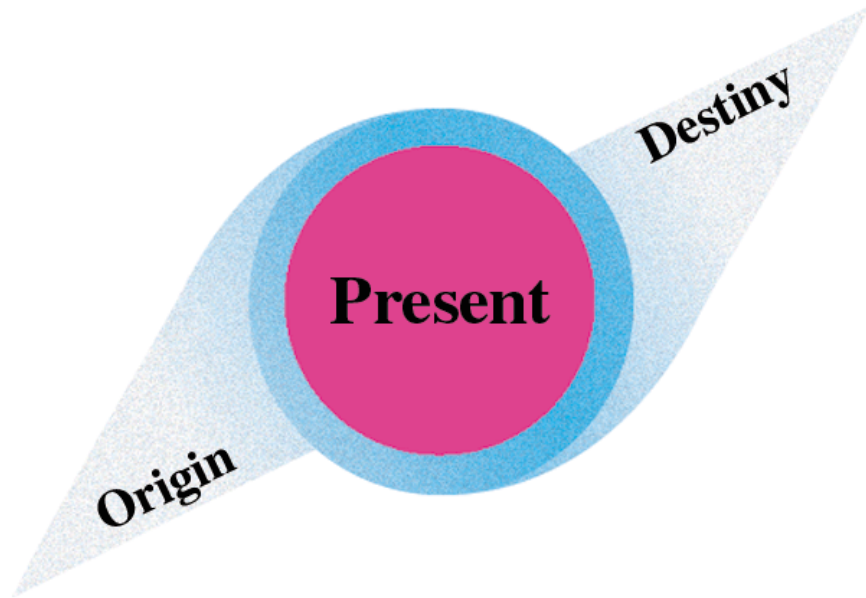
I tell it to you with an openness of heart that I doubt I shall ever achieve again, so I pray that you are in a quiet room as you hear these words. My secret is that I need God--that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love.

Coupland's confession is at core a spiritual experience since it brings him to the shattering recognition that the material world cannot fix his own human fragility. He realizes he is far from whole, that his own resources and capacities in the search for meaning and happiness are not enough. Yet, he also recognizes that his own brokenness does not deplete his desire for virtue and unity of which he cannot give.

Our search for meaning as well as our fear of emptiness brings us to what we call *spiritual* questions and answers. Like love, spirituality is so expansive that it cannot be easily reduced to quantifiable statements or fully captured in a paper or any amount of words. But also like love, "the merest hint of its absence causes immediate distress." Like Coupland, most of us know that we are spiritual beings. We are more than our bodily parts, even though we struggle to put words to it. This struggle arises from the nature of the experience. Spirituality is not a consumable good we possess or command, even though our consumeristic culture tempts us to see it so. We can unfortunately treat spirituality as if it were something like our car or computer, where if we get the right one and use it correctly our life will become easier, more productive and successful, and at the same time more meaningful and less depressing.

Spirituality is not a *possession*. It is rather a *participation* in the "inexhaustible" truth of reality. We often experience the spiritual when we realize in our "time" bound experience a *participation* in the "infinite" that enables us to make sense of our life as it is meant to be. This spiritual experience is manifested when we understand and feel in a particular moment the whole of reality by realizing in the present moment both the past and the future. We awaken to our spiritual life when we see in the *present moment* both our *origin* and *destiny*, both our beginning and end. As a spiritual people, we know that to understand who we really are, we must explore where we came from and where we are going. Receptive to respond spiritually to others, to respond to the inexhaustible mystery of the other, we see in the other person both God's created image (beginning) and God's gift of salvation (end) and respond in true freedom to that person with love (present).

Spiritual Insight



Because work for most of us is an important piece to the integration we seek, a *spirituality of work* is critical to heal our own lack of integration within our lives and to live with greater unity and integrity. Spirituality of work is that divinely inspired human capacity to pattern our life where we can integrate what we believe to be true and the good we work for, an integration that participates in the inexhaustible but recognizable presence of God.

Because we can never be reduced to our biological parts, most people recognize their own spiritual *nature*. Because people express this spiritual experience in a social way, and because of God's self revelation to people, spirituality is *religious*. And finally because the ultimate end of all spirituality is friendship with God, spirituality must be *prayer*, a practice that establishes a communion and dialogue between the human and the divine. This paper develops a Christian spirituality of work by integrating these three dimensions of spirituality to three core spiritual questions: Where do we come from? (origin); Where are we going? (future) and Who am I? (present).

1. The Spiritual Nature of the Person: The Structure of Desire

It is important to note that for the most part, the recent deluge of interest in spirituality at work did not originate from churches or synagogues, theologians or philosophers, nor even with business schools at religiously inspired universities (although many of them are now responding). Much of it came from practitioners themselves, employees and managers who, in their search for meaningful work, found a capacity to be stewards and collaborators with a transcendent force. This practical spiritual experience, however, is too often countered by obstacles in their organizations and in their own spiritual upbringing to realize this spiritual dimension of their work. Yet, despite an overly secularized environment as well as a poor spiritual formation, many managers and employees still see that work is not fully understood, that is humanly understood, unless it is understood and lived spiritually.

Because we are "spiritually hardwired" we can never escape the spiritual dimension of life and work. When we are attentive to our experience as persons, we sense that there must be something more, something to be transcended. There is within the human person that natural "built-in" desire for self-transcendence, again, a participation in an inexhaustible reality. We see this transcendence operative in our search for knowledge, those things which are beyond ourselves. Knowledge is a spiritual good when we participate in the reality before us and not merely create our own version of that reality. We also see it in our desire to love, in giving ourselves to others. Unlike animals, we have the capacity, the freedom to reach beyond our own physical and bodily needs and limitations. Actually, we know that our fulfillment as persons is linked to this capacity to self-transcendence. People desire things to be good because they seek to become more than who they are. We desire non-material realities because we know we are more than just bodies. We are embodied spirits.

With this spiritual nature of who we are, it is natural to begin to look at work in spiritual ways. Work is an act from the *whole* person who is both body and spirit partaking in the action of work. Our work, because it originates from the whole person, cannot be captured in the confines of a financial transaction. Because of this human spirit, our hearts are restless, unable to accept a mere financial description of an activity that takes a significant amount of our life. The human spirit prods us toward resting in a meaning that embodies the spiritual realm. Consequently, to make sense of our work, we seek to integrate the deepest dimensions of our self-understanding with our work precisely because we know we can *develop* through our work. We realize that to develop ourselves, to understand reality as it is, we need greater integration between what we believe and what we do; otherwise, we increasingly push a wedge between work and action becoming evermore hypocritical.

This openness, this desire to bring our whole selves to work is in one respect the origin of what we mean by a spirituality of work. In its initial expression, a spirituality of work is an attitude of the mind that constantly asks three simple but profoundly human questions:

Where do I come from? (origin)

Where am I going? (destiny)

Who am I? (present)

These are not just any old questions. They describe the structure of spirituality itself. To understand the present I must understand my origin and destiny; to understand who I am, I must explore where I came from and where I am going. Coupland himself suppressed these questions only to find out that by avoiding them he avoided himself.

Origin Destiny Present

Where do I come from?	Where am I going?	Who am I?
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Where do I come from?: This is a very natural question, which begins at childhood. In order to know "Who I am?" we must know "Where do I come from?" When a child asks a parent "Where do I come from?" the child is asking for help to understand herself. Engaged couples are encouraged, for example, to discuss their "family of origin" with their future spouse on the premise that where they come from will significantly affect their marriage and future family. Since their families of origins are different, couples will face conflicts over issues such as raising children, male/female roles, finances, religion, conflict resolution and so forth. Not to understand these origins, is often not to understand the marital conflict at hand, which often intensifies the problems. But here we are talking about our human or ultimate origin. Do we have a common human origin and if so what is it? Does this human origin reflect a common image that influences the way we work and behave?

David Whyte explains that "we can create only in our own image. That is, everything takes form according to the consciousness that shaped it. If our self-image is small and restricted, or cold and inert, then what we produce will most probably be stillborn, like its maker." If we see our origin as a fluke, our work will be a fluke. If we are self-made then our work will be only for ourselves. But if we are made for a purpose, for a reason with transcendent meaning beyond our expectations, then our work will be purposeful and always ready to go beyond our particular understanding of it.

Where am I going? We are by nature teleological beings, people who act with an end or purpose. All of us know we have some destiny. We speak of following our journey or path in terms of going somewhere. We exist not simply to exist, but to arrive at a place and be changed in a particular kind of way. And it's not just the getting there that matters. What also matters is where we end up. It is impossible to talk coherently about human beings without articulating to some degree where we want to end up.

When older adults were asked "What 3 things would you do different if you could live your life over again?" the top items were:

- I wish I could be more reflective.
- I wish I could have been more courageous.
- I wish I could have contributed more.

When these older adults came to where they were going, they were not always happy with who they became. For many of these retirees, their regrets centered on their work. They worked too much, failing to develop the more contemplative side of their nature. They came to retirement without the reflective habits that would allow them to flourish in retirement. In their more honest moments they could only say what Lee Iaacco said on the front cover of *Fortune* magazine: "How I flunked retirement." They worked too bureaucratically never taking risks, especially moral risks. They "discovered a capacity for cowardice in the face of their own destiny, a refusal to live the life that has beckoned them." And finally they too often worked only for themselves strategically advancing their careers with an upward mobility like the tower of Babel. When they reached the top they realized that what they strove for was nonsense, babel. Because we are social beings, we want to contribute to society. To come to the end of our lives and the "headstone has our name inscribed about two columns--our net worth and our liabilities" that equals zero indicating "a life that gave nothing to anyone" is indeed a great tragedy. As it is often said, deathbed regrets are rarely in the form of more money or greater career success, but rather in the form of failing to develop meaningful and spiritual relationships.

Who am I? The famous Socratic dictum, "The unexamined life is not worth living" brings us to the present moment to ask, "Who am I?" People, particularly those in managerial and professional work, are often tempted to reduce their self-identity to their work identity: to the activities and accomplishments of the organization they work in. They do this by ignoring the spirit, cutting themselves off from other institutions such as the church, synagogue, civic organizations, community groups and family. By ignoring the

outside world of the organization, "we forge a small identity held within the narrow corridors of the building in which we work."

And yet, many people find this unacceptable. People know there is more to work than money, self-interests and image. They have grown tired of seeing their own narrow interests as the final arbiter of reality. In the depths of their reflection they know work can be a source of spiritual nourishment. Like them, we know that our own identity must encounter not how much I have, but what kind of character have I become. For ultimately, what counts is not how much we make but who we become in the making. And what we become depends on what we give of ourselves. Coupland's words describe this so well. His life is a gift, and to give himself authentically calls for more power than the autonomous self can give. It calls for a transcendent power greater than himself, which is why a relationship with God is so critical to our question: Who am I?

On a natural level, then, we awaken to our spiritual nature when we begin to see in the *present moment* our *origin* and our *destiny*, when we *participate* in meaning that is larger than our own self-creation of the world. We develop our spirituality when we see in time, the eternal pointing us to our ultimate meaning. We find in these spiritual timeless moments, the inadequacy of explaining the present moment only in economic or careerist terms. We begin to see why so-called worldly goods cannot have ultimacy in our lives. While money, work, power, status, fame, pleasure, etc are goods, they lack the ability to fill human meaning precisely because no finite good can explain our origin, our destiny or ourselves.

2) The Theological Virtues: The Structure of Grace

While our human experience tells us that we are spiritual, that a mere physical or even psychological explanation of ourselves and of our work fails to capture the mystery of our experience, we are, nonetheless, left with the question of "What next? Am I the source of these profound questions? Do I have the resources to provide adequate answers to my initial experiences? Is my spiritual nature sharable with others or am I the sole arbitrator to its meaning?" Our experiences of ourselves points us to something larger, something spiritual, but our own personal interpretations of those experiences can leave us isolated, leading to a contraction or worse a distortion of our ourselves, rather than to an authentic expression of our own spiritual nature.

In other words, human experience can take us only so far. Thomas Aquinas explains that the truths about spirituality and about God in particular "when investigated by reason [and experience] comes at great length to but a few and then mixed with many errors." That we know we are spiritual and that God exists is felt and known by many people. What spirituality is for and to Whom it is directed, however, is far from clear precisely because our spiritual life and experience outstrips our reason and feeling and our ability to fully understand. Spirituality exceeds our human capacity, which is why we need more than human endeavors for our spiritual life to flourish.

Our experience of ourselves, then, ends not in self-sufficiency, but in a certain incompleteness that calls for more than we can give. Because our vision of spiritual matters "is always fragmentary and impaired by the limits of our understanding," our spiritual life, if it is to flourish, calls for a community of people who recognize their brokenness and seek to be made whole not by their own efforts. This is precisely why religion is so important to spirituality. It provides a community of life and worship to accept, cooperate with and develop this life of virtue, God's grace, more readily. The word religion itself comes from the Latin *religio*, which means to reconnect, to bind us back together to God through a community of people that extends through time. This reconnection occurs through, as Alasdair MacIntyre explains and Douglas Coupland experienced, "the acknowledgment by oneself of radical defect [which serves as] a necessary condition for one's reception of the virtues of faith, hope and charity." This religious community, the church, is sustained and developed through the participation and cooperation of *faith, hope and charity*. It is these three virtues which serve as a bedrock to a Christian spirituality of work.

It is important to note the centrality of virtue to the Christian spiritual life. If virtue is that which develops us, that which makes us happy (patient, kind, just, temperate, courageous, etc), how do we develop our spiritual desire? The development of our spiritual nature occurs in relation to our final end, God. In the end, it is God who attains us, not we who attain God. In accepting this grace, God's free offer of a relationship in His self-communication, we cooperate and grow in relationship with God, which we call the virtues of faith, hope and charity. Like all human inclinations, the spiritual life needs to develop a habitual characteristic. Ignatius of Loyola, for example, describes the spiritual life in terms of exercises. Given God's grace we have the ability through our will to reject or accept God's grace. If we cooperate with this grace, we develop our whole selves by becoming ever more attentive to God's presence in our lives, that is, we begin to see in each present moment God's creative and redemptive designs. God infuses faith, hope and charity into us, but it is an infusion that calls for our free cooperation. We are also free to reject God's grace which is also a rejection of our own selves.

Without a revelatory gift of grace that brings to light and develops our spiritual nature, we are left only with our occasional spiritual ruminations that we ought to be something more at work, but we are never quite sure what that something more should be. Spirituality cannot be generic by remaining at its so-called "natural level," since it longs for something that the person cannot give. Virtue is the enhancement of the person. Our development as persons cannot be achieved by ourselves alone. The virtues of faith, hope and charity, what we call the theological virtues "is an ennobling of man's nature that entirely surpasses what he 'can be' of himself," which is paradoxically something he is meant to be. Without cooperating with God's grace we wallow in sin, which as Georges Bernanos wrote on his deathbed, "'causes us to live only at our surface'" preventing us from developing our humanity. Faith, hope and charity, God's self-revelation to us, help us to discover the meaning of lives. "It is only the kind of knowledge which faith provides, the kind of expectation which hope provides, and the capacity for friendship with other human beings and with God which is the outcome of charity" that penetrates the three fundamental questions of the spiritual life: Where do I come from? Where am I

going? and Who am I? These virtues are not earned through our own achievement, but rather they are given to us when we open ourselves through confessing our own fragmentation. Since God is our common good, we will be permanently dissatisfied if we seek our development only in finite goods. It is the virtues of faith, hope and charity that inform us in a way of life that allows to become who we are meant to be. It is these virtues that make sense of the cardinal virtues by answering ultimately why we should be just, prudent, moderate, and courageous, not because in the long run it will make us more successful, a prediction that is simply not possible to determine, but because it brings us in greater solidarity with others and with God.

Beginning End Present

Faith (Creation)	Hope (Salvation)	Charity (Incarnation)
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a) Faith and Creation: Where do I come from? The question of human origin, what Christian theology calls the doctrine of creation, is found in the first book of the Bible:

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.' . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

One of the foundational aspects of our faith in God's creation is that we are made in the *image of God*. While we have been created in God's image, and no matter what we do or neglect to do, the image can never be completely erased from our being, our image of God contains a certain dynamism that is fulfilled from our activity. We are called to become more like God by freely participating in God's creative activity. We are created with great potentiality as an image of God that blossoms through our free relationship with God in our free actions.

Our image of God, then, becomes clearer in our *imitation* of God. At the end of each day of God's creation or work, God says, "It is good." Imitating God's creative activity, who is the maker of only good things, we too should look back on our work and ask, "Was my work good?" In the Talmud, Rabbi Hama comments on this imitation theme:

Just as God clothed Adam and Eve when they were naked, *we* must supply clothes for the naked poor. Just as God visited Abraham when he was healing from his circumcision, *we* should visit the sick. Just as God buried Moses, *we* must bury the dead. Just as God comforted Isaac after the death of his mother Sarah, *we* should comfort mourners.

If our work is to imitate or participate in God's work, it must be work for the good of others. Yet, it would be a mistake to see clothing the naked, visiting the sick and consoling the mourners as only acts of liberality done through volunteerism. Rabbi Jeffery Salkin points out that imitating God in these three areas speaks to the millions of people involved in the clothing business (the naked), medicine/managed health care (the sick), and funeral services (the mourner). Our work, if it is to be good work, must imitate God's work. Our whole being was made in the image of God. In creating us, God did not departmentalize us into different spheres--economic life, a social life, a religious life, a family life, a political life. God made us one person where our whole life participates in God's ongoing creation.

Our faith brings us to a deeper understanding of where we come from. Faith provides a new sense of reality that does not discolor it, but penetrates its real meaning. Faith corrects our vision of life's meaning as a new pair of glasses with the correct prescription corrects our vision of the physical reality. This correction does not come from within, just as the correction of the eyes does not come from within. Faith enables us to see the dignity of work rise out of creation itself--that God's creation did not stop after six days, but we have been called to carry on God's work in collaboration with our work. Not to see our work in light of God's work is to misunderstand work itself.

b. Hope and Salvation: Where am I going? To fully understand where we come from, we must understand where we are going. "The beginning is only truly and completely known in the light of the end." As pilgrims en route to a promise, faith reveals to us God's reach to have us share in His divine life. Our ultimate destination, that which we are made for, is God's kingdom and eternal life. While we may find it awkward to speak of salvation, of heaven, of entering the kingdom of God, a Christian spirituality of work would be deficient, and fundamentally incomprehensible, without reference to our ultimate end. It is precisely a spirituality of work that brings us to our end, our *teleos*, in order to understand more clearly our present. In other words, if there is not eternal value of work, there can be no lasting "present value" no matter how complicated the formula.

In light of this end that we still wait for, an important habit within a spirituality of work is hope. *Hope* is the habit of having our ultimate end in mind and heart. Hope, as Paul Wadell explains, "fixes our attention on the best thing that can happen to us--the full

assimilation of ourselves in God--and sees this as the only genuine and acceptable fulfillment of ourselves."

This hope reveals to us two critical insights for our work. The first insight is that our journey can never be fully realized or completed this side of death. We must never *overinvest* ourselves in work thinking it will bring us to our full completion. For successful managers and professionals, there is a danger the Christian tradition describes as the Pelagian heresy—the false hope and overconfidence that we can achieve on the basis of our performance and actions our own development, our own perfection, our own salvation so long as we have the proper tools. Success often tricks the human ego to hope in the objects of their accomplishments. As one person put it "If I believed in God as much as they believed in the market, I would be a mystic." There is within managers and professionals, the temptation to forget their finitude that leads to "a self-deceptive reliance on a security that has no existence in reality."

The overconfident manager, politician, academic, doctor, lawyer who seeks to escape his existential plight of uncertainty does so by escaping into the apparent certainty of his own skills, tools and achievements. This is accomplished through the gravitational pull of success and the repulsion of discomfort and failure. This is evident in the story of David Durenberger, former US Senator from Minnesota.

At the height of his legal difficulties over various issues and near the end of his term as US Senator, Durenberger gave a talk at a faith-and-work-breakfast meeting in downtown Minneapolis. He started off telling the group all the great things people have said about him, providing a list of successes that characterized his political career. At the end of this litany he paused and confessed he made one mistake—he actually believed what these people said about him. He explained that as Senator he was smothered with power, compliments, prestige, and esteem. Unwilling to resist their appeal, this fame distorted his own self-understanding because he actually believed he was powerful, competent, and superior. As his political career progressed, however, Durenberger's family and spiritual life digressed. As natural in all of us, he gravitated toward his political successes and ignored familial and spiritual problems. He constantly said yes to career and no to family and the spiritual life. This led to a divorce, alienation from his children, and a decreasing amount of time in reflection, worship and prayer. The overconfidence in his own abilities at work, along with the help of people who fed this overconfidence, gave him a false hope that all would be well. But all was not well because he depended upon only himself and his political skills. It was only through a spiritual pilgrimage that Durenberger saw his hope misplaced, which gave him the insight and courage to reflect so honestly on his missteps.

Hope brings to our work a second insight—that the end of this journey is inextricably linked to what we do today. We must never *underinvest* ourselves in work to think of it as insignificant and meaningless. While our hope lies beyond death in the kingdom of God, it nonetheless colors our actions, including our work. Hope does not excuse us from inaction as we wait for the kingdom. It does not justify injustices and inhumanity because in the kingdom all will be well. Rather, hope in God's kingdom inspires and orders us to

the virtue of magnanimity that "aspiration of the spirit to do great things." Aquinas and Aristotle called magnanimity "‘the jewel of all the virtues’, since it always--and particularly in ethical matters--decides in favor of what is, at any given moment, the *greater* possibility of the human potentiality for being." It calls for "discernment." While, hope prevents overconfidence by tempering our false belief that our achievements are our own, it gives us the courage to attempt great things related to the greatness for which we have been made. Hope will help us discern our vocation by asking, "Is this the work I have been called to do?" "Have I used the right principles to discern the work I have chosen?" "Is this job the one I should stay in?" "Is this the major that will help me flourish as a whole person by contributing to the common good?"

What kills our desire for greatness, what kills the soul more surely than most vices, is despair. We want to believe in such greatness, we want to have hope in something better, but we are not sure we can. Our lives and work suffer from the temptation of despair, a despair that refuses to do great things, a despair that prevents us from being ourselves.

This despair has many expressions. The most obvious is cynicism—that person who refuses to believe in goodness. Anita Roderick, CEO of the Body Shop, sees cynicism as one of the greatest daily obstacles to overcome in creating a healthy organizational culture (see *Business Ethics Magazine*). Cynicism is particularly alluring to those who experience failure at work. And since all employees experience failure, cynicism is like the volcano constantly ready to erupt. Most people who enter organizations are not cynics, rather, they become cynics. They enter organizations with great expectations and optimism to do good things and make useful contributions. However, through various disappointments such as lack of promotions, poorly designed jobs, other cynics on the job, and a dysfunctional culture, they develop attitudinal defense mechanisms that shield them from future failures by reducing all motivations to a game.

In Christian spirituality, this despair, this cynicism is a disease more dangerous than any cancer that invades the body. For it damages the soul by preventing God's grace and human love from working in the person. As Jesus explains, be careful of what kills not the body, but what kills the soul. (reference). Usually the cynic has too long endured suffering and disappointment by himself. His pain has turned into an attitude that nothing good can come from work. He then begins to develop the habit, and this is what makes him the cynic, of constantly deflecting all problems outside of himself, to management, to employees, or to *the* system. The cynic never sees himself as part of the problem. Unlike Coupland and Durenberger, the cynic cannot "confess." For he thinks himself too smart to be part of the problem and no one will fool him otherwise. For him work is a game and to see it as anything else leads to naivete, idealism, and foolishness. Yet, in the end the cynic fools only himself, because he refuses to be what he was meant to be. While he appears to know many things, "he is incapable of fixing his gaze on the things that truly matter. Therefore, he can neither order his mind (*Prov 1:7*) nor assume a correct attitude to himself or to the world around him."

We overcome cynicism and its root of despair through the daily habit of hope. Hope is God's assurance that all will be well, not in some naïve form of sentimentalism that

denies the brutality of reality, but in the eschatological confidence that the full fruit of our actions and intentions inspired by God's grace will bring us to the kingdom of God. Hope provides us the "art of not yielding to despair" and the resources not to capitulate to our "crises of finality." By creating in us a joy that cannot be corrupted by disappointment and failure, a joy that while never complete sustains us through the toil of our work, hope brings to us in the present moment the end we have been created for.

Hope enables us neither to overrate nor to undervalue work. Yet, while hope is *the* sustaining virtue in a world that wears us down and detracts us from coming closer to our true good in this journey, at the end of the day even ideal temporal communities cannot fulfill the spiritual yearning of the human soul, a yearning that can only be quenched by that charity which is friendship with God

c. Charity and the Incarnation: Who am I? "So faith, hope and charity abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." The virtue of charity or love is the greatest virtue because it brings us to that relationship which reveals to us who we are: friends with God. This is the radical foundational claim of Christian spirituality, that our vocation in life in all that we do is to deepen our friendship with God for the human race and by doing so we become "'more and more a person.'" The Incarnation, God's revelation in Jesus, where "the Eternal enters time," models through his life, death and resurrection what it means to be friends. Jesus tells his disciples "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends." It is in charity, God's friendship, God's self-communication to us that we come to know ourselves and come to know our work. As Augustine prays, "God, let me know you and know myself."

Critical to authentic friendships is *benevolence*. To be benevolent is to seek the other's good. True friends have their friend's good as well as their own at heart; they take what John Finnis calls a "third viewpoint," which is neither theirs nor their friend's, but one that takes both into account. To work for the well-being of another means not just hoping or wishing for it, and not merely developing the appearance of friendship to cover enlightened self-interest. Rather, true friends delight in the happiness of each other and will each other's good. Because God knows our good better than we ourselves or any other friend, Friendship with God is paramount to being authentic friends with others.

To know another's good is to know what makes the person suffer. A story of two drunken peasants helps us to get at this deeper notion of friendship:

A rabbi was visiting the owner of a tavern in the Polish countryside. As he walked in, he saw two peasants at a table. Both were gloriously in the cups. Arms around each other, they were protesting how much each loved the other. Suddenly Ivan said to Peter: 'Peter, tell me, what hurts me?' Bleary-eyed, Peter looked at Ivan: 'How do I know what hurts you?' Ivan's answer was swift: 'If you don't know what hurts me, how can you say you love me?'

If we do not know the sufferings of another, we fail to share in the depths of true friendship, because we fail to understand what is good for them.

Our love and friendship for others cannot be understood without the cross, without understanding what makes people suffer. Our ascent to deeper and greater friendships must be "in touch with the depths of human misery." This is why the cross and death of Christ for the early Christians became cornerstones of Christian spirituality. It expresses the depth of true friendship. Christ's love for us expressed through the cross deepens our sensitivity to those who suffer around us. By emptying ourselves as Christ emptied himself (Phil 2:7), we, like Christ, bear the sufferings of others. A mark of spirituality, then, should be an increased *vulnerability* which in Latin means "capable of being wounded" so as to serve the good of another. Christian spirituality does not seek to escape the world looking for the emotional comfort without exacting the high price that love demands. It does not seek to escape the sufferings in the world of work, since as Bernard Lonergan explained, "[w]hen everyone is dodging suffering, when no one accepts it, the burden is passed on forever."

Without God's love in our lives, we run the danger of becoming people who zoom by those who suffer, not necessarily causing their suffering, but doing nothing to alleviate their suffering. Managers and professionals caught in their upwardly bound careers do not take a second look to see whole story. It is our friendship with God that stops us long enough to see the full picture.

We cannot have an authentic spirituality of work unless we understand the sufferings of those in the workplace. As Christ seeks our good by suffering on the cross, we must seek the good of others by taking on their sufferings. A spirituality of work must always end in love, a love that leads us to a deeper participation in God's love bringing a deeper sensitivity to the sufferings of others. A Christian spirituality of work crafted in charity aims to alleviate as much suffering as possible in the workplace. A spirituality of work that fails to develop a "disciplined sensitivity to the sufferings of others" becomes a form of angelism, a disembodied spirituality.

We respond more fully to our spiritual purpose when our lives are guided by the Spirit of God revealed through our participation in the graced life of virtue. Our friendship with God does not impel us to impose our religious beliefs on others, restricting their religious liberty. On the contrary, charity as well as faith and hope motivate us out of love for God to be collaborators with Him to create organizational conditions that help others to develop by prudently designing human work processes, justly establishing livable wages, tempering the disparity of wealth, communicating honestly, and courageously developing socially good products. A spirituality of work brings us to a clearer understanding that people are the subject of work not an instrument of strategic maneuverings. Faith, hope and love provide us the habits, in the words of Charles Handy "to live so that others can live better after I have gone," Animated by God's love, the cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, temperance and courage describe the habits necessary to create structures in the workplace that help people to develop which in turn helps us to develop. Our spiritual life is expressed through the moral life at work as living our response to God's grace. It is not

merely an add on to work. Any ethic that attempts to deny or relegate this spiritual dimension of human work, cannot be Christian. A Christian spirituality of work is precisely what enables us to know what our work is: a friendship with God for the human race. Any other description of work that fails to capture this core insight is deficient.

3. Three Rhythms of Prayer: The Structure of Practice

This brings us to the third level and to the heart of a spirituality of work: prayer. If we are to build upon our natural spiritual desire, if we are to nurture the graced habits of faith, hope and love, we must order and structure our day "to practice the presence of God." To see, as Teilhard de Chardin insightfully explains, that "nothing here below is profane." The heart of spirituality is the way we order our day to pay attention and become aware of God in our day to day lives so as to participate and flourish in the Spirit of God. There are many ways to structure a daily spirituality of work. We offer one possibility which we call the three rhythms of prayer: body, church and day. The focus here is how we start our day. What is the first thing we do when we wake up? What habits do we start our day with and what rhythms are we attentive to.

Rhythm of the Body: Daily Silence In July of 1995, we were in Calcutta, India giving talks where our host, who was Hindu, arranged a meeting with Mother Teresa. As we were leaving, Mother Teresa, with laughter in her voice said, "Let me give you my business card." It had no address or telephone numbers, but rather an insight of how we should order our day:

The fruit of silence is prayer.

The fruit of prayer is faith.

The fruit of faith is love.

The fruit of love is service.

The fruit of service is peace.

Mother Teresa

What we have in Mother Teresa's business card is a critical insight to a spirituality of work. Silence is first, since "only the silent hear." A precondition to any spirituality of

work is silence. We live in a very stimulated and noisy world where spiritual wisdom is drowned out by the constant hum of information. We need time in our day to hear things that are difficult if not impossible to hear at work. Not to take time for self-reflection in silence is to absent oneself from a deeper wisdom about who we are and what our work is for. It is the wise person who "seeks the silence that deafens every fool." For we cannot develop our soul's capacity to perceive the reality of the world without silence. In silence we confront our "inner emptiness" which can lead us to respond in *kenosis*, that is, to recognize one's emptiness so as to receive God's fullness. As Johan Verstraeten explains, "In stead of controlling or managing the universe, one develops an attitude of pure receptivity."

Practice: How can we in our silence, bring our over stimulated mind to a rest, to a stillness, that leads us from a sense of fragmentation in the various dimensions of our lives to a source of unity for our lives? The monks from the early church used what they called *hesychia*. *Hesychia* means silence, not only noiselessness, but more essentially the inner silence of the soul's power to receive the reality of the world. "*Hesychia* means silence, not negatively in the sense of an absence of speech, a pause between words, but positively in the sense of an attitude of listening. It signifies plenitude, not emptiness; presence, not a void." It is a silence that is essential to a spirituality of work; yet, it is a silence busy people find most difficult to practice.

Begin your day in silence. When we come to prayer, that practice of the presence of God, many of us come with so many distractions that our mind is like a "drunken monkey," stumbling over a multitude of thoughts. One practice to settle our mind to silence is breathing. If we practice silence on a daily basis and quiet ourselves we can begin to feel the rhythm of our breath as we inhale and exhale. We do not breath as those we control life, "but breathing out is first of all letting things go, and breathing in, receiving." Our breathing itself can become our prayer by opening ourselves to where we have come from. Breathing, which is used by many religions, settles the body, which then settles the mind. Just being mindful of our breath has a way of "centering" us in our awareness of reality that escapes us in our frenetic pace of activity. When our breath attaches itself to a word or phrase about God, we begin to recognize God's presence in the present moment. For example, take a short text and divide it into two parts for breathing. In inhaling, say aloud, "Lord Jesus." In exhaling say aloud "come to my assistance." In spending several minutes with this prayer repeating the prayer with each breath, we focus our being with God, conscious of God's presence.

b. Rhythm of the Church: Daily Scripture As we come to the end of our repetition, we have prepared ourselves to receive God's word as mediated through the scriptures. The church provides us a liturgical year, a rhythm that extends from Advent to Christmas, Lent, Easter with Ordinary Time mixed in. The church gives us daily scriptures that follow this rhythm. The liturgical year through its scriptures helps us participate in God's mysteries on a daily basis. During Advent, for example, the church's rhythm follows a time of quiet reflection, of silence, of waiting and expectation of God's son to be born in humility and poverty, in a stable where shepherds bring themselves to pay homage. Scriptures in Advent bring to mind the Incarnation of God's indwelling in human affairs.

Yet, where the liturgy in Advent encourages us to slow down, to pray more so as relive the expectation and anticipation of Christ coming into our lives, our work and culture offer us a different rhythm and message at this time of the year. We are to get busier through increased consumption and production. Particularly, for those in education, retail, and transportation, December represents a very intense time of the year. Not only is work busy, but many of us are caught up in the end of the year parties and gift purchasing. One can hardly think of more contrasting images and values to Advent than our frenetic work and consumeristic culture of the "holiday season." But for many of us this is the world we live in. And because it is the world we live in, we will lose Advent's message if we fail to be in daily contact with the message of Advent, and our work will lose another opportunity to be transformed by God's grace. Without the counter culture of the church, we may find ourselves going places that have nothing to do with the kingdom of God.

Practice: Within the Episcopal, Catholic, and Orthodox traditions, there is a liturgy of the hours or the readings of the day which matches this liturgical rhythm. These churches provide books that contain the readings of the day for the liturgical year. After centering yourself in the heyschatic prayer, let these scriptural readings be the first thing you read for the day. Pray with the church by participating in its liturgical life and calendar. By following the readings of the liturgical year we more fully participate in this rhythm, providing a healthy counter to the rhythm of our culture and our work.

3) *Rhythm of the Day: Daily Reflection* As we practice silence in our day and participate in the rhythm of the church we prepare ourselves to "pray our calendar" to look at our present situation with new eyes. What we find as we pray our calendar is that we do not bring God into work, but rather we begin to see God already acting in our work. With a play on words, John Haughey writes, "God is at work at work." Our problem is that too often we do not have the eyes and hearts to see God. We do not see the joy in our work, we do not see the sufferings that we have caused, and we do not see the possibilities to help others to grow in their work. When Mother Teresa went to the slums of Calcutta, she did not see herself as taking God to Calcutta, rather she encountered Christ in the sufferings of the poor. She saw God in the poor. Her spirituality of work allowed her to see God where most don't. This holiness, this ability to see God at work, is not relegated to the privilege few, but a universal call for all people to participate in God's creative and redemptive love--a love that does not discolor or distort the world, but which seeks to see its deepest meaning.

Practice: Pray Your Calendar. After breathing your prayer and reading the scriptures revisit your day with Christ. John Haughey suggests that we ask ourselves on an affective level two questions: 1) What were my positive experiences and affections yesterday (or today)? Reflect back on your day and ask why you felt good about that experience, and ask the Lord to give you insight on the experience. What were the attractions and satisfactions of the day? Were they real or merely apparent? 2) What were my negative experiences and affections? Why were such experiences negative? Get into focus and rest on certain events, and let Jesus look at it for you, and listen. One can do a similar reflection for getting ready for one's day, by bringing to prayer the events of the coming day.

Praying over our calendar brings our work, our family, our experiences to Christ for His insight. It is here that we will begin to pray for our "enemies" at work, those we do not care for, those we are jealous of, those who get under our skin. By praying for these people, God changes our attitudes and actions toward them, which serves as God's instrument to change their attitudes and actions. It's hard to pray for someone you do not love. Our prayer, if it is from the heart and to God, will begin to transform our actions and attitudes at work, since it is no longer we who work, but God who works with us.

Conclusion

A Christian spirituality of work is not merely another set of ethical rules, but rather a way of life that recognizes God's rule in our participation in the life of the Spirit. *A Christian spirituality of work is a friendship with God for the human race in the work we do.* A Christian spirituality of work leads to greater interiority without leading to individualism. It also leads to greater social awareness without falling into ideology and idolatry.

We are by nature spiritual beings. We may suppress this dimension of ourselves through our consumerism and egoism, but we can never kill it. It remains with us so long as we remain human. We develop this spiritual dimension through the theological virtues of faith, hope and above all charity, virtues which serve to integrate our lives in ways we are unable to do ourselves. Charity is not our love, but God's love indwelling in us through our free acceptance of the relationship God offers us. Christian spirituality, our dialogue with God, provides us the capacity to truly transform our intentions, to challenge our apparent self-interests, and to avoid our tendency toward instrumentalism within our work, all of which leads to an integrity of the deepest kind. This integrity penetrates the deepest meaning of our humanity where we begin to understand Jesus' beatitude, "Blessed are the pure of heart, for they will see God." This beatitude bespeaks a struggle to liberate us from our biases and prejudices, poor choices, distorted ideas, and passions that fragment our work and ourselves. To create a pure heart, especially in our work, is ultimately beyond our abilities. As Coupland realized, it is finally God's work. "This progressive purity of heart becomes the finding of God in all things and of all things in God [including our work], and it is the progressive emergent of a graced life that moves through conversion, virtue, and sacraments to union." A spirituality of work shatters any illusions that our work is our own, that we are ultimately in control of our destiny, or that our good works are our own doing.

The message of a Christian spirituality of work can be summed up in the words of a Baptist preacher: "A religion that ain't good on Monday ain't no good on Sunday." A Christian spirituality of work does not foist some foreign doctrine on the workplace. Rather, a participation in the life of the Spirit helps us to resist the resignation, cynicism and skepticism we find in our work, and provides the virtues of *faith* that enables our work to be a collaboration with God, of *hope* that directs our work toward building the kingdom on earth and of *love* that sensitizes us to the sufferings of others so as to help them and us grow and develop. A spirituality of work then is not an imposition on the workplace, but a revelation of what work should be and who we should be in our work.

