



Humanum

ISSUES IN FAMILY, CULTURE & SCIENCE

2017 - ISSUE TWO

A Labor of Love: Work and the States of Life





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A Labor of Love

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

There is a telling scene in the movie *The Circle*, in which a young woman recently employed by an all-encompassing social media corporation is persuaded to move her entire social life to her work-place: so that the line between her work and her personal life becomes completely blurred. This brave new world is far from being a dystopian vision: rather it feels like an all-too contemporary satire. Only a few years ago, Elon Musk, who runs the corporation incorporating both Tesla cars and the SpaceX company (which aims to establish a human colony on Mars), was heard to grumble that not enough of his employees showed up to work on the weekend.

Currently, Americans work more hours than their counterparts in any other Western nation. And yet studies at Boston University and Stanford have found that employees are not any more productive if they put in 80 hours a week than if they had worked a mere 55 hours. And researchers at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health have found that long hours simply increase stress, depression, and heart disease. Is it not ironic that a corporation that intends to ‘save humanity’ by making environmentally friendly cars and sending members of our species to another planet, prefers to hire workers who have no family commitments: that is to say, no human context? (And yet just recently Musk pointed out that falling birth rates would impact disastrously on the economies of the West—an interesting disjoint when put next to his obsession with keeping his workers out of their homes as much as possible!)

When we consider the question of work, we therefore have to consider the context in which work is carried out. The corporate vision that is engulfing much more than just the Western world leaves precious room for a context which allows us the freedom to be fully human (let alone to know what work is for). And humanity is always contextualised by community: a family, a religious community, a network of friendships that are not purely utilitarian. Another word for this context is the *States of Life*. In these the question of work takes on its rightful meaning, its place in the great scheme of things. And that is what this issue of *Humanum* aims to explore.

We look at the relation between economics and the family, with a review of Christopher Franks’ book *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas’s*

Economic Teachings, in which Rachel Coleman asks whether an economy in which money is the highest good might militate against the natural order in which the family finds its function and meaning. We also have Alan Carlson's feature on Willhelm Röpke, one of the lonely free-market economists who thought the family should be placed at the center of his field, and a review of Carlson's own book on the various 20th century attempts to actually do this!

Humanum looks also at the persons at work in the family. Margaret McCarthy reviews the latest book on the "work-life balance" issue for women: Anne-Marie's Slaughter's *Unfinished Business*. And Brian Rottkamp reviews the latest (disturbing) report on the state of work for men, Nicholas Eberstadt's *Men without Work*. Sonia-Maria Szymanski gives a personal witness of the role of work—her husband's and her own—in her marriage. Randy and Lucy Hines offer a glimpse of something that transcends the usual question about whether or not a woman should work—and the problem of men out of work—with a verbal diptych about their family business, a bakery they run together in close proximity to their home. With the Hineses we begin to get an idea of what John Cuddeback writes about in his article "In Search of the Household" where the household is both a home and a workshop.

Humanum also takes up the other state of life, the "life of the counsels" be it consecrated life in the world or in the monastery, with Léonie Caldecott's feature on the work of Caryll Houselander and a reflection on monastic work by Dom Hardy, prior of the celebrated Benedictine Abbey at Pluscarden in Scotland. Devra Torres's review of Josemaría Escriva's *Friends of God* prolongs this reflection for the everyday life that most of us experience:

Because the world comes from the hands of God, it is primordially good. Because He left it intentionally "unfinished"—in need of cultivation and development—our work has always had its part to play.

In all of this Humanum poses the following question: what does it mean for work—for the production of our "daily bread"—when it is contextualized by a vocation, a state of life? And what does it mean when it is not? For Charles Péguy's French peasant it was unthinkable that anyone would work if it were not for their children.

All that we do we do for children.

And it's the children who make it all get done.

-
| All that we do.

| As if they led us by the hand.

| —The Portal of the Mystery of Hope, 22

This is a long way from a world of work in which everyone enslaves him or herself to the quest for status or an ever-increasing pile of consumer goods. Such things are not like children. They are not a community. They do not give life.

Léonie Caldecott is the UK editor of both *Humanum* and *Magnificat*. With her late husband Stratford she founded the Center for Faith and Culture in Oxford, its summer school and its journal *Second Spring*. Her eldest daughter Teresa, along with other colleagues, now work with her to take Strat's contribution forward into the future.

It's the Children Who Make It All Get Done

CHARLES PÉGUY

This is an excerpt from Charles Péguy's *The Portal of the Mystery of Hope* (Trans. David Louis Schindler, Jr. [Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986]: 15–22). It is published here with permission and available for purchase in its entirety on the [publisher's webpage](#). Our “*All You Who Labor*” issue featured an excerpt from this same work of Péguy's: “*Finding the Eternal in Our Daily Toil.*”

The *Portal of the Mystery of Hope*, first published in 1912, is Charles Péguy's most famous prose-poem. Going through over sixty editions in the last hundred years, it gives voice to the French socialist's profound conversion to the Catholic faith, anchored in a vision that married eschatological vision with a deep sense of social realities. For Péguy, “the little girl Hope” is the most dynamic of the three virtues, enabling Faith and Charity to reach those parts of the humanity which a merciful God desires to plumb. The virtue of hope was of especial relevance to Péguy himself, whose personal circumstances prevented him from receiving the very sacraments around which his poetic vision revolved. Few poets have meditated so deeply on the meaning of human work, and he remains the poet of the disenfranchised and the dispossessed: those who might be tempted to despair at the futility of everything they do.

What is above everything.

God's blessing, which is on his house and on his ancestors.

The grace of God, which is worth more than anything.

He can be sure of this.

Which is on the poor man and on the working man.

And on him who raises his children well.

He can be sure of this.

Because God promised it.

And because he is supremely faithful in his promises.

His three children who are growing so much.

Provided they don't get sick.

And who will certainly be bigger than he is.

(How proud he is of this in his heart.)

And his two boys will be awfully strong.

His two boys will replace him, his children will take his place on earth.

When he is no longer here.

His place in the parish and his place in the forest.

His place in the church and his place in the house.

His place in the town and his place in the vineyard.

And on the plains and on the hill and in the valley.

His place in Christianity. After all.

His place as a man and his place as Christian.

His place as parishioner, his place as worker.

His place as farmer.

His place as father.

His place as a son of Lorraine and of France.

Because these are the places, great God, that must be taken.

All of this must go on.

When he is no longer here as he is now.

If not get better.

The work around the farm must go on.

And the vine and the wheat and the harvest and the vintage.

And the tilling of the soil.

And the pasturing of the animals.

When he is no longer here as he is now.

If not get better.

Christianity must go on.

The Church militant.

And for that you need Christians.

Always.

France and Lorraine must go on.

Long after he's gone.

As well as they are now.

If not better.

He thinks tenderly of the time when he will be no longer and his

children will take his place.

On earth.

Before God.

Of that time when he will be no longer and when his children will be.

And when they say his name in town, when they talk about him, when

his name gets brought up, at some chance remark, it will no

longer be him that they talk about but his sons.

All together, it will be him and it will not be him, since it will be his

sons.

It will be his name and it will no longer be and it will not be his
name, since it will be (will have become) his sons' name.

And he is proud of it in his heart and he thinks about it with such
tenderness.

That he will no longer be himself but his sons.

And that his name will no longer be his name but his sons' name.

That his name will no longer be at his service but at his sons' service.

Who will bear the name honestly before God.

Openly and proudly.

As he does.

Better than he.

And when they say his name, it's his son they'll be calling, it's his son
they'll be talking about.

He'll have long been in the cemetery.

Around the church.

He, that is, his body.

Side by side with his fathers and the fathers of his fathers.

Lined up with them.

With his father and his grandfather that he knew.

And with everyone else, all those that he didn't know.

All the men and women of his lineage.

All the old men and all the old women.

His ancestors and forefathers.

And his foremothers.

As many of them as there have been since the parish was founded.

By some founding saint.

Sent by Jesus.

His body, because his soul he will have a long time ago.

Commended to God.

Putting it under the protection of his patron saints.

He will sleep, his body will thus rest.

Among his own, (awaiting his own).

Awaiting the resurrection of the body.

Until the resurrection of the body his body will thus rest.

He thinks tenderly of the time when he will no longer be needed.

And when things will go on all the same.

Because there will be others.

Who will bear the same responsibilities.

And who will perhaps, and will undoubtedly, bear them better.

He thinks tenderly of the time when he will be no longer.

Because you can't be forever, can you.

You can't be and have been.

And when everything will go on all the same.

When they will not go any worse.

On the contrary.

When things will only get better.

On the contrary.

Because his children will be there, for a while.

His children will do better than he, of course.

And the world will go better.

Later.

He's not jealous of it.

On the contrary.

Nor for having come to the world, as he did, in an ungrateful time.

And to have no doubt prepared for his sons a time that is perhaps less
ungrateful.

What madman would be jealous of his sons and of the sons of his sons.

Doesn't he work solely for his children.

He thinks tenderly of the time when people will scarcely ever think of
him except because of his children.

(If they only think about him occasionally. Rarely.)

When his name resounds (warmly) in town, it'll be because someone is
calling his son Marcel or his son Pierre.

It'll be because someone needs his son Marcel or his son Pierre.

And is calling them, happy to see them. And is looking for them.

Because it's they who will rule then and who will bear the name.

It's they who will rule with their peers, those from the same generation.

It's they who will reign on the face of the earth.

Perhaps for some time still, an old man who remembers

Will say.

Those two Sévin boys are good boys.

It's not surprising.

It runs in the family.

Their father was such a good man.

And after a while the young will repeat with confidence:

The old man was such a good man.

But already they'll know nothing about it.

They'll no longer know then, and the comment itself, the very remark
will disappear.

He thinks tenderly about the time when he will no longer be even a
remark.

It's to this end, it's for this that he works, because doesn't one always
work for one's children.

He'll be nothing but a corpse in six feet of earth under six feet of earth
under a cross.

But his children will be.

He tenderly greets the new time when he will be no longer.

When he will have ceased to be.

When his children will be.

The reign of his children.

He thinks tenderly of the time that will no longer be his time.

But his children's time.

His children's reign (of time) on earth.

In that time, when they say The Sévins it won't be he but they.

Nothing more, without explanation.

His children will bear the name Sévin.

Or the name Chénin, or the name Jouffin, or Damrémont, or any
other name from Lorraine.

Any other Christian name, or French name, any name from Lorraine.

At the thought of his children who will have become men and women.

At the thought of his children's time, of his children's reign

On earth,

In their turn,

A tenderness, a warmth, a pride swells in his breast.

(My God, could that be Pride

But God will forgive him.)

How strong and brave his sons will be in the forest, great God.

Boys as solid as oaks

In the forest when the winter wind blows.

The bitter north wind.

That will cut to their bones.

And make icicles in their beards.

He laughs when he thinks what they'll look like.

He laughs to himself and perhaps even openly.

Out loud.

When he thinks what they'll look like when they have beards.

And he thinks tenderly about his daughter who will be such a good
homemaker.

Because she'll certainly be like her mother.

As for him, it's understood, he'll be no longer.

He'll have lost his taste for bread.

But there will be others, great God there will be others,

One must hope,

Who already know the taste for bread and who will know how to bite
into a good crust of bread.

Who will eat heartily.

Their daily bread.

Who will eat heartily their daily bread and their eternal bread.

(They'll manage very well without him, and he'll no longer sit at table,
because one must get up from the table when the newcomers
arrive and nudge one aside.)

There will be others—his children who will live and who will die
after him if all proceeds in the right order.

And whom he'll see again in heaven.

[...]

And his wife who stayed home today.

But who otherwise usually goes to the fields too.

Who is such a good homemaker.

And such a good Christian.

Would she be as willing to work.

And do the housework.

If she weren't working for her children.

Thus, without exception, all the world works for the little girl hope.

All that we do we do for children.

And it's the children who make it all get done.

All that we do.

As if they led us by the hand.

Thus all we do, everything that everyone does is done for the sake
of the little girl hope.

Charles Péguy (1873-1914) was a notable French poet, essayist and editor.

In Search of the Household

JOHN CUDDEBACK

Even after the war [of 1870] a farm in the Beauce country resembled a farm of the Gallo-Roman age infinitely more than this same farm resembles itself today. Or rather, this farm was like its Gallo-Roman self, as far as customs, regulations, seriousness, gravity, in structure itself, in institution and in dignity. And even, at bottom, it was close to a farm of the time of Xenophon.

—Charles Péguy, *Cahiers de la Quinzaine*, 1913

Over about the last hundred and fifty years western society has, for various reasons and in various ways, turned away from the household, which is now almost a lost reality—even while the census and common usage perpetuate the impression that we live in ‘households.’ We do not really know what we are missing, which is the more remarkable the more keenly we feel its absence.

From time immemorial in almost every society up until the Industrial Revolution the majority of human life was lived within or in close proximity to the household. And while physical proximity was essential, it was not the defining characteristic of the household community. Household members engaged in common actions in a common project of making a life together, daily. The significance of this point cannot be overemphasized, and yet we seem to live in utter incomprehension of it. From a purely historical perspective one should wonder: how can people today not feel disconnected and isolated at a root level?

We do not think of the household as something that has a rich natural structure, and that also needs to be shaped through our intentional efforts. We do not even really think of our homes as a place to live, a place to enact at the deepest level who we are and who we want to be, on a daily basis.

There is a basic household structure that is ancient both in notion and in practice. We might refer to this household community as perennial, as its structure is rooted in human nature itself.

That the household community finds its proximate originative principle in a permanent commitment between a man and a woman, called marriage, I will take for granted. My interest here is certain features of that broader community, a community which can be distinguished from the family. When Aristotle says that the household is a community ordered by nature for the satisfaction of every-day needs, it would not do to substitute the word family for household. We would say for instance that certain possessions, such as clothing and rudimentary tools, are part of the household, while they are not part of the family.

Our difficulty in conceptualizing the distinction between family and household surely stems from the diminution and demise of the household in the richer, older sense.

Just what goes on in a household according to the older notion? One angle from which to address this question is a basic duality deep in the heart of the household, a duality that can be captured by the words ‘home’ and ‘workshop.’ A household is first of all a home: it is a place of stability and rest. We see this in the simple power of the words “You are at home,” words that can be used in number of contexts. Home is my place; even more it is our place. It is where I, and we, belong. It is where we can be ourselves, and do our thing. There is no tension toward the future, but rather the peace and tranquility of being-in the present. No greater compliment can one give a host than to say “I feel at home here.” Likewise, a serious condemnation of a place or context—say of someplace that a person has lived for some time—is contained in the contrary description of a place where one does not feel at home.

That a household should be a ‘home’ is deeply intuitive. Here is the primordial human place of belonging, which speaks to the deepest of human needs.

The word ‘workshop’ conveys something different. A workshop, as a place of work, necessarily involves a tension toward the future, the not-yet. A workshop exists for the sake of bringing about something that does not yet exist, through steady, intentional labor.

While we might speak of someone being ‘at home’ in a workshop, these two terms nonetheless capture fundamentally distinct and somewhat opposed, though not contradictory, aspects of a household. It seems to me that the integration of these two aspects is at the heart of a right understanding and practice of household life.

If a household is a workshop just what is its proper work? There are two works written into the very fiber of the household: the formation of persons, and this especially as regards the raising and formation of children, and the ‘work’ in the more

common sense of the production of wealth. In both of these ways a household has a tension toward something to be achieved every day: youth should be formed, and the material needs of people be provided. Both of these are a matter of art—in the sense of a developed know-how—that is practiced and passed on from generation to generation, and they both require relentless attention and the deepest energies of the persons involved. In these two areas is the answer to the question: what most of all does a household do?

In the traditional household these two ‘works’ were deeply intertwined. The work of producing wealth was not only a responsibility of members of the household—as it often remains in contemporary practice—but it was also a work primarily in and of the household. As such, the daily work of wealth-production provided the first context for living the personal relationships of the household, and for the formation of young people. When Ischomachus’ wife in Xenophon’s *Oeconomicus* relates that the main lesson her mother taught her was to be “responsible,” there is little doubt as to the main daily school of that lesson. In and through the work of wealth-production young people were formed, in the presence of their parents, in the most basic human and moral dispositions.

The formation of the young of course was not restricted to the work context. Work (and here I mean work in the sense of all those activities that provide for the material needs of human life) is not the highest of human activities. But given human nature and the human condition, work will be the primary daily occupation of the majority of human persons, and as such it will have a kind of practical primacy—especially in a household—as the context for human life. Historically, the household was the central daily locus of human life especially because it was the central locus of work, and concomitantly of child-formation.

The contemporary household, in a change the significance of which has not yet been reckoned, is no longer the central place of the work of wealth production. A household can, at least in some sense, be said to perform the task of wealth-production, even if that production is by means of work that is remote from the household. This is of course the dominant model today, where for most people the connection between their ‘work’ and their household is simply a connection of intention. In other words, they earn a salary working outside the home, for the sake of using that money at home.

In a striking parallel, for several generations now there has been a growing separation of rearing of children from the household. Of course child rearing, and

especially the more academic aspect of it, has traditionally included some degree of involvement by church, state, and other social entities. Even so it seems beyond question that a significant feature of the contemporary household has been the reduction of in-home formation (through external child care, schooling, health care, training for work...), just as surely as there has been a reduction of in-home work of wealth-production.

But these two characteristics of the contemporary household, which sociologist Christopher Lasch referred to as the socialization of production and the socialization of reproduction, move us to ask a hard question about the nature of the household: at what point does a household cease to function as a household? Or put otherwise, just what is required in order to fulfill the true role of a household?

We noted that parents can, and often do, fulfill the responsibility for the material welfare of the household through work that in its immediate object and execution is unconnected to the household, though connected by intention. In a similar way parents might be said to fulfill the responsibility for child-formation through overseeing a formation done by agents exterior to the household.

My intention in this short essay is to suggest the urgent importance of a re-evaluation of our notion and practice of household, in view of the ancient notion and practice. This is not a matter of trying to ‘go back,’ of a return to ‘good old days.’ Rather, guided by a thoughtful understanding of the past, a sober and prudent deliberation based on first principles is in order.

Perhaps, for example, we might consider how meaningful, productive work can be re-introduced to the household, even while work exterior to the home provides income. The reality of chores—often today reduced to mere cleaning—might be transformed by some version of the older home arts. This will require much thought and change of habit if there are to be more than simply cosmetic changes.

I have pointed to a duality in the household between ‘home’ and ‘workshop.’ I have likewise pointed to a traditional connection between the two fundamental ‘works’ of child-rearing and wealth-production as largely in-home projects. In view of the contemporary crisis of the family, we should reasonably ask how and even whether the work of child-rearing can reasonably be done apart from a robust home life. And what, if anything, can constitute a robust home life in the absence of the real work of producing the material needs of human life.

Finally, we will want to consider the deep connection between being a ‘home’ and

being a 'workshop.' Can spouses/parents and children really experience home as a place of profound belonging and rest, if it is not likewise a place of the very works that most characterize daily human existence? If, as Josef Pieper and others have suggested, true leisure and good work are mutually dependent, we might gain insight into the problem of home as 'entertainment center' versus place of shared rich activities.

The household has been at sea in uncharted waters for several generations. A frank examination of the results of this experiment in light of the traditional household, and in light of human nature, can be a significant first step in discerning a more healthy way forward about how to live a truly human life in households today.

John Cuddeback is a husband, father, and professor of philosophy at Christendom College. His book *True Friendship: Where Virtue Becomes Happiness* was republished in 2010. He is currently working on a book on reclaiming the household, on which he also writes at his website BaconFromAcorns.com.

Back to the Garden: Wilhelm Röpke's Vision of a Humane Economy

ALLAN CARLSON

This article appeared originally under the title “Wilhelm Röpke’s Conundrums Over the Natural Family” ([Intercollegiate Review](#) [Spring 2009]). It is reprinted here with permission.

Wilhelm Röpke was an unusual free-market economist working in a difficult time. I believe that we should see him, first of all, as a product of 1914, the year which launched what he called “the devastation on so gigantic a scale to which mankind, then having gone mad, dedicated itself.” Mustered to war as a young man, Röpke served in the trenches on the Western Front. He concluded that a civilization “capable of such monstrous depravity must be thoroughly rotten.” Röpke pledged that if he “were to escape from the hell” of the Great War, he would devote his life to “preventing the recurrence of this abomination.” He also resolved that war “was simply the rampant essence of the state,” collectivism run amuck, and he launched his life-long “struggle against economic nationalism . . . , monopolies, heavy industry and large scale farming interests,” all of which he believed had given encouragement to the terrible conflict.

A second starting point for his economic views was Christian. A descendant of German Lutheran pastors, Röpke held to that concept which “makes man the image of God whom it is sinful to use as a means” and who embodies inestimable value as an individual. Noting that the idea of liberty had appeared uniquely in Christian Europe, he concluded “that only a free economy is in accordance with man’s [spiritual] freedom and with the political and social structures . . . that safeguard it.”

The key pillar of that social structure, Röpke maintained, was the natural family. Along with religion and art, he held that the family did not exist for the state, but was “pre-statal, or even supra-statal.” In its essence, family life was “natural and free,”

while the “well ordered house” served as the very foundation of civilization. Derived from “monogam[ous] marriage,” he said that the family was “the original and imperishable basis of every higher community.” The “centre of gravity” for planning and living one’s life should be in that “most natural of all communities—the family unit.” The autonomous family also stood first “in opposition to the arbitrary tendencies of the state.” Indeed, the natural family became the touchstone of his quest for a truly Humane Economy.

And yet, despite this strong affirmation of the natural family as critical to free society, Röpke’s analysis also led him to several conundrums or dilemmas surrounding family life. For example, he avoided discussing ways in which certain incentives of a free economy might tend to weaken family bonds. Surprisingly, Röpke was also hostile both to the American “Baby Boom” and to the new suburbs in which the young Boomers lived. He criticized the creation of large families, although these were in practice a common and fairly natural product of happy home life. For related reasons, he frequently fretted about population growth. Meanwhile, he encouraged public policies that actually had pro-natalist, or pro-birth effects. What were the sources of these conflicting views?

The Humane Economy, Family Style

We should start by examining in more detail the family nature of—or the place of the family in—his desired Humane Economy. Emerging from the Great War, Röpke found himself engaged in an intellectual battle on two fronts. As he later reported: “I sided with the socialists in their rejection of capitalism, and with the adherents of capitalism in their rejection of socialism.” By capitalism, as John Zmirak noted, Röpke did not mean the free market. Rather, the term “capitalism” embodied for him “the distorted and soiled form which market economy assumed” in the period between about 1840 and 1940. The liberal quest for economic liberty had gotten off track in this era, he asserted, producing effects that would pave the way to socialist collectivism; specifically:

. . . the increasing mechanization and proletarianization, the agglomeration and centralization, the growing dominance of the bureaucratic machinery over men, monopolization, the destruction of independent livelihoods, . . . and the dissolution of natural ties (the family, the neighborhood, professional solidarity, and others).

The task facing the modern economist, Röpke said, was to eliminate “the sterile alternative” between a return to 19th century laissez-faire and 20th century collectivism. The needed “free economic constitution,” as he phrased it, would embrace certain basics: “the market, competition, private initiative, a free price structure and free choice of consumption.” Röpke praised the true market economy as the only system “which releases the full activity of man so natural to him while, at the same time, [curbing] his hidden tigerish tendencies which, unfortunately are no less natural to him.” A system of free economic competition alone could deliver “discipline, hard work, decency, harmony, balance and a just relation between performance and payment.” It was also the only system compatible with protection of the free personality, which offered men and women the liberty to tackle challenges in the domains of culture, the intellect, and religion.

All the same, a market economy was not easy to achieve. As Röpke explained, “it is an artistic construction and an edifice of civilisation which has this in common with political democracy: it demands and presupposes . . . the most strenuous efforts.” Among other needs, the free market required a “high degree of business ethics together with a state ready to protect competition.” Looking to the failures of the 19th century, Röpke was relentless in exposing the “sins” of monopoly, including:

Privileges, exploitation, . . . the blocking of capital, the concentration of power, industrial feudalism, the restriction of supply and production, the creation of chronic unemployment, the rise in living costs and the widening of social differences, lack of economic discipline, [and] the transformation of industry into an exclusive club, which refuses to accept any new members.

He favored legal devices such as the Sherman Anti-Trust Act found in America to protect competition from these disorders.

Röpke was also an enthusiastic champion of free international commerce. A healthy economy, he insisted, “does not place collectivist shackles on foreign trade.” Efforts to build high tariff walls, he believed, actually “impoverished” small-scale producers. He consistently called for “a liberal and multilateral form of world trade with tolerable tariffs, most-favored-nation clauses, the policy of the open door, the gold standard, and the elimination of closed compulsory [trading] blocks.”

The restoration of private property was also central to Röpke’s vision. The antithesis to socialist or collectivized man was the property holder. Röpke explained that

competition was only one of the pillars of a free economy. The other was personal and familial “self-sufficiency.” Accordingly, expansion of the sphere of competition should be balanced by enlarging what he called “the sphere of marketless self-sufficiency.” This meant “the restoration of property for the masses,” a “lengthy and circumspect” program that would discourage the accumulation of big properties, use “progressive death duties” to break up large estates, and redistribute land to propertyless families on favorable terms. As Röpke wrote: “the industrial worker . . . can and ought to become at least the proprietor of his own residence and garden . . . which would provide him with produce from the land.” This alone would render each family “independent of the tricks of the market with its wage and price complexities and its business fluctuations.”

Indeed, Röpke held an almost religious faith in the transformative power of the private garden. As he wrote, the keeping of a family garden “was not only ‘the purest of human pleasures’ but also offers the indispensable natural foundation for family life and the upbringing of children.” In praising the “Magnetism of the Garden,” he told the story of a friend who was showing the family gardens of several workers to a “dogmatic old-time liberal;” some think this was Ludwig von Mises. In any case, Röpke continued: “on seeing these happy people spending their free evenings in their gardens,” the laissez-faire liberal “could think of nothing better than the cool remark this was an irrational form of vegetable production.” Röpke retorted: “He could not get it into his head that it was a very rational form of ‘happiness production’ which surely is what matters most.”

Still, Röpke acknowledged that it was not certain “that people really want to possess property.” Actually, “to hold” land presupposed much more: “frugality, the capacity to weigh up the present and the future, a sense of continuity and preservation, the will to independence, [and] an outstanding family feeling.”

The necessary task, he said, was broader still: a “deproletarianization” that would take industrial workers who lacked roots in “home, property, environment, family, and occupation” and transform them into free men. This meant, in Röpke’s mind, “rendering the working and living conditions of the industrial worker as similar to the positive aspects of the life of the peasant as possible.” Beyond his praise for family garden homes, the economist celebrated businesses like Switzerland’s Bally Shoe Company which actively assisted its workers in acquiring houses and land and supported their small agricultural endeavors with ploughing services, fertilizers, locally adapted seeds, and special animal stock. All of these initiatives were designed, Röpke said, “to save [these families] from their proletarian existence.” The result

would be the citizen free of the vagaries of the business cycle “who, if necessary can find his lunch in his garden, his supper in the lake, and can earn his potato-supply in the fall by helping his brother clear the land.”

To heal the distortions of human life wrought by 19th century laissez-faire capitalism, Röpke even sought to undo—in some degree—the urban-industrial revolution. Writing in *The Social Crisis of Our Time*, he called for nothing less than the “drastic decentralization of cities and industries, [and] the restoration of some more ‘natural order.’” He labeled the modern big city a “monstrous abnormality,” a “pathological degeneracy” that devitalized human existence, adding: “the pulling down of this product of modern civilisation is one of the most important aims of social reform.” Relative to the decentralization of industry, he urged that “the artisan and the small trader” receive “all the well-planned assistance that is possible.” He also saw promise in the rise of the “tertiary,” or service sector. Moreover, Röpke believed that recent technological advances—electric motors, the internal combustion engine, compact machine tools—these lent new competitive advantages to small enterprises. Anticipating the *Prairie Home Companion*’s Garrison Keillor (who has said that you buy local products at Ralph’s Pretty Good Grocery in Lake Wobegon instead of at the Mall in St. Cloud, because Ralph is your neighbor), Röpke urged that consumers “should not shrink from the sacrifice of a few cents in order to carry out an economic policy of their own and support [local] artisans to the best of their ability and for the good of the community.”

This process of “deproletarianization” also meant restoration of a peasantry: a countryside of small family farms. Röpke called the peasantry “the very cornerstone of every healthy social structure” and “the backbone of a healthy nation.” Sounding here like Thomas Jefferson, or the Southern Agrarians of the 20th century, he continued: “A peasant who is unburdened by debt and has an adequate holding is the freest and most independent man among us.” The peasant household also showed “that a type of family is possible which gives each member a productive function and thus becomes a community for life, solving all problems of education and age groups in a natural manner.” Given these qualities, Röpke held that “a particularly high degree of far-sighted, protective, directive, regulating and balancing intervention [by the state in agriculture] is not only defensible, but even mandatory.” He looked with particular admiration to the relatively advanced peasant farming systems then found in Switzerland, Scandinavia, Holland, Belgium, and France, and he looked with particular hope to the prospects for specialized production in dairy, eggs, meats, fruits and vegetables.

Another component of the Humane Economy would be a limited, but real welfare or social security system. Röpke did condemn the cradle-to-grave approach of Great Britain and Scandinavia, where “a large part of private income is continually being fed into the pumping station of the welfare state and redistributed by the state, with considerable wastage in the process.” He stressed the corrupting effects on the broader economy of this “everything in one pot, everything out of one pot” scheme, including the suppression of capital investment, the loss of individual initiative, and inflation. Moreover, such a system was like “a powerful machine that has neither brakes nor reverse gear,” ever encroaching “upon the area of self-providence and mutual aid” so that “the capacity [and willingness] to provide for oneself and for members of one’s family . . . diminishes.”

All the same, Röpke acknowledged the need for “a certain minimum of compulsory state institutions for social security.” There must “naturally be room,” he said, for public old-age pensions, health and accident insurance, widow’s benefits, and unemployment relief in a “sound . . . system in a free society.” The imperative was to keep the scheme limited, providing only a floor of support. He had special praise for the Swiss and American social security systems, circa 1960, which recognized and defended these necessary limits.

Röpke called his whole program a “Third Way,” one which would reconcile “the immense advantages of the free market economy with the claims of social justice, stability, dispersal of power, [and] fairness.” This program favored “the ownership of small- and medium-sized properties, independent farming, the decentralization of industrial areas, the restoration of the dignity and meaning of work, the reanimation of professional pride and . . . ethics, [and] the promotion of community solidarity.” This Third Way also sought “the organic building-up of society from natural and neighborly communities . . . starting with the family through parish and county to nation.” Alone, this Third Way rendered “possible a healthy family life and a non-artificial manner of bringing up children.” Indeed, “simple, natural happiness” would come from placing humans “in the true community that begins in the family” and exists “in harmony with nature.”

The Costs of Family Decay

Viewing the Western world in the middle decades of the 20th century, Röpke identified the negative consequences of “spiritual collectivism, proletarianization, . . . and centralization,” the “most serious” of which was “the disintegration of the family.”

Usually propertyless and without productive function, the modern family was “degraded to a mere consumers cooperative . . . often without children . . . or without the possibility of bestowing on them more than a summary education.” Along with this “disruption of the Family” went “the loss of a sense of ‘generations’ [where] the individual loses . . . his sense of the continuity of time and the relationship of the dead to the living and [of] the living to their successors.” Things were “fundamentally wrong,” Röpke said, in those nations “where the most natural actions of man like . . . caring for his family, saving, creating new things or raising children must be instigated by propaganda . . . [or] moralizing.”

And yet, Röpke’s analysis of and prescription for the social crisis of his age involved troubling paradoxes or dilemmas over the natural family. For example, where his contemporary Joseph Schumpeter and later analysts such as Daniel Bell argued that certain incentives within the market economy tended to weaken family bonds, Röpke seemed unconcerned. Notably, he largely ignored the market’s latent demand for the labor of married women. He did argue that family was “the natural sphere of the woman” and that the decay of autonomous homes made “the female half of society” into real victims, but he apparently did not see this in any way as the result of legitimate market incentives. Instead, Röpke seemed to blame the “bad” capitalism of the 19th century for this result.

It was true, of course, that equity feminism—a common companion to a free labor market—had made little headway into his model domain of mid-20th century Switzerland. Most married women there still were Hausfrauen, or housewives; indeed, women did not even gain the vote in that Alpine land until 1971, five years after his death. Röpke simply assumed that the male breadwinner/female homemaker family would prevail in the Humane Economy.

Röpke was also direct witness to the burgeoning American suburbs of the 1940’s and 1950’s, where young adults fled the overcrowded cities to create child-centered homes, each complete with housewife, lawn, and garden. And yet, instead of praising this process as an aspect of decentralization, he condemned these new creations. At the more objective level, he pointed to “the danger that [such] decentralization will become a mere extension of the big city into the country along the main roads.” This would amount “to a mere decentralisation of sleeping quarters whereas the big city would still remain the centre of work, shopping and pleasure.” Meanwhile, he predicted that traffic problems derived from suburbia would grow insoluble, creating a “hell of congestion.”

At a more visceral level, Röpke objected to the superficial charm and hyper-“gregariousness” of the new American suburbs. “Everybody is forever ‘dropping in’ on everybody else,” he complained. “The agglomeration of people [in the suburb] stifles all expression of individuality, any attempt at keeping to oneself; every aspect of life is centrally ruled.” Röpke especially indicted the “pressure . . . to take part in [suburban] communal life, . . . unless [one] wants to be known as a spoilsport.” He concluded that trying “to escape from the giant honeycombs of city dwelling, into the suburbs is to jump from the frying pan into the fire.”

More curiously, this great champion of the “natural family” showed an emotional dislike of human numbers, involving direct and implied condemnation of the large family. In *A Humane Economy*, for example, Röpke complained about “the visible crowdedness of our existence, which seems to get irresistibly worse every day,” the “masses of people who are all more or less the same,” the “overwhelming quantities of man-made things everywhere, the traces of people,” “this deluge of sheer human quantity,” and the emergence of humankind as the “parasite of the soil.”

Röpke did recognize on occasion the reality of anti-natalist tendencies in modern life. In his 1932 work, *What’s Wrong With the World?*, he linked the global agricultural depression of the prior decade to “the slowing up of the growth in population.” He acknowledged that birth control “techniques which permit the separation of sexuality and procreation” spread ever more widely. He continued: “Old mores have succumbed to new attitudes until the practice of birth control has become increasingly a simple matter of habit.” Röpke attributed the use of birth control, in part, to “deliberate selfishness” and concluded that “the modern rationalist spirit” could “drag down both the birth rate and the moral health of the nation.” He even acknowledged that “the birth rate . . . can theoretically fall to zero . . . resulting in an absolute diminution of population.”

However, his more usual message was a condemnation of those economists who defended population growth as a good. Röpke denounced the “blindness,” the “criminal optimism,” and the “strange mixture of statistics and lullabies” which overlooked the dangers of expanding human numbers. He denied the “bold theory” that it was population growth “which imparts dynamism to the industrial countries.” He mocked the argument that “the more cradles there are in use, the greater is the demand for goods, the higher is the investment, . . . the more vigorous is the boom.” He labeled it “a degradation of man and of the great mystery of creation to turn conception and birth” into vehicles for economic expansion. Röpke considered the

formation of a large family to be an irresponsible act. He pointed to the Baby Boom in America, fueled by an average family size of about four children, as particularly “new and disturbing.” He concluded: “Every thinking person must . . . admit that, sooner or later, it will become necessary to restrain such population increases. . . . So why not sooner than later?”

How might we explain these views? To begin with, Röpke advanced the unusual argument that the processes of industrialization, centralization, and proletarianization were in fact the consequence of too many children. During the 19th century, he explained, birth rates in Europe had remained high while death rates fell, producing “the swamping effect of the incredible increase of population.” Röpke noted that each new generation is like a horde of little barbarians. If parents could not tame them, disaster resulted; adding:

Now since this increase in population took place largely in circumstances and among classes in which this taming, i.e., cultural assimilation was less and less successful, we have been obliged in effect to experience a barbarian invasion out of the lap of our own nation.

This flooding of the earth with a “mass” was “bound to stamp its mass character” on the whole civilization. It had produced an “orgy of technology,” “mammoth industries,” “bloated big cities,” a “materialist and rationalist life without tradition,” “the undermining of everything permanent and rooted,” and “the subjugation of the whole globe by a mechanical, positivist civilization.” Röpke asserted that it would be impossible to build a humane economy “when the industrial nations of the West are improvidently taking a new demographic upsurge for granted.”

Second, he embraced an analytical Malthusianism premised on the calculation of an optimum population for each nation. While the Reverend T. R. Malthus had failed as immediate prophet, Röpke said, the Anglican priest had correctly asked why every economic gain achieved by “the labors and ingenuity of the existing population” should be immediately “claimed by millions of new individuals instead of serving to increase the well-being of those now on earth.”

And third, like many other mid-century analysts, Röpke grew mesmerized by population growth projections which counted 300 billion inhabitants on the Earth by the year 2300. In such an anthill existence, he asked, what would happen to those “unbought graces of life”: “nature, privacy, beauty, dignity, birds and woods and fields

and flowers, repose and true leisure.”

Röpke insisted that “a stabilisation of population” was “an indispensable prerequisite of the restoration to health of our society.” Yet he was vague in explaining how to reach this goal. In one passage, he suggested that the three-child family would allow for “a healthy and normal family life” while “in no way” opposing “the stabilisation of population.” In another place, though, he implied that “overpopulation” in Europe would require a two- or even one-child family system to restore economic equilibrium.

In retrospect, we can see that Röpke greatly over-estimated the procreative potential of late 20th century western peoples. The surge in numbers during the 19th century was over by 1920. Indeed, fertility had been falling throughout Europe, North America, and Australia-New Zealand since at least 1880; and in France and the United States, since 1820. Post-World War II “baby booms” were fragile events, the products of unique social forces that would not last. Post-family attitudes, closely linked to a strange combination of democratic socialism with secular individualism, eventually carried the day. As would be clear by the year 2000, below-replacement fertility and depopulation represented the real Western future.

In his public advocacy, Röpke posed still other dilemmas regarding the natural family. For example, his plan to resettle industrial families in semi-rural homes, complete with a vegetable garden and simple animal husbandry, ran counter to his demographic goals. As he was well aware, such an existence would give “the family with many children those conditions which transform a heavy burden to be endured . . . into something natural, stimulating and immediately worthwhile.” As an economist, Röpke should have realized that this would in turn create incentives for more children, for larger families. Put another way, his goal of fertility limitation would have been best achieved by leaving families in large cities where children became ever more costly luxuries.

A similar contradiction emerged in his advocacy regarding social security. As noted earlier, Röpke urged creation of a limited system of public pensions, “putting a floor” under the feet of “the weak and helpless” and preventing their fall “into bitter distress and poverty; no less, no more.” Such a system, he insisted, should not drive out other forms of old-age support, including private savings and annuities and the aid provided to aging parents by grown children.

Röpke was right in seeing such a system as possible and socially constructive.

Ironically, though, new research shows that moderate-sized public pensions such as found in the United States during the 1950's actually have a positive effect on fertility: that is, they encourage larger families. Indeed, it appears that the pre-1965 American system of limited state pensions was a contributing factor to the Baby Boom.

Conversely, it has been fairly clear since the late 1930's that large, publicly-funded pensions discourage fertility and larger families. Explained briefly, such a system socializes the "insurance value" of children, so punishing parents who raise the young while rewarding their "free-riding," childless neighbors. Once again, if a decline in fertility was his primary goal, Röpke should have encouraged ever larger state pensions.

Röpke as Successful Prophet

Fortunately, though, Röpke's priority lay elsewhere. While raising the matter in the context of the population question, he had a larger purpose in asking:

[W]hat happens to man and his soul? What happens to the things which cannot be produced or expressed in monetary terms . . . but which are the ultimate conditions of man's happiness and of the fullness and dignity of his life?

In finding answers, Röpke was—and is—correct in trying to rehabilitate social life by returning human beings to decentralized, autonomous, self-sufficient, functional homes, where education and real work would be reintegrated into the daily flow of family living. Toward this end, he correctly saw mid-20th century Switzerland to be a model state. "As the common enterprise of freedom-loving peasants and burghers," he wrote, "it has offered the world a living example of the harmonious integration of [rural] and city culture." He described a real village of about 3000 people with nearby farmsteads in the Bern Mittelrand, a place which combined artisan shops, small factories, a brewery, a dairy for cheese, a "highly tasteful" book store, and "a great collection of obviously thriving crafts and craftsmen." He added "that the whole place is remarkable for its cleanliness and sense of beauty; its inhabitants dwell in houses which anyone might envy; each garden is lovingly and expertly tended; [and] antiquity is protected. . . . This village is our ideal translated into a highly concrete reality."

Röpke's analysis also points toward ways to achieve this ideal in our new century.

His goal of "genuine decentralization" through "the creation of fresh small centres in

lieu of the big city” anticipates the New Urbanism of our day, where attention to the physical settings of real neighborhoods combines with a reattachment of work and retail sites to family residences.

Röpke’s reminder that certain technological innovations may support the broad dispersal of productive work gains new importance in the age of the home computer and the extraordinary economic democracy of the internet. Indeed, the German-Swiss economist had challenged technologists “to serve decentralisation instead of centralisation, rendering possible the greatest possible number of independent existences and giving back to human beings as producers and workers a state of affairs which would make them happy and satisfy their more elementary and most legitimate instincts.”

Röpke’s attention to “tertiary production,” or the service sector, as a growing sphere for human labor again enhances the prospects for small and medium businesses which might support household independence.

And Röpke’s insights regarding the competitive advantages held by small family farms in the production of specialty crops gains new relevance in the age of organics. Indeed, here in America at least, the last decade has witnessed an explosive growth in farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture, and independent organic farms, with farm income soaring. As the editor of *Small Farmers’ Journal* recently declared, “There has never been a better time to be a farmer.”

These are the areas where Röpke succeeded as both analyst and prophet. He was also prophetic in seeing that the civilizational crisis of the Christian West deriving from “a cultural retreat, . . . a squandering of our inheritance” linked to “a continuous process of secularization.” He wrote that the core of “the malady from which our civilization suffers lies in the individual soul,” adding that this disease would also only be “overcome within the individual soul.” Here, too, we can safely conclude that Wilhelm Röpke was altogether correct.

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In Good Hands: Caryl Houselander and the Single Vocation

LÉONIE CALDECOTT

Caryl Houselander (1901–1954) was a British Catholic writer and artist who lived during the first half of the twentieth century. She was also a mystic. As a single woman who lived through two world wars and a time of social upheaval, she exercised a further, hidden apostolate: to tend to troubled souls. The President of the British Psychology Society, Dr Eric Strauss, who sent a number of his patients to see her, summed up her therapeutic style with a simplicity that cuts to the core of today's more convoluted mental health environment: "She loved them back to life."

Coming from a dysfunctional background herself—her parents split up when she was a young child, and as she grew up she often had to care for her own deeply neurotic mother—Caryl drew on her early wounds in order to formulate a deeply Christian vision of the human person. She herself was the first to admit her own faults: socially awkward, yet finding it difficult to curb her own tongue, she started out as a self-conscious young woman and developed into an eccentric who didn't suffer fools gladly. She smoked like a chimney and cursed like a trooper. And yet in front of human suffering she would pour herself out. Her correspondence gives voice to her warm-hearted and sensitive approach to anyone who approached her. Caryl's primary vocation was to spiritual motherhood. And this is particularly interesting for our own age, given that she was neither married nor a mother, nor did she live the consecrated life as conventionally understood. She adored children (and helped to raise the grand-daughter of her closest friend), yet she never had any children of her own.

Caryl also had a very powerful sense of the dignity and meaning of human work, both professional and domestic. She began her career as a wood carver, working on church decoration among other commissions. She also drew, wrote poetry and eventually

became known as a spiritual writer whose influence was far-reaching, particularly during the stress and duress of the Second World War, when her best-selling book *This War is the Passion* was published by Sheed and Ward. All of this in between working in first aid posts, schools and asylums, as well as corresponding with and visiting an increasingly large circle of people who depended on her for comfort and advice.

Having struggled to make ends meet as an artist and writer, Caryll was particularly sensitive to the problem of the cash-strapped who had no one to fall back on. During the depression of the 1930s, being for once fully employed (she was working for the interior decoration firm Grosse), she formed with some friends a secret society, *The Loaves and the Fishes*. The idea was to identify, and then help, people who were in financial need, but unwilling to ask for assistance. The interesting aspect of this was the creativity and sensitivity with which the help was brought to bear. As much as possible, the recipient was made to feel that he or she was not being treated as a charity case. Ways would be found to make it look as though the money given was a windfall, the result of a competition, or with people lined up to 'buy' the things that the person was able to produce. A strong sense of the dignity of the human person lay at the heart of the whole apostolate.

Whether she was creating something beautiful with her hands, or helping to reshape a life that had been knocked off-course, Caryll's efforts were always imbued with a sense of proportion and beauty: things that would bring Christ, as naturally as possible, to the human environment. In the pre-war years she would work, and receive guests, in an unheated shed at the bottom of her friend Iris Wyndham's garden. A visitor to this tiny fastness recalled the scene: "Lit by the lamp, her finely articulated hands appeared curiously transparent, utterly capable in an innocent and effortless way: when not holding a pencil or graver she relaxed them and they lay quiet, slightly flexed on some scrubbed surface of plain wood or a sheet of paper."

These were the same hands that, metaphorically, she would apply to that other creative medium: that of the human soul, province of a greater Creator. Her genius for friendship overflowed into a work that of necessity was hidden and unquantifiable, and yet improved the quality of life for many whose lives had been destroyed by displacement, trauma and the myriad spiritual and psychological wounds of their age. The work, for this semi-eremetical eccentric, was made possible only by faith: a faith that had in fact been severely challenged early on in her life. Caryll had been received into the Church at the age of six, alongside her mother and older sister—making her what she called "A Rocking-Horse Catholic" (which became the title of her autobiographical memoir). But in her late teens, during a time of great strain at

home, she experienced the worst side of parish life, which a final stinging experience whilst trying to attend Mass in a wealthy area of London brought to a head. She ceased for a while to be a practising Catholic, though she never let up on her spiritual quest. Having experienced a spiritual rebirth after some mystical experiences in her twenties, Caryll was henceforth possessed of a profound and sacramental Catholic faith which was also capable of understanding the travails of the disaffected soul. Her empathy for this kind of suffering is what turned her into the ‘wounded healer’ whose genius men like Dr Strauss recognised. Of her first such experience, counselling a refugee child, she wrote:

I am able to put into practice all my theories about psychology and I have great hope that from our poor little shed and this one strange lovely boy, our wisdom school may really begin. Pedro has a mind like a beautiful valley, almost hidden by a dark and shadowy twilight. In that twilight one hears the sound of tears and yet finds rare and isolated flowers growing, and these flowers have a positively sparkling brilliance.[1]

The work grew from there, and it truly absorbed her.

I don't exaggerate, with these children I suffer myself, you can't help them if you don't. To give all my spare time to them seems silly, but you have to (I mean, I have to) ... You have to share their sense of defeat, shame and so on, go with them step by step through the dark valleys, and bring them out again to the light.

As these words reveal, one of Caryll's strongest qualities was her imagination. Her writing, which developed into her primary professional focus, is imbued with this gift. "I am a drain pipe," she wrote. "God wants to pour words through me." Imagining herself into the daily life of the Holy Family, for instance, gave her a taste for the tenor of a life lived between manual labour and the communion of souls. Some of her most beautiful writing was done in the form of what she called 'rhythms' (she hesitated to call them 'poems'). Her classic book of Marian spirituality, *The Reed of God*, is also imbued with this poetic voice, a voice which makes the reader enter into the very essence of what it means to be a bearer of Christ into the world, modelled on his own mother. Here her psychological astuteness meshes with the scripturally-based material, as for instance when she ends her meditation on the meaning of Advent, and Mary's pregnancy, with the following counsel:

If we have truly given our humanity to be changed into Christ, it is essential to us that we do not disturb this time of growth. It is a time of darkness, of faith. We shall not see Christ's radiance in our lives yet; it is still hidden in our darkness; nevertheless, we must believe that He is growing in our lives; we must believe it so firmly that we cannot help relating everything, literally everything, to this almost incredible reality. This attitude it is which makes every moment of every day and night a prayer. In itself it is a purification, but without the tense resolution and anxiety of self-conscious aim.[2]

Caryll was always something of a freelancer. She took work as it came along, had to rely on the shelter and charity of others in hard times, and dispensed the same when her fortunes turned. She was wary of formal ecclesial organisations, which she felt might get stuck in their own 'charism' and distract its adherents from spontaneously responding to the here and now of daily circumstance. Any formal organisations she got involved with, such as the Grail Society, had to accept that in the long term she could not be contained within their boundaries. She liked to respond to the Holy Spirit as personally as possible. As Maisie Ward put it in her biography of Houselander (That Divine Eccentric): "It is the paradox of the Gospel: to work secretly, looking only to 'the Father who seeth in secret,' yet to let our 'light shine before men.' It is the problem of the Church itself, which after all was founded by Christ to gather in all the world, yet to reject worldiness" (114).

And yet she had a keen sense of economic realities, and reflected on the question of what Christian work consisted in. A letter written to her friend Archie Campbell-Murdoch, who converted partly under Caryll's influence, and who wanted to participate in her apostolate to refugee children, makes some interesting points about the relationship between work and Christian charity.

I think, if I may be frank, that you should disabuse your mind completely of the idea that an action or way of life loses its supernatural value because it is a means to your livelihood, because you are paid. The idea that only unpaid work is real charity (love), is simply a snobbish idea which grew fat under the Victorian worldliness: it is not the Catholic idea. To start with, the idea is that everyone should work, and that their work, which ought to occupy most of their life and all their best energy and ability, should be in itself the chief means by which they give glory to God—that means that their whole-time job should be their holiest and most charitable self-offering. If they are not able to find work that fulfils that ideal, they are crippled their whole life long.

To say that charity is only what is not paid for, and not a means to living, is the same as saying that the only people who can fill their lives with charity are the rich—the few exceptions, to be pitied, who need not earn their living; or alternatively that the poor and the huge majority who do have to work can only really glorify God in their spare time and when, in all likelihood, they are tired out and have only a fifth best to offer. Our Lord says, even in respect to the work of being Apostles, “the labourer is worthy of his hire,” and He specifically told His Apostles to accept board and lodging in return for their apostleship. He Himself was a workman, and He did not give away the things He made; He took pay for them and helped to support His home and family.[3]

The complexity of these questions was experienced keenly by Houselander herself. In the forties, for example, she struggled to balance the needs of her growing vocation to write, against those of the people who needed her on a more immediate plane. During the war, she was working incessantly for others both day and night (by day she was nursing, by night she was on fire-watch duty as German bombs fell all around her, learning to embrace her own terror as an identification with the suffering of Christ). Yet she was also trying to write. Iris Wyndham, who at one point during the war shared a one bedroom flat with Caryll and another woman, described how she struggled to fit her writing in around the needs of others.

Night after night she would write till the pen fell from her hand. Yet she never held back: she gave everything she had. Everyone felt they were the important person. Coming into the flat and finding someone who would make a demand on her she would stand stock still as if she had been shot. It would be at least ten minutes before she could speak coherently.[4]

People who had got to know her through her writings or her outreach work would knock on her door and ring the bell, and if she didn't answer go on knocking and ringing... “I am harassed by people as well as by bombs,” Caryll admitted.

Her year working at the first aid post was succeeded by a posting to censorship. Her department was next to the Air Force Division. Even here the double level of her work—professional and spiritual—came out: a non-Catholic Flight Lieutenant who had got to know her began to depend on her prayers. To the slight irritation of her superiors, he would “appear round the cupboard separating the two sections with his hands prayerfully folded, mouthing ‘a genoux!’.”

There are countless examples of how Caryll evangelised through her presence in the

midst of the world and of people who did not necessarily share her religious perspective. Like the fiery Dominican preacher Vincent McNabb, who inspired the early 20th century back-to-the-land movement, she was always willing to make a fool of herself for Christ. She was keenly aware of the moods of those around her. At one point she suggested a typically humorous way of brightening up the days of people sitting on the bus with her. You could simply sit there, she said, and make slightly strange faces. This would have the purpose of distracting people from their own problems, whilst at the same time making them feel grateful for being much more normal and attractive than you are. Even in the midst of the madness that was London in the Blitz, this particular manifestation of concern for one's fellow man must have taken a great deal of humility!

Under the high jinks and ready repartee ("Houselander," demanded her nursing matron one day as they prepped hurriedly to receive a batch of wounded civilians, "Are you sterile?" "Not so far as I know!" quipped the spinster in return), Caryll was of course in deadly earnest. She had enough experience of evil, both in her own soul, and in that of others she knew of, to be consumed, as was her medieval counterpart St Catherine of Siena, with a zeal for souls. What made her unusual, and perhaps particularly modern, is the great empathy and humanity she brought to that task. She was also realistic about her own limitations, something that anyone who does this kind of hidden work for Christ really needs to be. She was particularly aware of the dangers that beset pious single women. This was her commentary on the parable of the wise virgins.

Unfortunately, there are not only wise virgins in this world but unwise ones; and the foolish virgins make more noise in the world than the wise, giving a false impression of virginity by their loveless and joyless attitude to life. These foolish virgins, like their prototypes, have no oil in their lamps. And no one can give them this oil, for it is the potency of life, the will and capacity to love. Virginity is really the whole offering of soul and body to be consumed in the fire of love and changed into the flame of its glory.[5]

Much as she herself wanted to offer herself soul and body to Christ and to his needy children, as she got older and her health failed (she died of breast cancer at the age of 53), Caryll Houselander had to limit herself to one aspect of her vocation: the one that gave posterity access to her wisdom. She poured her last years into her books. Confiding to another writer who asked her about whether it was a bad idea for a writer to socialise, she wrote revealingly about this period of her life:

I find that my vitality is exhausted and that I can no longer cope both with people and with writing, and I am certain that for me the real communion with people is in writing, and this does not only apply to strangers but to my intimate friends; I have realised that when they keep me from writing, they are actually destroying all hope of communion between us. With you, however, it may be otherwise; social contact may be a necessary stimulus.[6]

Of one thing she was sure, however. For the Christian artist, the ego has to be mortified. “If one’s work is to be a communion with humanity, then one has to suffer for it; one has to suffer seeing its imperfections, for one thing. After all, our work is ourself, and this being so, we can be certain that it will never be perfect.” Curiously, her only novel, *The Dry Wood*, bears this out. Far from a perfect work of art, it is nonetheless imbued with all of Caryll’s central concerns: the dignity of the poor, the salvific impact of weakness and disability, of the vulnerable, the child, the mysterious presence of Christ at the heart of every human drama. Her art lay in meditation, without artifice.

And so far from taking herself too seriously as a creative artist, Caryll of necessity fell back on those day to day tasks that St Thérèse, to whom she had a devotion, held onto, and she never turned her back on those relationships which at times also tried her. This she wrote to a friend who had sent her some cleaning materials for her first little solo flat (dubbed the KitchMorgue, because it was so tiny and looked out onto a dark well between buildings):

I have more and more realised since I had the KM how real the prayer of contemplation is that consist outwardly in washing up, dusting and cooking; and to have thee mops and dusters and clothes to make even ‘the outward and visible sign’ of it beautiful, and to have them from you is a delight.[7]

Here we have all the aspects of Caryll’s ‘work’ in unison: the beauty of domestic labour, the attention to the human. Whether it was unseen and unsung, or out there in the professional world, Caryll believed that the best work for a human being was the “one which will enable him to serve God best and be, in itself, as work should be, a means of contemplation.”

Of course, she did not mean a contemplation that sets itself apart from the human suffering in our midst. Christians addressing this “must set their pace to the footsteps

of a crippled world... For every 1000 women who can now dress a wound on the flesh, there is only one—if as many—who can begin the healing of a wound in the mind. It requires much more education to attend to a broken heart than it does to attend to a broken leg.” In order to do this we must pray. We must allow prayer to break us. We allow Christ to grow in us, to take us beyond our comfort zone. “We have to stretch Christ in us... the cross overshadowing the whole world... The arms of Christ stretched on the cross are the widest reach there is, the only one that encircles the whole world.”[8]

[1] Maisie Ward, *That Divine Eccentric* (Sheed and Ward, 1962), 188.

[2] *The Reed of God* (Sheed and Ward), 29.

[3] Letter to Archie Campbell-Murdoch, December 24, 1945 (from *The Letters of Caryl Houselander* [Sheed and Ward], 59).

[4] *That Divine Eccentric*.

[5] *The Reed of God*, introduction, 2.

[6] Letter to Christine Spender, January 21, 1946 (*The Letters of Caryl Houselander*, 101).

[7] *That Divine Eccentric*, 184.

[8] *Ibid.*, 192.

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Work and Monasticism

DOM BENEDICT HARDY OSB

When the holy Abba Antony lived in the desert he was beset by accidie, and attacked by many sinful thoughts. He said to God, “Lord, I want to be saved, but these thoughts do not leave me alone; what shall I do in my affliction? How can I be saved?” A short while afterwards, when he got up to go out, Antony saw a man like himself sitting at his work, getting up from his work to pray, then sitting down and plaiting a rope, then getting up again to pray. It was an angel of the Lord sent to correct and reassure him. He heard the angel saying to him, “Do this and you will be saved.” At these words, Antony was filled with joy and courage. He did this, and he was saved. [1]

This little narrative is placed at the very beginning of the Alphabetical Collection of the Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The collection was compiled in its present form in the late sixth century, but it contains sayings dating back to the early fourth century. The Father of all monks, St. Antony the Great (c. 251–356) is depicted here as receiving a divine inspiration about the value of work in the life of a monk. He is shown that, far from being an obstacle, or distraction, work must be regarded as an essential element in the quest for prayer without ceasing. Unlike the Angels, we human beings are not capable of maintaining an uninterrupted and undistracted focus of attention on the Lord. We need some alternating rhythm in our day. We need to use our bodies. We need to have something to do. Some simple manual work, ideally of the sort that occupies the hands but leaves the mind free, has a place in monastic life no less important than Psalmody or silence or fasting. Through it, and not in spite of it, the monk will live in accordance with God’s will. He will deepen his ceaseless recollection and interior peace. He will grow in humility, in purity of heart and in holiness.

The story about St. Antony and the Angel makes one small contribution to an extensive polemical literature from the early centuries of monasticism. Orthodox monks of both East and West felt the need to counter a doctrine, or a temptation, that would hold work in disdain. Among those associated with this idea was a sect labelled the Messalians, or Euchites. Its adherents held that work must be somehow unworthy of a perfect Christian, and especially of a perfect monk. The real ascetic, having become wholly spiritual, will have no time to waste on merely mundane pursuits. Being

entirely taken up with prayer, and obedient to the Gospel command never to be anxious about food or drink or clothes (cf. Mt 6:25), such a one will enjoy uninterrupted gnosis of the Holy Trinity.

St. Basil the Great (c. 329–379) was one of those who felt obliged to add his voice to this controversy. In his Longer Rules Number 37, he gives a full response to the question: “Is it necessary to work?” And: “Should we neglect work on a pretext of prayers and psalmody?” Basil begins his answer with the Dominical text: “The labourer is worthy of his food” (Mt 10:10). In his typical fashion, he then turns immediately outwards. We need to work, he says, in order to have the means to give to the poor. In support of this, Basil quotes more than once the text from Ephesians 4:28: “Let him labour at some honest work with his hands, so that he might have something to share with those in need.”^[2] The life of piety, Basil goes on to teach, cannot be an excuse for idleness. On the contrary, it has to be a relentless combat, a hard asceticism, a training for patience and tribulation. And this is good for us. Our body needs the physical exercise, and our soul needs the opportunity to grow in charity and concern for those in need. Whereas, by contrast, idleness is bad for us in every way. Basil deploys here a battery of scriptural texts in favour of this point, of which the strong words of St. Paul form the centre piece: “Whoever does not work, let him not eat” (2 Thessalonians 3:10). As for the necessary alternation of work and prayer, Basil would agree with the Fathers of the Egyptian desert. Our work must be thought of as one ingredient in our life of prayer and union with God. Ideally, and if possible, prayer should continue even as we work. And if while we work we find ourselves unable actually to praise God with our tongues, then we should continue to do so at least in our hearts.

Drawing upon a very rich tradition of monastic literature, explicitly including the writings of St. Basil, and of the Egyptian desert Fathers, some time in sixth-century Italy St. Benedict wrote his Rule. The forty eighth chapter of the Rule is devoted to “The daily manual labour.” At least, that is the title of the chapter. Its real subject, though, is rather the desired balance in any monastic or Christian life between prayer and work: work that is truly a part and expression of our prayer; prayer that must be the chief work of the monk.

St. Benedict begins his Chapter 48, in typical fashion, with an aphorism: *Otiositas inimica est animae*—“Idleness is the enemy of the soul.” St. Benedict hated idleness. His insistence that idleness is utterly incompatible with the profession of a monk becomes something of a running theme in his Rule. Of course, Benedict knew of the tradition, inherited via John Cassian and Evagrius, which identified *accidie*, or

spiritual torpor, boredom, listlessness, as a particularly dangerous temptation for monks. “Only a single demon attacks a working monk” writes Cassian, “whereas an idle one is prey to innumerable devils.” [3] More even than that: for St. Benedict the vice of idleness has roots that reach all the way down to the original sin of Adam. We come to the monastery, he suggests in his Prologue, precisely in order to flee from *desidia*, the sloth of disobedience, through which we had drifted away from God. We come in order to take up, instead, the hard labour of obedience. This is the way of Jesus Christ. It’s the way that leads us back, from alienation and death, to God, and to everlasting life.

We find in St. Benedict’s Rule something of a tension between toil and rest. This tension is actually fundamental to the whole monastic life, and to the whole Christian life. Benedict speaks often in terms of urgency, even haste; certainly energy, purpose, determination in pursuing our heavenly goal. To his way of thinking, we don’t have much time in this life, and we need to make full use of the little we have been given. Yet, on the other hand, we need to be at rest in God’s presence. We need to have space and time to listen to his still, small voice. We need to be perfectly clear that we prefer nothing whatever to Christ. As later medieval writers would express it, the monastic life could even be defined as *sanctum otium*—a “holy leisure”; the life symbolised by Mary rather than her sister Martha (cf. Luke 10:41); an environment which provides for that freedom from the pressing business of this world, and from distraction, and from a divided heart, which St. Paul recommends for the unmarried (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:35, 34).

So, in his Chapter on manual work, St. Benedict uses the Latin word *vacare* six times: to be empty, free, open, available. At set times in each day the brothers are to work; then at set times they are to be free—or in Latin, *vacant*—for their holy reading. That is, in addition to the hours spent praising God in Choir, Benedictine monks are to spend several hours each day at their *lectio divina*. For the ancients, this exercise of reading and learning Holy Scripture is an encounter with God in his holy Word. Around a thousand years before the time of St. Ignatius of Loyola, in monastic usage the word *meditatio* refers above all to this manner of reading. So, we should think of Benedictine *lectio divina* as explicitly an exercise of prayer. To it the monk must give some of the best hours of his day.

Here comes the tension. *Lectio divina* is demanding. It requires dedication, application, effort, perseverance, as does the prayer of Psalmody, which St. Benedict calls the *Opus Dei*—the Work of God. So, we find in Chapter 48 of the Holy Rule the word *vacare* also used in its negative sense. What if a brother is found so slothful, so

negligent, so apathetic (*acediosus, neglegens, desidiosus*), that he wastes, or fritters away the time which should be spent in *lectio divina*? Let him be corrected, and if he fails to amend, punished. But if that fails to work, then at least let him be given some work to do, if necessary even on a Sunday: so that he may not be idle—*ut non vacet* (Holy Rule 48:23).

What sort of work is suitable for monks? St. Basil sets out principles that he thinks should guide the choice of work. Work must not be allowed to interfere with the peaceful and untroubled nature of monastic life, nor must it involve too much contact with people of the outside world. Crafts he recommends are weaving, shoe making, building, carpentry, metalwork and agriculture (cf. Longer Rules 38). Basil doesn't mention here the hospital he established by the monastery for the care of the local sick, nor his own preoccupation with pastoral, controversial and apologetic writing. Basil's younger contemporary St. Jerome (c. 342–420) offers his own suggestions about suitable monastic work, in his Letter 125 to Rusticus: horticulture, grafting of fruit trees, apiculture, basket making, fishing net manufacture, the copying of books. Jerome also fails to mention here his own massive work as a scriptural exegete and translator, and as a theologian and controversialist.

Regarding agriculture: it did not find favour among all the monastic Fathers. In his twenty-fourth Conference, St. John Cassian (c. 360–435) warns against excessive outdoor activity, because inevitably that will lead to the dissipation of a recollected mind. Too much farm work will also habituate monks to being outside their cells. St. Benedict speaks of heavy manual work in the fields, but only as if that were an exception, forced on monks of a particular community because of their poverty. Nevertheless, he comments on that positively. If that is their case, he says, they should not be distressed: “because then they are truly monks, when they live by the labour of their hands” (Holy Rule 48:8).

We can gain a useful insight into St. Benedict's mind on the subject of work by comparing his approach with that of the Rule of the Master. Benedict leaned on this Rule while composing his own, but silently distanced himself from many of the attitudes and conclusions of its anonymous author. If the Messalians occupy one end of a spectrum of opinion on monastic work, then the Master stands opposite, at the other end. He wants his monastery to be set up like a work camp. Its inmates are there for penal servitude, and the Abbot's business is to ensure that none of them gets away with a moment's respite. In striking contrast to this, St. Benedict is continually looking out for the weaker brethren, making sure that they be not over-burdened, or

saddened, “for no one should be disquieted or distressed in the house of God” (31:19). If they need help, they must have it. If the common fast is too hard for them, let it be broken (35:3, 12).

As for types of work, St. Benedict prefers to stick to principles. “Let them work at whatever needs to be done” he says (48:3). Ideally, he wants his monastery to be so constructed “that within it all necessities, such as water, mill and garden are contained, and the various crafts practised. Then there will be no need for the monks to roam about outside, because that is not at all good for their souls” (66:6-7). One activity that Benedict ring-fences is care of the sick “which must rank above everything else, so that in them Christ may be truly served” (36:1). Another very important task is that of providing hospitality. “Guests,” says Benedict, “are never lacking in a monastery” (53:16). They also must be served as Christ himself. This means that they must be treated “with all humanity,” that is, properly fed, comfortably housed, and duly attended by an assigned brother “whose soul is possessed by the fear of God” (53:9, 21). St. Benedict speaks also of the necessary work of administration, of kitchen service, of laundry, of the instruction of novices, and of children. He makes sure that light but still useful work is found for the elderly. As for the crafts: “let the artisans practise their craft with all humility, if the Abbot allows it. But if one of them becomes puffed up because of his skill, and feels he is conferring some great benefit on the monastery, let him be removed from his craft and not allowed to resume it, unless perhaps the Abbot commands him to do so, once he has manifested due humility” (57:1-3).

G.K. Chesterton famously observed that if a thing is worth doing, then it’s worth doing badly. That’s a very comforting truth, ever applicable in a monastery, which will never be staffed by trained professionals, but only by a strange collection of disparate characters who all happen to have received this vocation from God. A monastery must always therefore be a frustrating environment for a perfectionist. Any task or project undertaken will inevitably be interrupted, and its satisfactory accomplishment must be set considerably below the need to follow the daily timetable. That, as we have seen, subordinates work to prayer, and to the general demands of monastic life. The projects of perfectionists also tend to fall foul of the multifarious tasks a monastery always generates. Benedictine monks remain in principle always ready to “abandon whatever they have in hand” in order to follow the call of obedience (5:8). And the obedience matters far more than any particular work, however good, noble or useful.

That said, it is wholly in accordance with the mind of St. Benedict that monks should do their work as well as they can: “that in all things God may be glorified” (57:9). So it

is that, historically, monks have striven for and achieved outstanding excellence: not only in liturgy; not only in personal holiness of life, but also in art and architecture, in music, in scholarship, in agriculture, in theology, in science, in education and in the pastoral mission. Thank God!

Sometime in the nineteenth century, someone was so impressed by the mutual relationship between work and prayer in St. Benedict's Rule that they coined an axiom: *laborare est orare*—"to work is to pray." The phrase somehow stuck, and spread. We still occasionally come across it in print, as if it expressed a profound truth, or as if somehow it could stand as a Benedictine motto. But it can't, because it's nonsense. In fact, it's entirely contrary to the whole Benedictine tradition of work and prayer! One might as well say, with the inscription over the Auschwitz gateway: *Arbeit macht frei*. To which we respond: no, it doesn't! Work can be dehumanising drudgery, and it can be forced on unwilling slaves. Work can be a form of idolatry, and it can be driven by pride, greed, envy, lust or anger. The work of the swindler, the burglar, the kidnapper, the abortionist, the torturer and other such criminals is sinful by definition, and so cannot be offered to God as prayer. Work is performed by atheists who explicitly do not pray. Sometimes, too, work can be used by Christians, even by monks, as an excuse to dodge the hard task of confronting God in prayer. Yes, we can and must make our work an expression of our service of God and neighbour, and at least in that way make it a part of our prayer. Yes, if we pray well we shall work well, and if we work well, that will help our prayer. But sometimes, or very frequently, we have to do nothing but pray. And if we fail to do that, most likely we deceive ourselves when we protest that "my work is my prayer."

"Idleness is the enemy of the soul" said St. Benedict. But so, too, is overwork. And so is workaholism. Nowadays there is a lot of that about. Even while many today cannot find meaningful work because of unemployment, others find themselves driven to do nothing but work, work, work. This paradoxical feature of modern life cannot be entirely excluded even from monasteries. Especially in communities with falling numbers, and rising average ages, a few capable monks or nuns will often find themselves having perforce to accomplish tasks that would previously have been shared, or delegated. Often, too, nowadays, monasteries find it rather hard to identify work that can be both economically profitable and compatible with monastic life. Sometimes large projects established by former generations began as healthy outlets for monastic energy, and steady sources of income for the community. But globalised economics, advancing technology, and diminished human resources can conspire to turn such projects gradually into liabilities. So often we find them now kept going by

lay employees, perhaps at a loss, and even losing entirely their properly monastic character.

Do monastic and specifically Benedictine ideas about work remain relevant valuable and today? Many people think that the recovery of these ideas is essential not just for holiness, but even for sanity. Books which apply the wisdom of the Holy Rule to a modern and secular environment continue to pour off the presses. While this is greatly to be welcomed, still we need to see Benedictine principles lived out, day by day, in real, functioning, living monasteries. These principles were summed up in a fresh and coherent way a little over a century ago by the founder of the Caldey community, from which came the Abbeys of Prinknash and then Pluscarden. Let words of Abbot Aelred Carlyle, then, in his essay “Our Purpose and Method,”^[4] conclude this brief overview of monastic work. Carlyle writes:

Founders of later orders had in view some special work to which they wished their disciples to devote themselves. St. Benedict’s purpose was only to provide a Rule by which anyone might follow the Gospel Counsels, and live, and work, and pray.

Every community ever founded is said to possess a “spirit” of its own which is peculiar to it, and which sets its stamp upon the face and bearing of its members. The “spirit” which we are trying to cultivate is of assiduous Work for our daily bread, and the spirit of Prayer in the solemn recitation of the Divine Office by night and day. Work for the support of the community; Prayer for the glory of God, the needs of the Church, and the sorrows of the world...

The temporal work of our Monastery is of any and every kind, as adapted to the needs of the place and the qualifications of the workers. Even for its own sake, our manual work is necessary to us as an act of penance, and to keep the community in health. But apart from this, it is the lot of poor men to work for their daily bread, and if those who live in the world, wanting money and food, have to work, how much more important is it for those who have chosen to live in voluntary poverty to be forced to fulfil their obligations!

The human body is a machine made for work, and for hard work: a repose free from strenuous endeavours must cause flabbiness of mind and of muscle. As our numbers increase, and powers of usefulness develop, we shall hope to extend our labours according to our gifts, working for our daily bread with interest and thankfulness doing our best to deserve that great gift of God, a healthy mind in a

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[1] *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers (Apophthegmata Patrum)—The Alphabetical Collection* (trans. Benedicta Ward SLG [London: Mowbrays, 1975]).

[2] See also Acts 20:33–35, where St. Paul tells the elders of Ephesus: “I have never asked anyone for money or clothes. You know for yourselves that these hands of mine earned enough to meet my needs and those of my companions. By every means I have shown you that we must exert ourselves in this way to support the weak.”

[3] John Cassian, *The Monastic Institutes* 10:23. Dom Jean-Charles Nault, OSB has recently identified acedia as a principal, if forgotten, vice of our modern times. See his book *The Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of our Times* (Ignatius Press, 2015).

[4] “Our Purpose and Method” by Abbot Alered Carlyle OSB, 1874–1955, first published in 1907, while the community was still Anglican; later republished after its reception into full communion with the Catholic Church; republished again by Pluscarden Abbey, Elgin, Moray, 1987.

A Baker and His Wife Tell of Work and Home

RANDY AND LUCY HINES

Work in the family takes on many forms. There is paid work which sustains the family financially, the work of keeping house, the work of forming and educating the children... Every family must integrate all of these tasks into a whole which serves the true good of its members and, at the end of the day, leads to the flourishing of all.

We are grateful to Randy and Lucy Hines, parents of five children and small-business owners, for giving us an intimate glimpse of what this "integration" looks like in their home.

Tell me about the start of your day:

Randy: The alarm sounds at 2:30 AM, and I stir for a second, puzzled to be awoken in the middle of the night, but then I recall—it's time to bake the bread! I get dressed for the day as quietly as possible so as not to wake Lucy and the kids. I make the half-mile drive to our bakery, the Kolache Shoppe, and enter the kitchen to begin the daily routine. I remove the trays of pastries which had been prepared the day before from the refrigerators and let them rise. Once risen, they go into the oven and come out golden brown just in time for the first customers coming in at 6 AM for their breakfast.

I finish my baking shift around 9 AM and hand the remaining duties over to my staff. I then head home. I walk in the door shortly after nine and am greeted by the smiles and sounds of five young children and a warm hug from my wife, Lucy. She and I often joke about which task is more difficult: baking hundreds of pastries early in the morning or shepherding the children from wake-up through breakfast. We often agree that the one of us working at the Shoppe has the more tranquil task.

The rest of my day is filled with a mixture of paperwork, assisting Lucy with the children, and helping around the house. We both value the amount of time that we get to spend together as spouses—being able to discuss all the aspects of our shared

life:—our common work, common home, common task of forming the children—much more than was possible with my former profession.

Ten years before, my morning routine looked quite different—waking up at 7 AM to get dressed for my office job, most notably in a quiet house with no wife or children. The path to my vocation was long and winding but also marked by the grace of God.

Lucy: Work begins very early for Randy, and not too long after his day begins, mine kicks off around 5:30... Sometimes quietly with a morning offering that lasts several minutes uninterrupted, sometimes with a cuddling baby accompanying me during my time of prayer. That point of contact with Our Lord in the morning is essential and is at the heart of my work for the rest of the day. My work is mostly hidden to the rest of the world: the care and education of the children, the order of the home and supporting Randy. To be honest, loving and realizing the real treasure of my tasks has been a work in progress and I constantly seek the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to be reminded of the goodness that is in the work of a woman at home.

How did you come to be a baker and small restaurant owner?

Randy: In college I studied accounting and information systems, and after graduation I began my consulting career in Houston. Four years and many travels later, I found myself becoming increasingly restless—caught up with questions about meaning and vocation and work. Was I doing exactly what I was called to do, best equipped to do? I pondered my alternatives, and eventually I was moved to follow my heart and study theology. I had learned about the John Paul II Institute and was very drawn to its mission and so I moved to Washington, DC in the summer of 2005 to study and to drink more deeply from the well of our Catholic faith. What a time of blessing and growth!

During that first semester, my heart was so grateful for the time of study and friendship, but I missed the many Texas foods that were nowhere to be found in the nation's capital, especially the kolache—a Czech pastry with a huge following in Texas, consisting of a slightly sweet yeast dough traditionally filled with sweet ingredients (and, in its modern incarnation, with savory ingredients like jalapeno sausage).

I was eager to learn the art of kolache making so that I could make them for myself and others while away from home. So, I called upon my Houston favorite, the Kolache Shoppe, which had been serving authentic kolaches since 1970, to see if they would teach me. Fortunately, the owner, Mr. Ahrens, agreed and invited me to spend some

time with him that summer. This friendship with Mr. Ahrens led to an apprenticeship, and just eight months after our initial conversation, he told me that he had been looking for the right person to take over his bakery and that he would love for me to do it. So what started out as a simple desire to learn to make a kolache became an opportunity to completely change the course of my life.

So you could say that my studies in theology led me to being a baker and business owner.

Other areas of my life also took a change in direction. After many years of discerning the priesthood, I realized I was in fact called to the sacrament of marriage. My friendship with a longtime friend, Lucy, who was a widow at this point with three young boys, was led by the Holy Spirit to take on a different light and we were married in 2012.

In 2014, two years into marriage and eight years after my first conversation with Mr. Ahrens, he passed his Kolache Shoppe on to Lucy and me.

Lucy, what does your day look like and what is your involvement with the family business?

Lucy: In the first two years of owning the bakery I was more fully involved with Randy in carrying out the daily tasks of running the business, which now enables me to appreciate the work that he does at the bakery. This was one of our main reasons for going into small business ownership—to more intimately know the work of the other and to be able to help and support one another in our work.

Now though, with five children—aged 9, 8, 6, 4 and 1—my day looks a little different and my involvement in the day-to-day tasks in the Shoppe have curtailed. Randy and I still bounce ideas off one another and make high-level administrative decisions about the Shoppe together, but most of the daily decisions and actions are now in Randy's court.

Here in the home my work begins around 7 AM as I hear the stirrings of children and the morning chores begin. This is the only way I am able to fully care for the home... with the help of the children! At this point, my job is making sure that the chores are done well—to remind the children (and myself!) that each little job done well is a delight to the Lord.

By 8 AM all beds are made, older children are dressed and have helped the younger

children get dressed. They have made their way to the breakfast table. We are all in the kitchen getting breakfast and starting our day with lighting a candle and listening to the Gospel reading for the day. The simple act lighting the candle by the children allows them to participate in the symbol of the reality that “Jesus is the light of the world.”

We have the great privilege of homeschooling our children, and though the whole of our life is truly a living education for ourselves and our children, their academic studies kick off around 9 AM each day. The “order” of this time is very flexible, natural and rarely quiet. The toddler is walking about. The preschooler is asking for colors. The six-year-old is eager to read to me. The eight-year-old is drawing the newest bird he has seen outside our window. The nine-year-old is wrestling with his next math lesson. The cacophony that makes up our morning reminds us of the great lives that we are forming.

Are there many frustrations? Oh yes, every day! But by God’s grace I am able to remind myself that this work is indeed of great worth: The forming of children, the passing on of the light of Christ. All of it is worth it! I am edified by the words of St. John Chrysostom who said, “Let everything take second place to our care of our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide.”

How has your faith affected the way you run your business?

Randy: Lucy and I have always had the desire to more fully understand what a truly Catholic business would look like and to pursue that vision as much as possible. What began as a craving for a Texas favorite has evolved into a profession that encompasses the whole of our faith and challenges us daily to dig deeper into what it means to be truly human and truly Catholic. We have drawn from many sources, including many of the authors I was introduced to while at the JPPI Institute. One document that we have been referencing lately is the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace’s Vocation of a Business Leader, which was published in response to Pope Benedict’s encyclical Caritas in Veritate. The following is an excerpt that we refer to often:

There are many obstacles that Christians face today, but chief among these obstacles at a personal level is a divided life, or what Vatican II described as “the split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives.” The Second Vatican Council saw this split as “one of the more serious errors of our age.”

Dividing the demands of one's faith from one's work in business is a fundamental error which contributes to much of the damage done by businesses in our world today, including overwork to the detriment of family or spiritual life, an unhealthy attachment to power to the detriment of one's own good, and the abuse of economic power in order to make even greater economic gains. (10)

Lucy: We struggle like most to live a whole, integrated life, but the Church holds out for us the example of the Holy Family as the model of seamless sanctity. Another author who we frequently draw upon is Wendell Berry, whose body of work is a great treasure and provides an abundance of thought on the meaning of work, food, the economy, etc. One quote that continually draws our attention back to the meaning of our food community is the following: "A community economy is not an economy in which well-placed persons can make a 'killing.' It is an economy whose aim is generosity and a shared abundance."

These two interconnected themes, wholeness and community, are always focal points for us. At the end of the day, we attempt to place the person at the center of our business such that there is a true sharing in the common good and a pursuit of wholeness in all that we do.

At the end of the day...

Lucy: It is so important that we keep our priorities straight. As a small business owner it is so easy for the business to consume you and your entire life. We can say with regret that there have been times when we have allowed this to happen and our marriage and family life have suffered. We have spent much time over the last three years identifying our priorities, putting effort towards strengthening our marriage, and seeking to foster a healthy family life.

Randy: We constantly have to ask ourselves, why are we doing what we are doing? If we have not anchored our marriage and plumbed the depths of why we are doing what we are doing then we will have insufficient roots to weather these real life difficulties. Five years ago I couldn't have fathomed the pressures that running a small business would bring upon our family, and that is why I am grateful for the gift of the sacrament of marriage and the roots that it offers us to be anchored in Christ. He is our "Why," now and always!

Lucy and Randy Hines are parents to five children and owners of the [Kolache Shoppe](#) in Houston, Texas.

A Working Hypothesis in Good Times and Bad

SONIA-MARIA SZYMANSKI

I met my husband when I was 33. We were introduced to each other through a long chain of friends and acquaintances. When I found out he was a doctor, my first instinct was not to become involved. I knew doctors gave so much of themselves to their job and I was not prepared to be that kind of wife. I was not willing to share my life with his pager and his patients. But, I took a chance and we started dating. I fell in love with the wonderful person he is and our adventure began when we got married in 2011.

After we had been dating for a few weeks, I found out that my then-boyfriend (and now-husband) would be leaving Canada, my native country, in order to pursue further medical training in the United States. I remember him asking me if I would be willing to follow him. My own response surprised me, “Without a shadow of a doubt, I will follow you.” It was then that I realized that I wanted to be the wife he needed; the one that would support him. He made sure that I knew what to expect once we got married and moved. I felt prepared and ready for the challenge.

Yet thinking myself prepared was very different from actually going through the experience. Our first years of our marriage were extremely difficult. Not only were we learning about each other, but he was finishing his residency, studying for his board exam, and starting an intense fellowship. He was extremely busy at work and I was in charge of everyday household responsibilities. I was alone, away from my family and friends. I had to find ways of occupying my time in a city where I knew no one and a country where I could not work because I did not have a work permit. We had health issues. We suffered a miscarriage. We realized we were struggling with infertility.

Also, words cannot express the overwhelming stress of the financial difficulties we had in the first years of our marriage. I was powerless because I did not have a work permit. I kept checking the bank account, hoping that, miraculously, money would appear. It pained me to see him work so hard while all I could do was support him and

be brave. But when I was alone, I worried, cried and prayed. At that point in our marriage, my husband certainly felt the weight of responsibility for not being able to provide for us. He was also pained and frustrated at the delays in applying for the immigration status we needed so we could adopt a child.

At that time, it felt like my husband was very demanding. It felt like I needed to do everything for him. It was hard and frustrating because I felt more like a maid than a wife. It was hard not to be envious because I felt like his unacknowledged side-kick while he would get all the credit with his peers, our family and friends. It was easier for him because he had an engaging job, colleagues and friends. I was just a doctor's wife.

And yet, he was mindful of my struggles too. He encouraged me to find ways of filling up my time in a meaningful way. I volunteered as a volunteer coordinator at a pro-life organization and co-chaired a number of their events. I became my husband's research assistant. I trained as a FertilityCare Practitioner of the Creighton Model, a natural family planning system. I am pursuing a Masters in Theology. I began to meet people and create friendships, reestablishing what I left back home. This helped me gain more balance in my life and become a better wife.

All of this would not have been possible without his support. Not wanting to take away from the little time we had together, he declined professional positions of responsibility, like being chief resident. At the beginning of our marriage, he worked everyday, getting up before sunrise and rarely coming home before nightfall. In all this craziness, he made time, even a little time, to spend together. I appreciate that he continues to do this.

My husband's lot was not easy either and it was heartbreaking to see him come home exhausted. My deepest desire was to relieve him from the stress and daily pressures of his job. All I could do was be present for him, take care of him, feed him, encourage him and remind him that I was grateful for all the sacrifices he was making for our family. Many times, I wished I could do more. Now, it is clear that this was what he needed most—my support and encouragement—and that meeting that need proved to be the most fulfilling of all. The struggles in our marriage—my own and those we have shared—have made me grow and have transformed me. Slowly, I have shifted from a focus on what I want to what I need to and want to give. Before we started dating, I did not want to play second fiddle to my husband's patients, and now, after we have been married for some years, I try to find ways to help him serve his patients better, to allow him to be more fulfilled.

In the end, the suffering in our marriage—my husband’s exhausting work schedule, my desire for fulfilling work, our financial stresses and struggles with infertility—has brought us closer to one another. We began to pray together and asked others for prayers. It was a difficult time and it tested our marriage in its very infancy. Writing about it is still painful. But learning to carry my cross, our cross, showed me that God was present in our lives, through and in our suffering.

Our adventure continues. These hardships have brought me closer to God, my husband and my wedding vows. When I said “in good times and in bad,” I never imagined that this is what I meant. Yet, through much grace and prayer, some things have improved for us and others. I have learned to see in a new light and I am happy and proud that I became the wife I was refusing to be when I first met my husband. After six years and counting, I am still learning, but supporting him is no longer a job for me. It is my way of loving him. God called me to be a wife. Doing His will, and taking on the challenges that it implies, brings me much joy and peace.

Sonia-Maria Szymanski is a wife and a Creighton Model FertilityCare Practitioner.

Money, Poverty and Human Flourishing

RACHEL M. COLEMAN

Franks, Christopher A., *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas's Economic Teachings* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009).

Christianity can feel like a bit of a tightrope walk: being “in the world,” but not “of” it indicates to us that there is a fundamental tension Christians encounter and experience when it comes to the world. Does “the world” mean temptation, persecution, and humiliation? (Yes.) Or does it mean the truth, goodness, and beauty of creation, the joy of relationships, the wonder of being at all? (Also yes.) All Christians’ actions are thoroughly colored by this tension.

The response to this tension often tends in two seemingly opposite directions: (1) run away from the world and close oneself off from an increasingly hostile culture or (2) accept the world whole-cloth, and perhaps sprinkle one’s Christianity’s on top in the form of holidays and rituals, but never in a penetrating way. Notice above I wrote that these two tendencies are seemingly opposed; upon closer inspection, we find that they share the same metaphysical root: neither thinks Christianity can actually engage with the world in any meaningful way. That is, neither of these responses to the fundamental Christian tension actually believes that Christianity can transform the world. So we come upon one of the oldest and most profound questions at the heart of being a Christian: do Christianity and the world ultimately have anything to do with each other?

This very question lies behind Christopher A. Franks’s excellent book, *He Became Poor: The Poverty of Christ and Aquinas’s Economic Teachings*. Franks looks at the question of the relationship between Christianity and the world through the lens of money and poverty to great effect, and in doing so, also gives a fine recapitulation of both Aristotle’s and Aquinas’s understanding of money and economics, as well as offering a

correction to those who misinterpret Thomas as a proto-capitalist. But most of all, Franks shows the intrinsic connection between the evangelical counsel of poverty—which seems, in a way, superhuman, and therefore impossible—and what it means to live in this world.

Regarding the position that views Thomas and his economic theory as precursors to a capitalist economy, Franks dismantles it, explaining, first of all, that the word “economy” has taken on a new meaning: when we say “economy” we refer to a “market economy,” which Franks defines as fostering “a construal of nature in which human claims to secure welfare from raw materials seem to be prior to any external order” (36). The key here is what “nature” and “order” mean. For both Thomas and his predecessor, Aristotle, an individual’s welfare and security is entirely bound up with the welfare and security of the greater community, which in turn grows out of a natural order. To understand either Aristotle’s or Aquinas’s economic teaching, it is key to see that both understand “how fitting it is for humans to have a sense of the priority of their membership in a natural order that precedes them” (41). To say that we have lost this sense in our modern liberal society would be an understatement.

A non-market economy, which recognizes a natural order which both precedes and, I would argue, exceeds it, will naturally affect how we understand money. In its explicit or implicit recognition of what is natural, a non-market economy will also recognize that nature can only sustain what it generates, and thus will have built-in limits. In short, “only the acquisition that is limited by what is required for human sustenance is natural” (43). Franks assures us that this does not mean a life of mere subsistence, for nature never intends subsistence, but rather flourishing. Still, limits are necessary for this flourishing. In this case, money is just a stand-in for those things that allow man to flourish within the natural and communal order. That is to say, money is not valuable in itself (which to our liberal ears sounds almost oxymoronic), but only inasmuch as it replaces the “use value” of a particular concrete thing. In a non-market economy, therefore, money is tightly bound to concrete things found in nature (and made by man), which in turn have natural and easily visible limits.

In a market economy, on the other hand, money is not intrinsically tied to nature since neither is the economy itself, and so money takes on value in itself. Because neither the economy nor money is tied to anything natural, the acquisition of money is the telos of human activity rather than the flourishing of man and his community. Here, money is the goal instead of the means, and it has “exchange value.” The perversion of the value of money from use to exchange has profound implications, none of which I can address here, but the crucial point is that every time Aquinas

writes about money, he is thinking of something very different from what we know today.

So then, does Thomas, like Aristotle, think the key to human flourishing is simply to acquire wealth to make one's life comfortable within reason and operate an economy according to natural limits? Here Franks points out another common mistake when it comes to the Angelic Doctor: interpreting him as if he is simply Aristotle baptized. To be sure, Aristotle's teachings on money and the economy are a solid foundation, but as with so many other of his philosophical insights, they must be completely transformed from the inside out once looked at with the light of Christ.

Franks calls the understanding of economy as intrinsically linked to nature an Aristotelian deference, but in Thomas, this is transformed and "deepened into an acknowledgment of our fundamental ontological poverty before God" (105). Here, as with all of his work, Thomas's thoughts revolve around the double foci of the ontology of creation and the cross of Christ. These two poles—ultimately unreachable to Aristotle—shape all of his thought, even what we might begin to call his "economic theory."

While Aristotle recommends deference to nature, Thomas implores Christians to abandon themselves into the hands of God. While Thomas's understanding of the world does not exclude nature and its limits, it can also reach further back, to the Creator himself. Now, how does this affect Thomas's understanding of money, and how to use it? At first glance, in comparison to Aristotle, not all that much: our societies should still reflect the natural order, our money should still be valued in terms of use, and our activity should still be directed toward human flourishing. However, now we have this sticky situation of the evangelical counsels, one of which is to imitate the poverty of Christ. What are we to do with that?

Notice what's at stake here: is every Christian (and, therefore, hopefully every person) called to live as Christ did, giving up all material possessions and simply trusting in the Lord to provide? This seems untenable and, in fact, seems to ignore the natural order and limits of the world—after all, even Christ relied on those people who were not poor. But is the only other option that the counsels are only for the select few, having nothing to do with most Christians (and, therefore, most of humanity)? This seems implausible as well, if we are all called to be like Christ.

We have an echo here of the dialectic I presented above: it seems unnatural for every person to practice the evangelical counsels, and it seems unchristian to say that the

evangelical counsels, including poverty, don't have anything to do with living a normal Christian life. Franks reminds us here that the evangelical counsels are not, in fact, ends in themselves, but rather, like all things in Christian life, an aid for virtue. The counsels, says Franks, help to specify a mature perfection of Christian virtue; however, "they are neither sufficient nor necessary for perfection" (127). According to Thomas, the counsels—including poverty—are always ordered to charity, that is, the love of God. But charity involves other things as well, including deference to nature and community, and an acknowledgment of one's vocation, both of which would help one to determine whether practicing the evangelical counsels to the fullest is his correct path. In short, to pursue poverty as an end in itself instead of as a means for charity is almost as bad as the perversion of pursuing money as an end in itself.

What, then, do the counsels have to say about living the world? Surely they are not totally disconnected from most Christians, called as we all are to be like Christ? The evangelical counsels are the inner form of all Christian life, meaning they inform all of our activity, and of course, what human flourishing means. In the case of poverty, it is there as a constant reminder of what is true about us ontologically: that we are creatures, called out of nothing by He Who Is. A certain amount of material poverty and precarity is then appropriate to every Christian (albeit in differing forms). While Aristotle calls for deference to nature, which would include the acquisition of a certain amount of wealth so as not to burden society with one's own neediness, Christians are called to trust in the Lord, which may include neediness, weakness, and even humiliation. The fundamental disposition of the creature is gratitude, but also confidence: confidence that his Creator will never abandon him and that he—the creature—will always be cared for. He who creates us out of nothing will never let us return to it—but he will ask more of us than we thought we naturally contained. In this sense, Christians do disregard nature and its limits—but only in order to surpass it.

Thus, Franks helps us realize that part of the tension of Christianity is not to ignore the world or simply accept it as is, but—in and through our gratitude and confidence—to transform it. It is only through an ontological poverty (which includes, but is not limited to, material poverty) that this transformation can occur. And it is the poverty of Christ—his trust in the Father to the point of death—that is the fullest expression and fulfillment of the profound meaning of creatureliness.

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Still Unfinished? Probing Anne-Marie Slaughter's Latest "Solution"

MARGARET HARPER MCCARTHY

Slaughter, Anne-Marie, *Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family* (Random House, 2015).

When *Lean In* came out, it was as though a cork had been forced back into a bottle that had begun to bubble over. A high-ranking director in the State Department had just stepped down to return to her job nearer to home—and her two teen-age sons. What is worse, she had dared to write about it in *The Atlantic Monthly* (in July 2012) in an article entitled “**Why women still can’t have it all**,” offering in response an unconventional answer. The reason she suggested was not chiefly found in outside male forces inimical to women and their advancement—but in women themselves who don’t appear even now to think the same way about being away from their children as do men. “Deep down,” wrote Anne-Marie Slaughter, “I wanted to go home . . . [not just that] I needed to go home.” And she would not go alone. Launching the “happiness project,” she rallied her feminist sisters: “Let us rediscover the pursuit of happiness, and let us start at home,” she cried. That was the message that Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In* manifesto came swooping in to put back into the bottle. There was no place for the wisdom and experience of older feminists, garnered after years of putting off having children, and not being with them (if and when they had come along). There was no room for questioning the terms of “equality,” measured as they were by boardroom and C-suite statistics, only new resolve to stay on task and resist the urge to “lean out” when the baby was due or desired by recommitting to the (one legitimate) cause—career advancement—choosing the right partner and sequencing things correctly. It was in the wake of these “half-truths,” that Slaughter decided to pick up where she left off when she popped the cork with her provocative article.

Unfinished Business: Women Men Work Family, Anne-Marie Slaughter's 2015 book, is in many ways a welcome breath of fresh air much like her earlier article. When a woman such as Slaughter "comes out of the closet" acknowledging her unexpected desire, however un-orthodox, it gives women who are no longer willing to put their whole lives at the service of the (one) goal a little breather. It makes them feel not so out of step when they read her account of a young millennial's confession: "I don't want to go to grad school. I don't even know if I want a career. I want to get married stay at home and raise my kids. What's wrong with me?" (124). They feel a certain liberation from all the denial—personal and cultural—in the face of the book's realism about "sequencing" (however painful). "Life doesn't go as planned," the author tells us soberly. And even apart from external obstacles to set goals, there is the simple fact that, from the point of view of a woman's actual body, the (one) sequence—terminal degree, established career, capstone marriage, then maybe a baby—is, well....out of sequence.

Beyond providing a little relief for weary feminist pilgrims, the book also probes and challenges some of the cultural habits of thought and practice. As for the first, Slaughter points out the general underestimation and presumed inferiority of the care of children, telling us how difficult the work is and how much intelligence it requires for the person who can "respond in the moment, dynamically, [with] analytic skills, executive function, ordering and sequencing, and ... a lot of information" (105). While some of the care-giving expertise Slaughter brings forward sounds rather . . . un-caring, what Milton Mayeroff offers her hits the mark. "Caring," he says in his book *On Caring*, "is a work akin to that of an artist who has an idea but then has to follow the grain of the wood or the fissures in the stone, or the characters of the story.

Essentially, to care is to shape and guide someone who is not entirely within one's control, based on a deep commitment to and knowledge of him" (112). Slaughter doesn't know about Saint John Paul II's "feminine genius," but the insight and re-evaluation of caring which resembles it, however generically, has her "happily [if cautiously] embrace gender differences" (149).

Unfinished also takes on the workplace itself which, in its dominant mode, is everything one would expect in a society where the care of the most vulnerable is considered unimportant. It is the world of the ideal worker with a good work ethic, namely the one who is the first to arrive, last to leave, never sick, never takes a vacation, and is essentially available 24/7. Sensitive to criticisms coming from left field—Susan Faludi, for example—about white feminists who have sold their souls to the "company store" by letting the store establish the benchmarks of success for women,

Slaughter proposes that the store be renovated. For Slaughter that means that the workplace listen to the “different voice” more typical of women. A woman’s “lack of focus,” for example, is for Slaughter exactly the kind of antidote needed for the tunnel vision of Homo economicus who has no emotional baggage. As a case in point she brings forward new findings about women traders, who make better long-term decisions with their careful analysis than do their rapid-fire male counterparts.

And if, for Slaughter, the workplace would be better off populated with more women, it follows that the home would be better off with more men taking care of some of the “care.” After all, she argues, science has now discovered that men are affected biologically by becoming fathers in ways that “wire” them to their children, just as women are by their better-known “love hormone” (the oxytocin released during labor and breastfeeding). And from the historical point of view, she reminds us, it wasn’t so long ago—before the workplace and the homestead were set apart—that children apprenticed with their fathers on farms and in workshops. In sum, each place, the workplace and the home, would benefit from both men and women being there.

Slaughter does well to criticize the too stark division of labor which took work (and men) away from the vicinity of home and made the home the “comfortable concentration camp” that Betty Friedan described. That said, however much we might welcome a greater proximity of men and women in their day-to-day lives, it isn’t clear that the business Slaughter wants to “finish,” going forward, isn’t going to drive an even deeper wedge between work and home, to the point of absorbing the latter. It is not enough to put men and women next to each other in the same workplace and on equal shifts at home (after overcoming the care stigma), as Slaughter proposes. The real question is whether the world of work will serve the common good that men and women generate together and live out in the most paradigmatic way in the home, where the good of its members is bound up quite literally with the good of the other. If that is the object of work, then there will be no problem accepting the differences in the way men and women work—akin to the way they generate children. If it is not, then there will be. And work will be about equal possibilities for “personal fulfillment,” as one chooses it.

That question is what drove John Paul II to promote the “feminine genius”—the “special openness to the person” (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 18) that a woman has in virtue of her capacity to be a home for the child, making room for it, letting it grow. . . letting it be. Because of dominant cultural tendencies that make the world un-homelike—tendencies in social organization and management that crush the humanum under the criteria of efficiency and productivity (*Letter to Women*, 4)—the Holy Father

thought that this “genius” had to be acknowledged and “brought forward” in a particularly urgent way. He proposed this, we should add, not merely to temper the hectic pace of the workplace and promote more long-term decision making while leaving the current terms of work—the “bottom line”—and the consumer economy largely unaffected (as Slaughter appears to do). But to turn work and the economy toward their proper ends: the promotion of goods and services that serve the proper good of the human being, making him more at home in the world. (The first meaning of “economy” is “household management.”) This “genius,” moreover would do this as it made the home more, not less of a home. But the latter is one of the likely effects of Slaughter’s “unfinished business.” What is ultimately a genderless care reform proposal for Slaughter—after paying all the predictable respects to a culture which has now made interchangeable “parents” the norm, and reduced the “biological imperative” for women to the bare minimum, if that—becomes for her very quickly a parentless one. However much she enjoins men to consider “primary care giving” too, in the end, what Slaughter looks forward to is a “care economy,” in which children would spend the few remaining hours of free time left in an “infrastructure of care,” in organized “educational” activities with “highly trained,” and better-paid, employees, that is. The home, as a result, would become ever more what it has already become, an address where people sleep, entertain themselves, open and heat their meals, receive Fed Ex packages, and “consume a large quantity of merchandise and a large portion of each other,” as Wendell Berry put it. Instead of recovering what was lost after the much-maligned Industrial Revolution—by recovering the home as a place that generates society, including its economy—the proposal would continue to absorb what little was left behind into the newer (digital) corporate marketplace while putting “care” into the hands of interchangeable wage-earners in that marketplace. As a result, the workplace would be even more deprived of a view of the common good and generate an even more un-homelike economy.

Perhaps the real “unfinished business” is to follow through with the experience that Slaughter had in the first place and ask: after all of the energy we have spent bringing down “social constructs,” why is it that women still have a different—even if not exclusive—relation to “care,” wanting to go home, not just needing to? And if there is a reason other than those resistant “stereotypes” offered almost unanimously (including by Slaughter), might we consider a different idea of equality than the one that dominates American culture: the one that flattens out of all the differences, shuts all our homes, and institutionalizes all our children? One that can really put men and women together—not just on parallel tracks, but in a fruitful, human, and more home-like economy?

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Out of Work: The Tragedy of "Un-Working" Men

BRIAN ROTTKAMP

Eberstadt, Nicholas, *Men Without Work: America's Invisible Crisis* (Templeton Press, 2016).

Today's received wisdom holds that the United States is now at or near "full employment." An alternative view would hold that, by not-so-distant historic standards, the nation today is short of full employment by nearly 10 million male workers (to say nothing of the additional current "jobs deficit" for women). Unlike the dead soldiers in Roman antiquity, our decimated men still live and walk among us, though in an existence without productive economic purpose. We might say those many millions of men without work constitute a sort of invisible army, ghost soldiers lost in an overlooked, modern-day depression. (31)

Prior to the end of the nineteenth century, the journalist Jacob Riis published a series of articles (later turned into a book) titled *How the Other Half Lives* utilizing the recent innovation of photography to depict the lives of the working poor in New York City. Through this groundbreaking work of photojournalism and social commentary, Riis exposed the abhorrent living conditions in New York City's swollen tenements (the population density of which was more than double that of today's most crowded slums in India or Bangladesh). Life in the tenements was horrid; a squalid existence of severe overcrowding, exploitative child labor, drunkenness, and disease. Through Riis' work, the forgotten men, women, and children of the tenements were finally made visible and deemed worthy of sympathy as the question was posed to polite Manhattanites: what kind of society are we to allow (and, in many cases, profit from) such wholesale exploitation and degradation? Due to the role of tenements in fueling the cycle of poverty, this was seen as a major moral crisis facing society, a silent destroyer of families and the prospect of upward mobility. Thus, the reform movement began in earnest to elevate the lives of the working poor through ensuring basic

housing improvements by bringing fresh air, clean water, and sunlight to the tenements. An intrepid journalist and the thoroughly human response generated by his photographs changed the world.

Today we tend to think that discoveries such as Riis' can no longer be made, as innovation at the subatomic and cosmic extremes clouds our ability or willingness to see what is in plain sight. Our culture is inundated by numbers and statistics. Everything seems to be neatly categorized and measured, perhaps especially in the fields of finance and economics. But do these numbers portray reality? First published in September of 2016, the thought-provoking treatise *Men Without Work: America's Invisible Crisis* by Nicholas Eberstadt (the esteemed political economist at the American Enterprise Institute) challenges the rose-tinted perspective on the economy with his expert use of data sets and analytical observation and is a fitting 21st-century successor to *How The Other Half Lives*. Eberstadt's discovery, gleaned through extensive data analysis, is sobering: the work rate for prime-age American males (defined between 25-54 years of age) in 2015 was lower than during several years of the Great Depression and has been steadily falling for fifty years. It is precisely this continuing expansion of "un-working" able-bodied men that portends a unique economic, social, and moral crisis for American society. Similar to Riis, Eberstadt phrases the situation not only in economic but social and moral terms. What does it mean for American society that an increasing number of men are growing incapable of providing for themselves (and others) and have become dependent upon their wives or girlfriends, their parents, or government aid? Eberstadt considers this "male flight from work" as running counter not only to the natural role of man as breadwinner but also the American ethos of self-reliance.

How has this happened? On a daily basis we are met with overly optimistic views of the economy as US stock indices reach new all-time highs (the once-lampooned Dow 20k has become reality!). The Federal Reserve, economists, and financial media have repeatedly touted historically low unemployment rates. Yet, as Mark Twain once quipped: "Facts are stubborn things, but statistics are pliable."

As Eberstadt aptly describes, we are living in strange economic times as wealth, output, and employment are moving in a divergent manner. Normally, one would expect these three indicators to move largely in lockstep. Simply put, wealth has continued to grow for wealth-holders (explaining the optimism among Wall Street and financial media) while there has been a marked decrease in work for workers (a factor fueling the response to the "populist" messaging of Bernie Sanders and Donald Trump). Utilizing government employment figures, Eberstadt shows that the labor

force participation rate (LFPR) for American men twenty and older has fallen from 85.8% in 1948 to 68.2% in 2015. Of course, this metric includes some challenges at both ends of the distribution, as many more young men attend college now than in 1948 and men are living longer than they did seventy years ago. This is precisely why special attention is paid to analyzing employment trends in the segment of the population that has always had the highest level of workforce participation—men between twenty-five and fifty-four years of age. In 1948, one in twenty “prime-age” men was out of the work force, whereas in 2015, one in six “prime-age” men was out of the work force. This serves as a telling reminder that data (unemployment rates showing near-full employment levels) can obscure reality.

Much of this change can be viewed through a shift in attitude toward the nature of work. Historically, there were two categories for “nonfarm working-age American males”: working a paid job or being unemployed. Absent the protection of a safety net, fear of unemployment was the primary source of dread for men. Though not an altogether perfect analogy, think George Bailey in *It’s a Wonderful Life*. Today, the categorization of employment has expanded to three groups: employed, unemployed but seeking work, and neither working nor seeking work. It is this last category (men who tellingly would also be excluded from the official unemployment rate) that is of primary concern for Eberstadt: “A life without work (or the search for work) has become a viable option for today’s prime-age male—and ever-greater numbers of them seem to be choosing this option” (38). As a point of comparison between 1948 and 1965, there was roughly one prime-age man out of work but looking for a job for each man who was altogether out of the work force. As of 2015, this balance has shifted to a 3:1 ratio of un-working prime-age men for each unemployed man looking for work.

As Eberstadt shows by comparing LFPR among men throughout 23 advanced nations, this is a distinctly American phenomenon without a strong correlation in other advanced economies. The question arises: who exactly are these men? In one of the most compelling sections of the book, Eberstadt examines the demographic characteristics of these prime-age men who have left the workforce.

In sum, an American man ages twenty-five to fifty-four was more likely to be an un-worker in 2015 if he (1) had no more than a high school diploma; (2) was not married and had no children or children who lived elsewhere; (3) was not an immigrant; or (4) was African American. (64)

This is a strikingly clear synopsis of the research. Of particular interest to Eberstadt are the two categories that show volition (i.e., the willingness to marry [cf. category 2] and the decision to move to the United States [cf. category 3]). Men in these two categories, Eberstadt points out, are characterized by the aspirations they hold for the future, as well as by the priorities and values they hold dear. Regardless of race or educational status, married men with children work more than their never-married counterparts. Similarly, regardless of race or ethnicity, prime-age immigrant men work more than their native-born counterparts. Seeing as many of these immigrant men arrived in the U.S. with limited English skills and without a high-school diploma (which might inhibit employment), Eberstadt draws the conclusion that “one determinant to being in the U.S. workforce today seems to be wanting to be there in the first place” (76). So if a man isn’t working and isn’t looking for work, what is he doing?

For centuries, philosophers, theologians, and social scientists have contemplated the distinction between leisure (the basis of culture as per Josef Pieper) and idleness as defined by the cardinal sin of acedia. Modernity tends to blur the difference between spending time in a way that elevates the individual and society and a way which is unproductive and/or harmful. By utilizing various research conducted by the Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor statistics annual American Time Use survey, Eberstadt is able to show how prime-age men not in the labor force (NILF), unemployed men, employed men, and employed women spend their time. What comes to fore is that prime-age NILF men with their free-time dividend of over 2000 hours/year spend no more time assisting with household care than employed women and less time than unemployed men. Out of the four groups, these men spend the least amount of time in religious and volunteer activities—despite the much greater amount of free time they possess. Instead, this time is spent engaging in “personal care” which includes sleeping and grooming, and most notably, a huge amount of time spent in “socializing, relaxing, and leisure.” Especially telling is the fact that prime-age NILF men watch nearly five-and-a-half hours of television and movies each day which far surpasses all of the other sub-categories and is a full two hours per day more than unemployed men. Seeing as NILF men are much more likely to use illicit drugs and visit gambling establishments, while less likely to attend religious services, read the newspaper, or vote in a presidential election, the parallel of entertainment media to the soma of Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* is unavoidable and deeply troubling. It is a crisis for the individual, the family, and society at-large.

The macroeconomic changes which can be deemed responsible for this male flight

from work in the United States are varied. Increasingly, the influence of innovation, automation, and globalization is seen causing a fundamental shift in the nature of work. The large-scale incarceration of men—especially black men following the “war on crime”—unquestionably plays a major role, given not only the time each prisoner spends in jail but also the scarlet letter of a previous conviction that marks him when attempting to re-enter the labor market. Interestingly, Eberstadt also references a rapid increase in disability and social welfare claims which is perceived as inhibiting gainful employment. As Eberstadt makes clear, his intent is to create awareness of this crisis and open the discussion rather than providing all of the possible solutions. Without question, this book and the subsequent surprise victory of Donald Trump in the U.S. presidential election has led to an increased awareness of the plight of these “forgotten men.” The social reformers of Riis’ era clearly understood the effect that housing had on the individual and the family. One can only hope that we can be as wise to value the many benefits that work provides for men and society and develop the economy accordingly. The tenements are long gone but the challenge to develop virtue and character remains.

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Recent Attempts at Family-Centered Economics

RUSSELL SPARKES

Carlson, Allan C., *Third Ways: How Bulgarian Greens, Swedish Housewives, and Beer-Swilling Englishmen Created Family-Centred Economies— and Why They Disappeared* (ISI Books, 2007).

There is surely something very wrong with the present economic system. It is ten years since the eruption of the global financial crisis in the summer of 2007, yet the world's economies show no sign of regaining their formal vigour. Instead they limp on, or perhaps more accurately, are kept alive, by unprecedentedly low interest rates from the main central banks. The biggest losers from this are the young, who graduate from university with crushing debt levels only to find that the high-income jobs they were promised are an illusion. All this against the background of recurrent financial crises that seem to require massive bail-outs from the public sector, otherwise known as the tax payer.

There is also growing discontent with the academic study of economics itself. Indeed, the most obvious fault of modern economics has been its complete and utter failure to either predict, explain, or remedy the global financial crash. There also seems to be a huge dichotomy between the messy and unclear world we live in and the subject as currently taught, that is, by way of mathematical models of great elegance and power that show a beneficent system that moulds the rational self-interest of individuals into an efficient flux. Indeed students around the world have founded “Post-Crash Economics” societies, demanding that their professors drop some of the equations and actually look at the real world.

If we take a step back however, the economic failures of the last ten years may be seen as the most visible symptom of a deeper malaise in modern capitalism, a malaise that is centered upon the heart of the global economy—the United States. In the US average

incomes are lower now than they were at the end of the millennium. In fact, although economic growth has been reasonably good over the last forty years, this has not been felt by the ordinary person, as real wages have been stagnant. There are two main reasons for this: essentially all the benefits of economic growth have gone to the rich, whilst there has also been a notable shift in the share of the economic pie. Wages have fallen back, whilst the share going to corporate profits has soared.

None of the above would be a surprise to Allan C. Carlson, whose book *Third Ways* was published in 2007, but which seems more relevant now than when it was originally published. Carlson is a professor of history at Hillsdale College, Michigan, and president of the Howard Center for Family, Religion & Society. His deep scholarship is apparent in the copious references at the end of *Third Ways*, which consists of individual chapters examining various attempts at family-centred economies in the twentieth century:

This volume examines a very different search among some Europeans and North Americans for a Third Way, a form of social and economic organization that in important respects would be neither capitalist nor Communist...unlike both, [these searchers] treasured rural culture, family-scale farming, gender complementarity and the vital household economy. (Preface, x)

To my mind the best chapters of the book are its first two, dealing with the English Distributists of the 1920s and 1930s, followed by the US battle for a family wage regime in the first half of the twentieth century. Each chapter on its own is worth the price of the book. Indeed, Chapter One, “‘Chesterbelloc’ and the Fairy Tale of Distributism,” is the best modern summary of Distributism that I have seen. Carlson notes how most writers on Chesterton dismiss his work on Distributism, the attempt together with Hilare Belloc to propose a humane economic system based upon the principles set out in the first great encyclical on Catholic social teaching, *Rerum Novarum* (1891). There Leo XIII states:

We have seen that this great labour question cannot be solved except by assuming as a principle that private ownership must be held sacred and inviolable. The law, therefore, should favour ownership, and its policy should be to induce as many people as possible to become owners.[1]

In fact it is hardly surprising that Distributism is condemned by most Chesterton biographers, generally men interested in his literary works. Distributism not only

diverted him from literary work, but chronic overwork to fund his Distributist projects, including the movement's journal *GK's Weekly*, probably contributed to his relatively early death at the age of 62 in 1936. However Chesterton himself, despite the undoubted brilliance of his essays, the recognition of his religious masterpieces such as *St Francis of Assisi* and *The Everlasting Man* (on Jesus), and the enormous popularity of his Father Brown detective stories, always felt the advocacy and support of Distributism to be the most important thing he ever did.

Third Ways discusses in some depth how the Distributists tried to implement Rerum Novarum's teaching. As Carlson notes, there were three main aspects of this: measures to support small, family-owned businesses, a bias in favour of the family farm and agrarian economics generally, and insistence that the family must be the fundamental basis of any political and economic system. I was also pleased to see the author argue that Distributism had a much more coherent and practical programme to support small business than is generally accepted.

Inevitably, in a relatively small canvas not everything is satisfactorily covered. Carlson has read Chesterton and Belloc's books on the subject, but he does not seem to be fully aware of all the Distributist material published in *GK's Weekly*. I have recently argued that study of this material shows Chesterton to have been much more knowledgeable of conventional economics than is generally credited.^[2] There is also little on Distributist material produced by other authors. In particular, I am surprised at the book's lack of coverage of the thought of Father Vincent McNabb OP, the third major inspiration behind Distributist thinking, and one whose insistence on a return to the land would seem very much in tune with Carlson's agrarian sympathies.

Third Ways' second chapter, *The Wages of Kin*, is a fascinating account of the struggle to build a family-friendly wage regime in the US in the early twentieth century. Contrary to general belief, workers and trade unions have not always campaigned for wage equality between men and women; in fact, as Carlson shows, from the very beginnings of trade unions in early Victorian Britain, workers aimed at a society where: "labouring men of this country should return to the good old plan of subsisting their wives and children on the wages of their own labour and they should demand wages high enough for this purpose". Similar views were expressed by workers in the USA. This was not only theory; the book documents how family wage systems were increasingly put in place in Europe and the US in the first half of the twentieth century.

All of this changed, of course in the 1960s, when militant feminism emerged as one of

the main “progressive” causes of that era’s social revolution. In the US, as Carlson notes, Congress was persuaded to add “sex” to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 without realising the implications of what it was doing. Shortly afterwards, President Lyndon Johnson issued an Executive Order forbidding sex discrimination, and the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, established in 1968, ran roughshod over state laws in order to promote sex equality in the workplace. In many quarters it is politically incorrect even to question these policies, but Carlson documents their impact:

Several consequences followed from this dramatic weakening of the family wage. First, family households with only a single male wage-earner experienced a decline in real income, a predictable result of the effective expansion in the labour supply achieved through the elimination of the gender barriers. Using constant dollars, the median income of married-couple families, when the wife was not in the paid labor force, was \$34,956 in 1973 and \$30,218 in 1993, a decline of 13.6 percent.... These changes led to the declining well-being of children... [Another] consequence of the disappearance of the family-wage system was that American families became fully industrialized or commodified for the first time. As married women moved into the labor market there was a sharp decline in “the production of immediate use values within the family” ... [such as] gardening, food preparation, home repairs, childcare. (50–51)

It is worth noting that during the British Industrial Revolution it was well known that employers sought women and children even for hard, heavy labour in the mines and factories, as they were cheaper and more docile than men. Carlson describes how the main, consistent advocate of women’s full participation in the US workforce from 1903 onward was the National Association of Manufacturers—the advocacy body for larger American corporations.

I noted earlier how US real wages have been stagnant for over 40 years; Third Ways provides an explanation for this phenomenon that you will not find mentioned in any economics textbook, nor indeed in any modern media analysis. It would have not surprised G.K. Chesterton, however, who predicted exactly this over one hundred years ago in the first major Distributist text, which analyses the curious alliance and effective similarity of outlook between Gudge, the capitalist, and Hudge, the would-be reformer:

A horrible suspicion...has sometimes haunted me: the suspicion that Hudge and

Gudge are secretly in partnership.... Gudge the plutocrat wants an anarchic industrialism; Hudge the idealist provides him with lyric praises of anarchy. Gudge wants women workers because they are cheaper; Hudge calls the woman's work "freedom to live her own life". [3]

The breadth of Carlson's book is impressive, covering such varied topics as a campaign for family-friendly economics led by Swedish housewives, and the Christian Democratic roots of European economic reconstruction post 1945. There is also a workmanlike chapter on the economist Karl Polanyi, whose important 1944 book *The Great Transformation* argues that the growth of the capitalist system in Europe was not the natural, organic process generally depicted, but rather a consequence of government policy to establish nation states.

I thought I was well-read in the field of alternative economics, but the author's coverage of the Soviet economist Chayonov's attempt to build a network of peasant-centred communes was unknown to me, as was the "Green Rising", the rise to power of agrarian parties and of land redistribution in Eastern Europe in the early 1920s. Unfortunately, both of these movements came to nothing. Small-scale peasant farming was tolerated by Lenin in the early 1920s, but when Stalin assumed power after his death in 1924, forced collectivization of agriculture became state policy. Chayonov was arrested by the secret police and died in the labour camps. The final stage of the First World War saw the collapse of the Hapsburg, German, and Russian empires that had dominated Eastern Europe. Consequently, countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia (Bohemia) regained their independence. Their newly sovereign governments promoted the "Green Rising" of land reform, policies which enjoyed widespread popular support. However, the region was squeezed between the Communist threat from the East, and the rise of local fascist or nationalist movements, with democratic agrarian parties being overthrown by brutal coups d'état.

Indeed, as the book points out, all of these pro-family movements failed, squeezed out in democratic societies by an unholy alliance of big business and intrusive big government—what Belloc and Chesterton called "The Servile State" ninety years ago. Now that Communism has fallen, the Servile State seems the only game in town. Yet *Third Ways* ends with cautious optimism:

However, those who still seek an authentic liberty premised on personal liberty, family integrity, and a culture of enterprise might still look to the Third Way

tradition to find the shape of a fresh alternative...It might be called the Family Way....In the end, the Family Way means reconnecting everyday tasks with the great purposes of the Creator. Only then do common deeds bend towards transcendence. (It) offers a way, perhaps, to overcome much of our alienation, to reconcile humankind with its created nature, to bring about a simple and yet profound coming home. (184-86)

Russell Sparkes has a long-standing interest in both Catholic Social Teaching, and G.K. Chesterton and the Distributist movement. A former Chairman of the Chesterton Institute, in 1995 together with Stratford Caldecott he founded the Sane Economy project of the Centre for Faith & Culture. His books include: *Prophet of Orthodoxy—the Wisdom of G.K. Chesterton* (Harper Collins, 1997), *Sound of Heaven—a Treasury of Catholic Verse* (St Pauls, 2001), and *Cardinal Manning and the Birth of Catholic Social Teaching* (CTS, 2012).

[1] *Rerum Novarum: On the Condition of Labour*, 15 May 1891 (S3). Official translation: the Vatican Polyglot press, included in *The Social Teachings of the Church*, ed. Anne Freemantle (Mentor-Orbis Books, 1963).

[2] Russell Sparkes, “Chesterton as Economist”, in *The Hound of Distributism: A Solution For Our Social And Economic Crisis* (ACS Books, 2011).

[3] G.K. Chesterton, *What’s Wrong With the World* (London: Cassell, 1910).

I Call You Friends: Doing God's Work

DEVRA TORRES

Escrivá, Josemaría , Friends of God: Homilies by Josemaría Escrivá (Scepter Publishers, 1997).

We have to become saints, as they say in my part of the world, ‘down to the last whisker.’

—St. Josemaría Escrivá, Friends of God, “The Richness of Ordinary Life” (5)

Why in the world would the Word of God leap down from Heaven, become incarnate, enter time and space—only to spend a good thirty years devoted to the most prosaic of pursuits? Rather than bursting forth fully formed and accomplishing our Redemption in a more efficient manner, He appears as an infant, then grows to adulthood as gradually as anybody else. Then He toils away as a manual laborer for nearly all His remaining years on earth. Is this any way to run an Incarnation? Why so much wasted time? It’s enough to make a person suspect that everyday life and ordinary work might have some mysterious, hidden significance.

And so they do.

That’s the leitmotif of this collection of homilies by St. Josemaría Escrivá, founder of Opus Dei, canonized in 2002 by St. John Paul II, who christened him “the saint of ordinary life.” As St. Josemaría contends in a key 1967 homily entitled “*Passionately Loving the World*”:

There is something holy, something divine, hidden in the most ordinary situations, and it is up to each one of you to discover it.... We cannot lead a double life. We cannot be like schizophrenics.... There is just one life, made of flesh and

spirit.... We discover the invisible God in the most visible and material things.

And:

Either we learn to find our Lord in ordinary, everyday life, or else we shall never find Him.

Two essential terms in St. Josemaría’s writings—“work” and “vocation”—need to be understood in a broader-than-usual sense. First, “work” is not to be reduced to either paid employment or manual labor. In fact, the word functions as shorthand for “everyday activity”—all the minutiae of the duties entailed by one’s state of life. Volunteering at the soup kitchen, preparing an Excel sheet for the boss, filling out an insurance form, defrosting the meat for supper—all this is bona fide, sanctifiable work, just as surely as a carpenter sawing a board, a monk illuminating a manuscript, or a priest composing a homily.

Second, “vocation” is not an extraordinary calling addressed to a select few, those chosen to pursue priestly ordination or religious vows. And this is not mere semantics. As the Second Vatican Council made clear in *Lumen gentium*, the “universal call to holiness” is just that: directed every bit as much to the laity as to clergy and religious. No detraction from the nobility of vowed life is implied in acknowledging that all Christians are genuinely called to lives of personal sanctity and intense apostolate, whether they ever leave the lay state or not. “The holiness we should be striving for,” St. Josemaría insists, “is not a second-class sanctity. There is no such thing” (*Friends of God*, 6).

In other words, not only will the “raw material” of our sanctification consist (usually) of unglamorous, ordinary activities; the vast majority of Christians are called to be ordinary people, too—lay men and women, with no distinctive habits, no vows, no dramatic renunciation of the workaday world. And, yet, we are all called to pursue union with Christ with the utmost dedication:

Christ’s invitation to sanctity, which he addresses to all men without exception, puts each one of us under an obligation to cultivate our interior life and to struggle daily to practice the Christian virtues; and not just in any way whatsoever, nor in a way which is above average or even excellent. No, we must strive to the point of heroism, in the strictest and most exacting sense of the word. (3)

The standard is staggeringly high, but so too are the stakes:

We are in a position to give him, or deny him, the glory that is his due as the Author of everything that exists. (24)

Is this something revolutionary? Yes and no. The call to invite the Holy One of Israel into every nook and cranny of one's life is as old as the Shema ("You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might..."). Nothing indicates that He was addressing Himself exclusively to a "spiritual elite." Nor did the early Church make any provision for first- and second-class sanctity. But as priesthood and monastic life grew more formally structured and more deeply integrated into Christendom, a certain clericalism—a certain notion of two separate sets of standards (one for the religious and another for the rest of us)—crept in as well. Laypeople were to "pay, pray, and obey"; at most, they were to function as the long arm of the clergy, contributing time, money and prayers to projects designed and directed by the ordained. They were not expected to strive for heroism; they were not thought to possess legitimate autonomy. In fact, they were deemed to have declared themselves less than wholeheartedly dedicated to Christian life: after all, they had remained "in the world" rather than renouncing it. Against this backdrop, St. Josemaría's ideas were indeed revolutionary: he was even accused of heresy.

The homilies in *Friends of God* don't merely make the point that ordinary activities are "the very hinge on which our sanctity turns" and "offer us constant opportunities of meeting God, and of praising and glorifying him through our intellectual or manual work" (81). They also get down to the nitty-gritty of how it's done.

For example, there's a chapter on detachment, which amounts to a different kind of renunciation of the world, though not as obvious, not ratified in a single moment.

Our Lord asks for generous hearts that are truly detached. We will achieve this if we resolutely cut the thick bonds or the subtle threads that tie us to ourselves. I won't hide from you the fact that this entails a constant struggle, overriding our own intelligence and will, a renunciation which, frankly, is more difficult than the giving up of the most prized material possessions. (115)

He also sheds light on why work is so decisive:

[B]y doing your daily work well and responsibly, not only will you be supporting yourselves financially, you will also be contributing in a very direct way to the development of society, you will be relieving the burdens of others and maintaining countless welfare projects, both local and international, on behalf of less privileged individuals and countries. (120)

(Together with other illuminating passages, this one has been incorporated into a series of prayers that make up a **novena for work** through St. Josemaría's intercession.)

And besides these “external” consequences of work, there's the question of the self-realization of the personal subject. As St. John Paul II would elaborate years later, work is where human persons—not least the laity—take up their God-given freedom and their legitimate autonomy to perform the actions that not only keep the external world running but also cause us to flourish or deteriorate as subjects. In St. Josemaría's terminology, we not only sanctify the work itself; we sanctify ourselves—and others as well—through our work.

Our daily to-do list is not just a series of tasks to be checked off as hastily as possible, the better to get on with more noble, more “spiritual” things. We're not just called to busywork; it's not just that “idle hands are the devil's plaything,” or that drudgery builds character. Nor are we trying to “work our way to heaven,” since “without [Him] we can do nothing” (John 15:5). Nor—St. Josemaría insists most firmly—is work a curse, though the “sweat of the brow” that has attended it ever since the Fall certainly is.

Because the world comes from the hands of God, it is primordially good. Because He left it intentionally “unfinished”—in need of cultivation and development—our work has always had its part to play. And because it's been corrupted, though not entirely ruined, by original sin, our work is doubly necessary. God has graciously allowed us to play a part not only in the “cultivation” of creation but in its co-redemption. Together with Him, we embrace its primordial goodness while working to rescue it, and ourselves, from the stain of original sin. Through our work, we seek to let that original goodness shine forth again. Rather than becoming worldly, we are to be—in one of St. Josemaría's signature phrases—“contemplatives in the middle of the world.”^[1]

Our task is not to fear, reject, or flee the world but—always in union with Christ—painstakingly to restore it in a million seemingly insignificant ways. That is what

work is for.

No act of love is too small or too mundane for a God who has numbered the hairs of our head. Becoming saints “down to the last whisker” turns out simply to be an accurate account of our mission.

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[1] Josemaría Escrivá, *Furrow* (Scepter Publishers, 1992), 497.