
Pro Rege

Volume 30 | Number 4

Article 8

June 2002

Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life (Book Review)

Scott A. Quatro
Dordt College

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege

Recommended Citation

Quatro, Scott A. (2002) "Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life (Book Review)," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 30: No. 4, 35 - 36.
Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol30/iss4/8

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

a trinitarian understanding of creation clarify the connection between creation, providence, and redemption.

An important theme for McGrath is that natural science should play a ministerial, not magisterial role, for theology. Over against the longstanding controversy concerning whether philosophy should serve as the handmaiden of theology (*ancilla theologiae*) or vice versa, he offers the original and provocative thesis that the actual work performed in the natural sciences, though always provisional in terms of its results, can strengthen and otherwise assist theology. And while science can be a helpful tool in theological study, the always-tentative conclusions of science ought not be taken over into Christian doctrine. McGrath gives an insightful account of the Galileo controversy as having its origin in the Council of Trent's counter-Reformation insistence that the consensus of previous theologians be normative (thereby also affirming Aquinas' development, in his thorough incorporation of Aristotelian science into Christian dogma, of Augustine's maxim that science should help interpret unclear passages of Scripture). But McGrath fails to point out that theology, because of its fallibility (demonstrated in this case as uncritical acceptance of science), must not itself play a magisterial role for science.

McGrath, taking his cue from theologian Torrance, argues for the reclamation of a proper role in Reformed thought for natural theology (which, since Barth's devastating critique, was conflated with proving the existence of God). It is resonance, not proof, that studying the natural world offers to Christianity. McGrath finds no reason to disagree with the traditional approach to Psalm 19's "The heavens declare the glory of God" in which "nature-as-creation [has] an ontologically grounded capacity to reflect God" (297), but he also promotes an alternative "covenantal" understanding, recognizing that Scripture is understood by a community of faith which claims that "the

ability of creation to disclose God is not intrinsic [but] grounded in a decision that this shall be the case" (297).

McGrath's treatment of the effects of the fall is disappointing, especially because he faults Aquinas for the same thing (174). He points out that both man and nature suffer effects of the fall (affirming, with Calvin, that "a fallen human mind reflects upon...a fallen world" [174]), but he is not convincing in his listing of chaos, disorder, and entropy as such effects. It would be more appropriate to point out that these can certainly be seen as features of the good pre-fall creation (unless there is an utterly unfathomable chasm between pre- and post-fall worlds), but that "thorns and thistles" (Gen. 3:18) are clear effects of the fall on the non-human creation. Precisely what the physical effects of the fall were remains a mystery: how do galactic clusters and neutrinos "groan in travail" (Rom. 8:22)?

We eagerly anticipate the publication of the remainder of McGrath's trilogy and recommend the book to anyone interested in historical, philosophical, or theological perspectives in or out of the natural sciences; we plan to use portions in our course on these topics in the fall semester. Penned by an erudite and sensitive Christian author, *Nature* contains a wealth of insight and scholarly resources on a number of fundamental topics. While his understanding of the theoretical significance of a world-view is valuable, it resembles only the beginning stage from which the Dutch philosopher Herman Dooyeweerd advanced Kuyper's ideas in formulating a Christian theory of theorizing. Nevertheless, McGrath is blazing new trails that many of Christ's people can fruitfully follow. Readers unfamiliar with Latin, Greek, French, and German would do well to have dictionaries handy, as words and phrases in these languages are often used without translation to make important points.

Church on Sunday, Work on Monday: The Challenge of Fusing Christian Values with Business Life, by Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2001). xxxi, 316 pp. Hardback \$23.95. ISBN 0-7879-5698-8. Reviewed by Dr. Scott A. Quatro, Assistant Professor of Business Management, Dordt College.

The topic of spirituality in the workplace has gained prominence in the business scene over the last 12 years. It is perhaps at once the most compelling and least understood force driving organizational theory and practice today. From a Christian perspective, this is an exciting development, given the opportunities such a trend affords for impacting organizational life for Christ. It is ostensibly this belief that motivated the research of Laura Nash and Scotty McLennan, resulting in the publication of their work *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday*. Nash and McLennan make a well-balanced team for inquiry into the intriguing world of workplace spirituality. Nash, a Senior

Research Fellow at Harvard Business School, aptly covers the practitioner/lay-person perspective, while McLennan, an ordained minister and Dean for Religious Life at Stanford University, brings the perspective of the clergy/church professional.

In the introduction to their book, they lament the lack of significant influence the mainstream Christian church has had on the workplace spirituality movement, thereby articulating the driving force behind the project:

The church could be one of the strongest resources we have for leading a balanced and effective business life. In most cases, it is not. It could provide spiritual and

ethical insight about work that would revolutionize business life. In most cases, it does not. At the heart of these problems are fundamental tensions between Christian ideals and the realities of business life that have created a significant gap between our life at church and our life at work. Exploring why this gap exists, and what the Christian Church and businesspeople can do to bridge that gap, is the subject of this book. (xix)

The major premise of the book claims that the mainstream church has failed to engage leaders in the contemporary business world in a meaningful and enlightened manner, thereby forcing these leaders to pursue spiritual growth via the workplace spirituality movement (which is, as discussed below, largely devoid of Christian orthodoxy). These business leaders are, according to Nash and McLennan, driven to do so by the following four "felt needs": (1) emergent awareness of the sacred self (soul), (2) harmony with an ultimate order (balance), (3) connectedness with community (sacred community), and (4) religiously consistent morality (faith-based business ethics) (18). Thus, Nash and McLennan posit that contemporary business executives are increasingly compelled to meet these needs at work without the support of their churches.

The real question that remains is why do these executives feel the need to pursue workplace spirituality almost as a substitute "religion"? Is it because the church has failed to address these needs? Or is it due to the fundamental beliefs of the church itself? To answer this question we need to understand what exactly comprises the "church" within the context of Nash and McLennan's study, which leads to a discussion of the project methodology. Serious concerns can be raised regarding Nash and McLennan's methodology and related study sample, particularly given their desire to address the Sunday-Monday gap from a decidedly Christian perspective. The research approach involved conducting in-depth interviews with approximately ninety-five middle-to-senior-level business executives from "primarily mainstream and nonaffiliated Christian denominations" (275) in affluent areas close to major centers of business activity, such as Boston and Chicago. Given the relatively liberal bent of these mainstream (i.e. Presbyterian Church USA, Episcopal Church, Methodist) churches, one wonders whether Nash and McLennan were accessing and assessing the thinking of a truly representative sampling of Christian business practitioners. The large gap that exists between the congregants' Sunday and Monday worlds may be a by-product of

the secularization of their denominations, places where the traditional reformed Christian tenet concerning the sacredness of all spheres of life (including the business world) is not emphasized. Nash and McLennan openly admit this methodological limitation, commenting that their study sample "may be overly skewed toward the most liberal, secular-humanistic population in America" (276). This limitation is further reinforced by several summary statements shared by Nash and McLennan regarding the lack of willingness on the part of study participants to openly discuss how their religious life intersects with their professional life due to the "private" nature of "religion" and the belief that the topic is "inappropriate to discuss as it relates to one's official executive role" (276).

To their credit, Nash and McLennan do provide a solid review of the contemporary context within which the workplace spirituality movement has emerged and evolved. They contend that six major realities have catalyzed and influenced the movement and the development of the "four felt needs", including: (1) the coming of age of the affluent and deep-thinking baby boomers, (2) the rise of the global economy and resultant increase in societal interconnectedness, (3) increasing work-related stress, (4) contemporary scientific concepts (i.e. chaos theory and fractals) that offer multiple paradigms for dealing with what appears to be a chaotic reality, (5) postmodern paradigms and religious experimentation, and (6) the rise of the spiritually-insightful business guru/consultant (11). The result has been an explosion of interest in what Nash and McLennan term "secularized spirituality," a spirituality that is largely devoid of orthodox Christian thinking. Overall, this section of the book (Chapter 1) provides the reader with both a helpful context for understanding the movement and specific insight into the "theology" of its adherents.

In summary, while *Church on Sunday, Work on Monday* makes an important contribution to the workplace-spirituality discussion, it clearly has limited validity in terms of representing the mindset of the entire spectrum of the Christian church in regards to addressing the sacredness of organizational life. Thus, while insightful (particularly regarding the shared mindset of mainstream congregants), Nash and McLennan's work falls short in its attempt to understand and address the "challenge of fusing Christian values with business life" (the formal sub-title of the book).