

candidates at least receive a full and rigorous academic course. If this means fewer visits to hospitals and prisons during a candidate's college years, so be it; required in-service training for licensed probationers prior to ordination is not impossible to provide, and it is never more readily received than by those at the pastoral "coal face". He continues,

I see no viable substitute for practitioners' having a solid grounding in the Bible, a thorough acquaintance with the history of Christian thought (which is broader than historical theology, but includes both it and the linguistic competence to read salient texts), and sufficient philosophical-analytical skills to probe presuppositions, analyse arguments and avoid the writing of incoherent gobbledegook. None of this is achieved without real time and effort; and the churches would do well to encourage in all possible ways those ministerial candidates whose gifts take them in these directions, and whose academic lungs can withstand prolonged immersion in extensive and sometimes choppy waters (p. 191).

Disappointingly, Sell pays relatively little attention to the second half of the twentieth century. Apart from infrequent and brief discussions of the contributions of Paul Fiddes and Colin Gunton, by and large the lectures are heavily weighted towards the century's first half which, to be fair, reflects the greatest volume of non-conformist material published in the twentieth century. As a consequence, the relatively slight contributions from within Pentecostalism, the Brethren, Black churches, and independent evangelical churches are all but ignored. This, however, most certainly says more about the dearthly state of more recent nonconformity than it does about Sell's treatment of the material. Congregationalist (receiving the most attention), Baptist, Methodist and Unitarian contributions are, however, well represented. Some readers may also be disappointed that Sell limits his discussion to the nonconformist scene in England and, to some extent, in Wales. While a treatment that seriously took in any more would expand the book's length considerably, and perhaps with little profit, the title of the book could have been more revelatory here. That said, the volume is no poorer for this limitation of scope.

The volume includes a helpful list of biographical references of some of the major personalities discussed in the lectures, as well as an impressive bibliography. Those concerned with the life and theological contribution of the nonconformist family specifically, and those interested in the shape that theology took in twentieth-century Britain more generally (and may be taking in this century) will be prodigiously served by reading this book. It is an encyclopedic, but accessible, study!

Jason Goroncy, St Andrews, Scotland

*A Theology of Work:
Work and the New Creation*

Darrell Cosden

Paternoster Theological Monographs; Nottingham:
Paternoster Press, 2004,

xvi + 207 pp., £19.99. pb, ISBN 1-84227-332-9

The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work

Darrell Cosden

Nottingham: Paternoster Press, 2006, vii + 149 pp.,
£8.99. pb, ISBN 1-84227-417-1

SUMMARY

In this pair of books Darrell Cosden aims to remind us that human work is both essentially part of what it means to be human and contributes to the building of the eternal kingdom. This is a welcome attempt to revalorize contemporary Christian thinking about work, though conflating an appropriate discussion about what we ought to aim for in our work with an evaluation of its actual goodness.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

In diesen beiden Büchern beabsichtigt Darrell Cosden, uns daran zu erinnern, dass menschliche Arbeit sowohl ein wesentlicher Teil dessen ist, was es heißt, Mensch zu sein, als auch, dass sie einen Beitrag zum Aufbau des ewigen Königreiches leistet. Dies ist ein willkommener Versuch, gegenwärtiges christliches Denken über Arbeit neu zu bewerten, auch wenn eine angemessene Diskussion darüber, wonach wir mit unserer Arbeit streben sollen, mit einer Bewertung der tatsächlichen Güte der Arbeit verschmolzen wird.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans ces deux ouvrages, Darrell Cosden rappelle que le travail joue un rôle essentiel dans la vie de l'être humain et contribue en même temps à la construction du royaume éternel. L'auteur revalorise ainsi la pensée chrétienne contemporaine sur le travail de façon heureuse, en réfléchissant sur les objectifs que nous devrions viser par notre travail ainsi qu'en cherchant à apprécier ce que le travail a présentement de bon.

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In this pair of books Darrell Cosden presents the fruit of his doctoral work (St. Andrews) in academic and popular formats. The title of the popular work, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, aptly summarizes the project as a whole, which aims to remind us that human work is both essentially part of what it means to be human and contributes to the building of that eternal kingdom which will not be burned away in the judgment. This is a welcome attempt to revalorize contemporary Christian thinking about work, though the solution proposed is not without problems of its own. The books target a mainly evangelical audience, and *Heavenly Good* presents a readable and engaging set of criticisms of the terribly

thin accounts of work among evangelical Christians. As the intellectual heavy lifting of the project takes place in *A Theology of Work*, and as the general flow of the argument is parallel in both books, I will concentrate on the academic form of the argument.

As an opener, Cosden traces the theology of modern Roman Catholic encyclicals on work. Here he concludes that *Laborem Exercens* is overly foundationalist in its anthropology and conception of work, and so underplays the doctrines of nature (understood as a subject in its own right) and eschatology. An equally brief survey of Protestant conceptions of work is read as expressing an overemphasis on vocation and protology. These criticisms function primarily as ground clearing for Cosden's introduction of Moltmann's theology of work with its emphasis on human work's 'correspondence' to divine activity. Here Christ's 'labour' on the cross brings about the eschatological realization of creation, and (perhaps counter intuitively) grounds Moltmann's emphasis on the joyful and gratuitous nature of work over against its utility. Cosden's criticism of Moltmann is that he overplays justification and inconsistently explicates the cross as either play or labour, so rendering problematic the nature of work as actually satisfying in this life.

Cosden suggests that what is needed is a more detailed and appropriate ontology of work. He begins to construct such a theology in dialogue with Oliver O'Donovan, who allows him to validate creation as having a teleological order, though Cosden thinks O'Donovan still lets protology do more work than it should. An appropriate theological anthropology can have a more eschatological teleology, contends Cosden. In this quest Cosden draws together the insights of what he calls substance and function conceptions of the *imago dei* by imbedding them in a relational ontology. Here Colin Gunton is his main dialogue partner, despite his worry that Gunton draws the analogy between human and divine persons too tightly and so is not always able to sustain a proper place in anthropology for human stewardship of non-human creation.

The treatment culminates with an extended discussion of Moltmann's anthropology, which adds to these points a stress that work is not just a task commanded at creation, but is part of what humans are ontologically meant to be, as part of God's redeeming and eschatological purposes. The thrust of the whole book becomes clear when Cosden points to Isaiah 40:3-5 as the heart of a properly theological ontology of work: '...prepare the way for the Lord; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God...'

This theology of work raises at least two questions. First, Cosden is surely right that thinkers like Gunton so focus their reasoning about proper human relationality on the immanent trinity that it becomes difficult to imagine what light is shed on ethical questions in a broken world. Cosden's attempt to develop a more robust anthropology (ontology) with the condition of the ecological crisis in view seems a plausible response

to this deficit. Yet the question remains: How much work in the real world is done by getting one's ontology right? Cosden answers, 'what this concept of work's essential nature primarily guarantees is resistance to any reductionistic ethical prescriptions related to work. It provides a set of checks and balances that will simply not allow one particular concern, as legitimate as it may be in its own right, to run roughshod over other important concerns' (180). But is this avowal of 'balance' as an ethical prescription either practically illuminating or reflective of biblical examples? Here the avowal of 'Christian realism' and 'flexibility' further complicates matters. 'Practically, a work ethic may initially need to legitimatise a host of economic activities and structures necessary for the provision of resources for basic life support for the greatest number of people. In so doing it may even legitimatise certain kinds of work which under less extreme circumstances would be deemed unethical' (181). An ontology which legitimatizes the unethical is a relatively exotic beast requiring much more explanation than Cosden supplies.

The second point follows from the first. It is clear that this type of ontological account of work, especially when emphasising eschatology over protology, easily embraces activist or progressivist programs. What is missing is the idea that there is a rather large gap between our working and its success, a view which appears so clearly in places like Psalm 127. On Cosden's view, work is not a discipline that is good and from which we can learn whether it is met with success or not, but is concerted to show that our work 'matters in the grand scheme of things.' Here, by 'matters', Cosden does not mean as a sanctifying discipline, nor as a living out of an appropriate vocation (which he misunderstands in *Heavenly Good*) but as *actually* advancing the kingdom, or in his terms, heaven on earth. Cosden seems to conflate an appropriate discussion about what we ought to *aim* for in our work with an evaluation of its *actual* goodness, which Protestant theology at least, has been properly keen to keep distinctly separate.

Brian Brock, Aberdeen, Scotland

Nietzsche and Theology: Nietzschean Thought in Christological Anthropology

David Deane

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006, x + 195pp., £50, hb, ISBN 978-0-7546-5767-5

SUMMARY

This book assesses and responds to the use of Nietzsche's critique of modernity by Radical Orthodox theologians Milbank and Pickstock. Based on a close reading of the biological underpinning of Nietzsche's concept of the will-to-power, Deane shows how Milbank and Pickstock draw on Nietzsche in a manner that undermines the coherence of their own constructive proposals. Deane proposes that