THEOLOGY OF WORK [1]

Eurojess, Piestany, August 2007

Work and Labour

In George Eliot's novel *Middlemarch* (first published in 1871, and perhaps the supreme English novel of the nineteenth century) the rich and irresponsible Fred Vincy loves Mary Garth. He knows she thinks of him as idle, and he therefore considers becoming apprenticed to her father Caleb, a builder and surveyor. Could Fred make a success of a trade?

> 'That depends', said Caleb, turning his head on one side and lowering his voice, with the air of a man who felt himself to be saying something deeply religious. `You must be sure of two things: you must love your work, and not be always looking over the end of it, wanting your play to begin. And the other is, you must not be ashamed of your work, and think it would be more honourable to you to be doing something else.... No matter what a man is - I wouldn't give twopence for him . . . whether he was the prime minister or the rick-thatcher, if he didn't do well what he undertook to do' (ch. 56).

George Eliot (real name Mary Anne Evans) was brought up as an evangelical Christian. Before she gained success as a novelist, she became a scholar of religion. (She translated into English David Strauss's famous *Das Leben Jesu,* 1846, an early work of radical biblical criticism.) So when the novel's narrator says that Caleb (clearly symbolic of the craftsman of intelligence and integrity, an ideal then threatened by the industrial revolution) 'feels himself to be saying something deeply religious', it is significant. For Caleb, honest and wholehearted work is a **religious act.** Work for him lies at the heart of human identity and human fulfilment.

Compare with this passage, the philosopher Simone Weil's account of her experience of a Renault factory in the 1930s:

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[1] There is plenty of interest in this topic in academic circles. In OCIPE we recently received an unsolicited book seeking the favour of our reviewing it: *Le Droit à l'Epanouissement de 'Être Human au Travail: Métapmorphoses du droit social.* It is published by Bruylant, in 857 pages at €120! I will not refer again to this book.

> The very conditions of the work exclude . . . all motivations except those of the fear of being `bawled out' or fired, of the eagerness to fatten one's pay envelope, and, in some cases, an interest in speed records.

Simone Weil drew a chilling conclusion from her experience:

> No society can be stable in which a whole stratum of the population labours daily with a heartfelt loathing. This loathing for their work colours their whole view of life, all their life.[2]

The fictional Caleb Garth and the 'real' Simone Weil seem to refer to two quite different modes of activity. Hannah Arendt has termed what Caleb Garth does 'work' (*oeuvre*) and what Simone Weil did 'labour' (*travail*). In ancient Greece, work was the activity of a free citizen, labour the toil of slaves, done to allow **others** to live freely, with that 'leisure' (*schole*) that Aristotle believed essential to political citizenship.

According to M-D. Chenu, a distinction akin to Hannah Arendt's is found in the Hebrew Scriptures themselves:

> Two terms are used: *melakha,* denoting God's creative work and defining his presence in history as carrying out the plan drawn up on the first day; and *avoda,* which means the work of a slave or servitude. ... But the words overlap, and work has the paradoxical connotations of inexorable (harsh) constraint and joyful expansiveness, unremitting compulsion and liberating self- fulfilment. [3]

Many people recognise their work as satisfying. It may sometimes be 'hard' and tiring, may entail unpleasant tasks that they would prefer to avoid. It is therefore (after the Fall) what Thomas Aquinas called a *bonum arduum*. I think I can put in this bracket nearly all the work of my Jesuit life: but of course, also, that of **many** people I know –doctors, pastoral or community workers, teachers (sometimes!), the staff of NGOS and development agencies, etc. They have a sense that their work is **worth doing**, that they contribute to the common good; and also (maybe, and **therefore**?) that their work expresses and enhances their humanity. If they are Christian they may believe without

[2] 'Factory Work', reprinted in *Cross currents,* vol XXV, no 4 (1976), pp 376-82.

[3] *Sacramentum mundi,* Karl Rahner, ed, vol VI (London, 1970), p 369.

being pompous that they are 'co-creators' with God: creators of good and necessary things, or (in the case of services) of well-being.

But harsh and alienating work is just as common as enriching work: in terms of numbers, probably far more common. In this type of mass industrial production, the perversion was that people were treated as machines.[4] A guiding concept was 'Taylorism', named after Frederick Winston Taylor who in 1911 wrote an influential book entitled *Principles of Scientific Management*. His proposed enhancing efficiency by reducing jobs to fast, simple, repetitive processes: assembly lines, fast food restaurants exemplify the idea. 'Taylorism' was a logical development ' of classical liberal economics: labour was just one 'factor of production' along with land, and capital, and its **human** character was discounted. That brutal simplification causes **loathing.** I'll come back to this. ('Fordism, incidentally, which James Hanvey had planned to mention, was an attempt to compensate for this dehumanisation by paying the workers better. It ran into certain contradictions. I have an appendix on this, which I have not space to include in the presentation.)

The 'labour' described by Simone Weil recalls the Biblical paradigm of *Exodus.* 'The Egyptians forced the sons of Israel into slavery, and made their lives unbearable with hard labour, work with clay and with brick, all kinds of work in the fields: they forced on them every kind of labour' (*Ex* 1: 13-14). There are still many thousands of slaves and 'wage slaves'. Such work causes not joy but desperation (*Ex* 2: 23). The liberation promised by Yahweh is to grant to the Israelites land **for their own**: the work will still be hard but it will again become a *bonum arduum*: however, they are so crushed that they cannot believe in such a liberation (6: 8-9).

One might posit a neat dichotomy: 'work', 'oeuvre' *melakha*, is a great good, whereas 'labour', 'travail', *avoda,* is a serious, though possibly ineradicable, evil. It can at best be endured, it might be loathed.

Not so simple

[4] In what follows I draw especially on *Trois leçons sur la société post-industrielle,* by Daniel Cohen (Editions du Seuil, Paris, 2006

However, if we think of Simone Weil's factory, we should remember that Marx attributed the dehumanisation or labour not to factory-based mass-production itself, but to the mode of property ownership and of social-industrial relations which deprived labourers of the fruits of their labour. For Marx, industrial labour was the ***privileged*** area in which liberation could be achieved. Conversely, much pre-industrial work clearly negated or undermined human dignity.

Secondly, I have described two highly distinct **types.** These examples are not 'extreme' in the sense of being rare. But many or most cases are far less clear-cut. Let me speak personally. I left school at the age of 18 and did not immediately go to university. I began work in a bank. I worked for four years in the UK, gradually disliking the job more and more. It was not 'harsh' in the sense of *Exodus,* my employers were not oppressive, the hours of work and the holidays were decent, I related fairly well with work colleagues. But I had no sense of **commitment** to the bank and its purposes. My work 'kept me out of trouble', paid my way, helped finance the life outside the office that alone interested me. So I often did what Caleb Garth said you **must not** do: I counted the hours to going home! After four years in Britain, having completed my banking exams more quickly than normal because I went to night-school 3-4 nights a week, I succeeded in transferring to an international bank and went to Ghana. This experience changed my life. I still disliked banking, in fact more than before, while I came to feel a warmth for Ghana. At the age of 22 I had a far 'better job' than in the UK – which only helped me to realise I would never be content in banking whatever promotions I might achieve. The point I want to make is this: I got out at 24 – because I was free to do so, dreaded spending the rest of my life half-bored, and regretted missing university. If I had been married with a baby, I suppose I would have stuck it out for decades, as thousands of people must do.

So these are the 'ordinary' factory or office jobs that may be more or less stressful, busy, tedious. People shrink into them, rather than grow into them or become more alive: except that the **power to endure** grows, and the capacity to build human relations, to find small but perhaps genuine satisfactions in a grey world The work is legitimate, is more or less necessary. Societies need farmers, traders, up to a point they need banks and car-makers. The parables of Jesus usually just assume the socio-economic life of his time. I

say, ‘up to a point’, because Jesus’s work and that of his disciples is often seen as **contrasting** with the mere making of a living. Economic activity is not a worthy human **end**; it is fatally stupid when someone (an early capitalist entrepreneur) ‘stores up treasure for himself in place of making himself rich in the sight of God’ (*Lk* 12: 16 seq). Jesus’s only act of violence, the expulsion of the traders from the Temple, reveals his hostility to that economic activity which is blind to its own evil effects.

Other types of employment

Let me add two other general categories: to one of them we can attach the biblical image of the shepherds. To be a shepherd was in itself honest and legitimate work. But shepherds at the time of Jesus were almost social and religious outcasts: rough, dirty, often semi-criminal, automatically ‘sinners’ in that they could not fulfil their religious duties. They were excluded, held in low esteem. (That is why the angels appeared to them first, since the joy of the Incarnation must touch everyone, one of the first of the reversals of value that would be proclaimed by Jesus.) In a just world, one would expect that the kind of unpleasant and dangerous work that no one wanted to do was well-rewarded, by way of ‘fairness’, compensation: and that those who enjoyed easier more pleasant tasks (like speaking to Eurojess) were content with less money.

But we all know that the reverse principle applies. As the philosopher Michael Walzer argues, ‘the negative good of the work is matched by the negative status of the people into whose hands it is put. It may be that citizens can outsource it to slaves, to resident aliens or ‘guest-workers’. Or it may be that the insiders or citizens **become** objects of discrimination: untouchables, perhaps, or perhaps simply **women**, who must still commonly do the work that men succeed in refusing. [5] We once thought that machines might relieve people of the worst such jobs. In fact it often makes them tougher and more stressful by speeding up the work, preventing casual friendly conversation along the way, etc.

The fourth category we can symbolise as **Babel**. This is the work that, far from co-operating in the creative work of God, defies that creation. It is destructive of

[5] Michael Walzer, *Spheres of Justice,* (Blackwell, Oxford, 1983), pp. 165-66

human community and the common good. It might require high levels of skill and hard work: but the more efficiently the work is done, the worse off we are. It's easy to point to the more dramatic examples: the production of instruments of torture (which arms-manufacturers probably call 'non-lethal weapons'), or of hard-porn films. Not everyone will agree on which jobs should be assigned to this category. Making nuclear weapons, or Sports Utility Vehicles? Prostitution? (A militant secularist like the British scientist Richard Dawkins would add the priesthood!) Societies might discourage them, but no societies have managed to eliminate them. Such workers may be seen as culpable or as victims, or as both.

Post-industrial societies?

Having referred so 'factory work', let me note a few changes in 'post-industrial' economies. It would be misleading to think that we have abandoned behind 'making things' in favour of offering services and information. We demand, and make, and buy more 'things' than ever before. But we are often short-sighted, seeing only our own problems – in this case, the decline of industrial employment. In fact, of course, production is displaced to those countries where labour is kept cheap. Modern corporations still retain the practice of driving down wages, for example (especially in the age of globalisation) by exporting industrial work to low-wage economies – as anyone who has seen a Latin American *maquiladora* will know.[6] In some countries, cheap labour is combined with high technology. So it is estimated that China may within a decade produce 50% of the world's textiles. A theology of work cannot forget about Chinese workers either! The European Union, G Trade, is currently deeply preoccupied with how Europe can 'compete' with such industrial power.

Is the service or the information economy much different? In the service economy the 'matter to be transformed' is human persons themselves: someone's hair, or

[6] I think of the one surrounding the airport at San Salvador. The company enjoys virtual tax-exemption on both imported materials and exported manufactures. The workers are non-unionised, lack any alternatives to accepting the conditions offered by the transnational companies (in Central America, these are predominantly from USA). Famously, Nike paid the basketball player Michael Jordan more to endorse its 'Air Jordan' trainers than it paid the entire workforce that produced them.

health, or education, or bank-account. The work may be relatively simple and face-to-face (not, obviously in the case of the haircut!).[7] But whether in industry or in the service economy, work stress and pressure-levels have consistently increased. In the bank more than thirty years ago, I and my colleague rotated tasks – for example, between serving customers on the counter and doing jobs behind the scenes, such as letter-writing or telephone-answering, or updating customer accounts. There were busy periods and slack periods. Now the ordinary bank official does all these things, therefore has no quiet time. Typists used to have a specific skill: producing a document rather quickly, without mistakes and therefore without the consequent need for lengthy retyping. In Ghana, aged 22, I had a typist-secretary. Computers now mean that all but the highest status workers do their own typing. 'Typists' have become general administrative staff. Again, what is eliminated is 'dead time'. Labour is expensive, so workers must be kept under pressure. Positively, it may true that this work is 'enriched', more varied, and perhaps more satisfying – if and only if the pressure is kept within tolerable limits. But the neo-Stakhanovite ideal is to eliminate all slack in the system.[8] In Thailand in 1995, I remember having a travellers' cheque cashed in a bank – and it took six young women to do it. Very pleasant for me: but I wonder if five of them are now unemployed.

Theological Reflection

I have tried to set the scene, stressing the double face (at least) of work. Theologically, we can say that the structures of work manifest both sin and grace. Work falls under the curse of sin, and the effects of sin go beyond what is dramatised in the expelling of

[7] In the information economy, what is valued is research and invention. What is expensive is not to **manufacture** the software, or the new drug, but to research, conceive and develop it. And this paradigm gets transposed to classic industrial production. Renault describes itself in its advertisements, observes Cohen, as a 'concepteur d'automobiles', not as a manufacturer. Presumably anyone can 'make' the cars! The prestige and the big salaries are made through worldwide marketing, the capacity to control and sub-contract the 'mere' production: by the bosses, obviously, and by the investment and finance specialists.)

[8] According to *Wikipedia,* the **Stakhanovite movement** began during the second Soviet 5-year plan in 1935. It named after Aleksei Stakhanov, who had mined 102 tons of coal in less than 6 hours (14 times his quota). However, his record would soon be "broken" by his followers. The idea came to indicate oppressive overwork.

Adam and Eve from the Garden, with God warning that now the work done for human sustenance will entail 'the sweat of your brow'. (3: 14-19).[9] What is properly mutual service and support becomes the theatre for oppression and exploitation. But Christians believe (a) that Christ has conquered sin and death, and (b) that victory is yet to be made fully effective in our personal and societal life. Nevertheless, grace is even now no less a reality than sin.

We can say, maybe, that work as such is good. That is, devoting our effort to shaping our world and thereby serving our fellows can be selfless and ennobling. But if we accept this elevated conception of work, it follows that we must also oppose whatever *degrades* work into mere 'labour' – relationships of domination and servility, the payment of grossly unfair wages, the easy acceptance of mass unemployment, and the devastation of the environment. Otherwise, Christian teaching could merely underwrite injustice. So, we need always to take into account the **human** character of work/labour, its distribution, the relationships it permits or enforces, its intrinsic purposes, and its life-context

[9] St. Augustine saw work less as an active collaboration in the creative action of God than as a **punishment** that forms part of the human condition, from which one therefore seeks release, though a release that is not to be expected in this life. Augustine rejects any analogy between human work and God's work, because, unlike us, 'God works without ceasing from rest' *(Commentary* on *Ps* 92). 'A few years you labour, and even in your labours you do not lack all consolation, there is no lack of daily gladness. But do not find your joy in this world' *(Sermon* 130: 5*).*

I. Work maybe affirmed when and only when it is treated as a fully human activity.

John Paul II, in *Laborem Exercens* insisted that a business was first and foremost a 'community of persons' rather than a machine for profit. Similarly, when the so-called 'free market' outgrows its rightful status as a key economic mechanism and is taken to be (as my late colleague Jef Van Gerwen wrote) 'the integrating elements of the social and cultural order' then work will become no more than one 'factor of production' as noted above. Its **human significance** is then implicitly denied. Despite themselves, legislators **do** recognise the irreducibly human fact of labour, if only by trying to block its consequences: the neo-liberal policies that promote the removal of controls on land-ownership and capital movements never extend that liberalism to workers. Instead, they wish to allow only such immigration as benefits 'the economy' by increasing the supply of scarce skills in the receiving country.

II. The distribution of work may express or deny social justice and solidarity

As unemployment rose in Britain in 1982, the *Sunday Times* quoted the President of the Confederation of British Industry (the main employers' organisation) as saying (in insulting language) that those who were 'lucky enough to be employed' must put their backs into the job as never before: 'We must ensure that there is no skiving, no striking, no long lunches or long week-ends'. He said nothing about the responsibilities of those 'lucky enough to be managers'. But his language indicates a vicious and frequently recurring attempt to use the unemployed as a weapon against the employed. [10]

[10] St. Paul notoriously insists insistence that those who do not work do not have the right to eat. (*2 Thess* 3:10 'For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to **work** should not **eat')**. To a Briton of my generation this sentence sounds like the Thatcher Government's approach to work. Needless to say Paul is not articulating a Thatcherite policy on social benefits: but, in the context of the letter's eschatology, is firstly warning people not to leave aside the ordinary challenges of life to await the coming of the Messiah: and secondly, stresses that the service of the Gospel does not excuse people from those challenges.

In practice, the satisfying and extravagantly paid work goes to the rich or educated, in the name of 'incentives', and the demeaning and precarious work to the poor. Meanwhile unemployment (another distortion in the distribution of work) is a serious evil, mass unemployment a threatening **societal** evil.

The reality of work is usually determined not by respect for human dignity, but by power; and resistance to the sharing of power is expressed in such slogans as 'let management manage'. Let us, by all means, have a 'work ethic' - so long as it is an ethic, and not an ideology of subjection. We cannot abolish 'labour': nor can we magically transform it into being socially prestigious. But it can be shared more fully, unionised, respected, paid more fairly, compensated with better time off, etc. That is a collective political, social and ethical struggle. *Deuteronomy* repudiates any crude distribution of work and leisure between different classes of people. The Law of the Sabbath (which is explained in far more detail than most other commandments) emphasises that everyone, including servants and foreigners (even animals!) is called to share in both the creative work and the **rest** of Yahweh (*Deut* 5: 13-14, and *Ex* 20:11).

III. Work may have the character of partnership or of exploitation

Theologically speaking, just as God's creation is ordained to the Incarnation, so human participation in creation is mysteriously caught up in the advancement of the Kingdom of God, in building up humanity to become, by grace, the Body of Christ. If work does *not* somehow promote the common good, build up the Body it is useless. An adequate spirituality of work, therefore, must promote community and solidarity.

But our socio-economic values are often individualistic: by 'success' is sometimes meant merely our own promotion over the heads of colleagues, and we believe that economic 'salvation' will come about through productivity, efficiency, a 'meritocracy'. We have not yet got beyond the Enlightenment's dubious shift from the idea of community to that of **contract**. This image came to dominate social thought in the period of the Industrial Revolution, which it also facilitated. The sociologist Robert Nisbet has noted that:

> behind the rationalist image of society in this period there was always the prior image of naturally free individuals who had rationally bound themselves into a specified and limited mode of association. Man was primary; relationships were secondary.... Guild, corporation, monastery, commune, kindred, village community - all these were regarded as without foundation in natural law. [11]

Where community and solidarity are denied, the successful executive can be one who makes spectacular gains, but at others' expense. In the nineteenth century the merchants of Liverpool made huge profits on the voyages they financed – but only because dockers could be found to load the ships for starvation wages, and because seafarers, after months without work, could to be hired for long voyages leaving their families destitute at home. What was true of the nineteenth century, that fortunes were built on the misery of the poor, **remains** true, even if the economic mechanisms are now more complex. To stay with the same example, even today, when 90% of the world's international trade is carried by sea, labour conditions at sea can often be appalling.[12]

The harsh question, to which I have no easy answer, is this: how to balance the evils of oppressive work against the profound social evil of mass unemployment?

IV. Work may be intrinsically useful, or not. This matters

The 18th century Jesuit Jean-Pierre de Caussade famously taught in his book *Self-Abandonment to Divine Providence* that holiness was open to all, whatever their state of life, provided their hearts were changed.[13] This line of thought strongly influenced Teilhard de Chardin, for example in *Le milieu divin*: 'God awaits us in every instant, in our action, in the work of the moment. There is a sense in which he is at the tip of my

[11] Robert Nisbet: *The Sociological Tradition,* New York, 1966)

[12] See the website of the Apostleship of the Sea for an account of the 'race to the bottom in terms of wages and conditions', some implications of the Flags of Convenience system, for a grim case study, etc.: http://www.stellamaris.net/index.php

[13] . Applied to work that principle may be paralleled by the Reformers' insistence that to labour assiduously in one's 'calling' was precisely to conform oneself to God's providence. But the danger for de Caussade's position is that it invites us to abstract from **what the work actually is**: the danger in the protestant tradition lay in the easy inference that financial success indicated faithfulness to one's calling (what Jesus often brought into question). It is then an easy further step to assume that affluence is the legitimate (immediate) **purpose** of work; that every formally honest gain is justifiable.

pen, my spade, my brush, my needle - of my heart and of my thoughts' (p. 64). But Teilhard crucially insists that purity of intention, though indispensable, **is not enough**: 'The divinisation of our endeavour by the value of the intention put into it pours a priceless **soul** into all our actions; but **it does not confer the hope of resurrection upon our bodies**. Yet that hope is what we need if our joy is to be complete' (p. 55).

So it **does** matter what we do! We must always ask whether the result of what is made is useful, useless, or destructive. One central problem of work needs to be re-defined: how do we award social and financial recognition to those who *sustain* life, and cease to bestow eminence and honour on those who mutilate our lives and environment?

It is needless to stress the extent to which industrial production requires the slick management of public taste, to ensure, for example, swift changes of fashion in clothes and cars: 'There is no way to redeem such work by enriching it or restructuring it, by socialising it or nationalising it, by making it 'small' or decentralized or democratic. It is a sow's ear that will yield no silk purses'.[14] There is much work that is neither honest nor useful, and which *corrupts* us as we absorb its values. I do not deny that we need industry: but we have always to be searching for ways to heal or humanise it.

V. Work is one central element of life, but not the only one

In *Laborem Exercens,* John Paul II rightly speaking of work as a 'basic dimension of human existence' (sec. 1), then goes further, ***too*** far as it seems to me: 'man's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity'. I would say the specific dignity of being human derives from our humanity. If it derives from work, it would be conditional.

I dislike the common phrase 'work-life balance' – as if 'life' by definition were only found outside work. But we could say that the more the job tends towards 'labour' the more urgent it is to prevent it consuming the entire life and energy of the worker. In fact, work/labour has two opposite states: leisure and

[14] Theodore Roszak, Person/Planet, *New* York 1979, p. 220

unemployment. Think of the Desert Fathers, who positively renounced the world, and therefore certain economic roles in the world. For them work was an ascetical discipline, over against the danger of **idleness,** which denied the **virtue** of poverty and was also a temptation to the various sins of luxury. (In every age, there are a the 'idle rich' such as our fictional Fred Vincy.)[15] In the developing monastic tradition, manual work is both a **form** of prayer and a **complement** to prayer, so that God is glorified by the all-embracing rhythm of work, contemplation and rest. Once again, we note that work cannot be evaluated except by putting into the context of the whole of life.[16]

Passing finally to unemployment, John Paul II would naturally not deny the dignity of the unemployed, for example, since by 'work' he means not merely the paid transaction by which we earn our living, but any activity by which we consciously transform our environment. Nevertheless, the statement ('man's life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity') seems to me to lack balance. Work has an inherent value, but becomes an idol unless taken up into a rhythm of life which transcends it. As Giannino Piana writes:

> the meaning of work must be sought through a constant dialectic between work time and non-working time, between liberation *of* work and liberation *from* work... On the one hand we must recognize the irreplaceable value of work for human growth but we must also realize that the moment of rest, relaxation, worship, is just as essential for our humanization. [17]

[15] So in the *Verba seniorum* a brother asks the Abbot Pistameron, 'If I have enough for my needs from elsewhere, do you think that I need not trouble about working with my hands?' The abbot's answer is, 'Whatever you have, do not neglect work, and do as much as you can, but without perturbation of spirit'. (Waddell, Helen: *The desert Fathers* (London, 1936), p 120.)

[16] Medieval spirituality typically distinguished sharply between the duties of the active and the contemplative life. Those in the world must perform good works and carry out their duties zealously, those who 'forsake all worldly riches, honours and outward affairs' are called to contemplation. *The Imitation of Christ* recommends manual work **when deprived of spiritual consolation** (Bk III ch. 51). But this is far from the ideal of the integrated life which inspired Benedict. The assumption, which often becomes explicit, is that the search for spiritual perfection is for recluses: 'The further from the world's din, the more intimacy with the world's Creator....Why do you stand looking in at the shop window, when you can't go inside? The world and its gratifications pass away' (Bk I ch. 20c).

[17] G Piana, 'Human Work: blessing and/or curse>' in *Unemployment and the Right to Work,* eds Jaques Pohier and Dietmar Mieth (1982), p.70

Putting it scripturally, the work week without the Sabbath is uncouth and graceless; and the Sabbath can transmute the consciousness we bring to work.[18] Work is healthy only when it promotes an enhanced life outside work, for others *and* for oneself. It is possible that most people build community, and therefore prepare for the Kingdom, *less* in their paid employment than in their attentiveness to those they love, in their friendships, in their sexuality: not least, maybe, in their recreation. Our human dignity is rooted not in our work or our own effort, but in our very humanity, the gift of God.

[18] There are no absolutes. In *John* 5: 17, accused of curing a man on the sabbath, Jesus replies `My Father goes on working and so do I'. One commentator, Lesslie Newbigin, makes the interesting comment, 'It seems to have been accepted by the rabbis that God's sabbath rest did not mean that he had ceased to gives ife - for babies are born on the sabbath and rain falls'. Therefore the work of **giving life** is legitimate on the sabbath for Jesus, too.

Appendix on Fordism

'Fordism' (which I mention because James Hanvey had planned to mention it!) was a kind of humane (though profit-inspired) of Taylorism. Henry Ford recognised that factory work was repetitious, unskilled, boring, alienating: he presumed that workers would inevitably rebel (strikes, absenteeism, etc). His masterstroke was simply to raise his workers' salaries above what they were before. He said his aim was to make it possible for his workers to buy the cars. That put a temporary end to unrest at his factories. In this way Henry Ford reversed orthodox management thinking. I mean that whereas managers typically insist that workers must increase their productivity **in order to deserve** a pay increase, Ford gave them a pay increase in order to raise their productivity! The problem with Fordism was not hard to spot. Ford could pay his workers more than they were paid before: but could he pay them systematically more than they would be paid elsewhere? What would happen to his competitive position? In other words, it was not easy to generalise Fordism without steep inflation. Secondly, Ford presumed that his workers were more or less illiterate. (Many were recent immigrants to the USA.) So he hoped that a pay rise would reconcile them to utterly boring work. That might work for a few months, when the only alternative was unemployment. It could not apply to the next generation: and it abandoned all attempts to enrich the quality of work. To be fair to Ford, he lived in a time and context dominated by the new assembly-lines, and numerically massive labour forces. Given those conditions, it was far better to raise pay to a fair level than to drive it down. Industrial capitalism had an internal contradiction. It could survive only as it allowed more people to become consumers, yet it always sought to cut its labour costs and deprive its workers of spending power.