

CHAPTER 3

Toward a Theology of Work

Given the paramount importance of work in both liberal and socialist economic and social theory, it is remarkable that in our world dominated by work a serious crisis in work had to strike before church bodies paid much attention to the problem of human work.¹ Theologians are to blame for the former negligence. Amazingly little theological reflection has taken place in the past about an activity that takes up so much of our time. The number of pages theologians have devoted to the question of transubstantiation—which does or does not take place on Sunday—for instance, would, I suspect, far exceed the number of pages devoted to work that fills our lives Monday through Saturday. My point is not to belittle the importance of a correct understanding of the real Presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper but to stress that a proper perspective on human work is at least as important.

One might object that the most basic things in life are not necessarily the most important, and that it is hence superfluous to spend much time reflecting on them. Breathing is rather basic to life, but we do it twenty-four hours a day without giving it a second thought—until air pollution forces us to do so. Working, one might say, is much like breathing: its point is to keep us alive, and we need not bother with it until its function is hindered.

The parallel between breathing and working makes sense, however, only in a theology that subordinates the *vita activa* completely to the *vita contemplativa*.² As Thomas Aquinas' reflection on work illustrates, in such a theology the only real reason to work is to make the contemplation of God possible, first by providing "for the necessities of the present life"³ without which contemplation could not take place, and second, by "quieting and directing the internal passions of the soul," without which human beings would not be "apt [enough] for contemplation."⁴ But apart from the fact that work is necessary to provide for the necessities of the body and to quiet the passions of the soul, work is *detrimental* to human beings, for "it is impossible for one to be busy with external action and at the same time give oneself to Divine contemplation."⁵ When a person inspired by the love of God does the will of God in the world, she *suffers* separation from the sweetness of Divine contemplation.⁶ Where the *vita activa* is fully subservient to the *vita contemplativa*, there is no need to reflect extensively on human work, since, as a mere means to a much higher end, it is in the long run accidental to the real purpose of human life.

The complete subordination of *vita activa* to *vita contemplativa* that has been basic to much of Christian theology throughout the centuries betrays an illegitimate intrusion of Greek anthropology into Christian theology.⁷ Faithfulness to our Judeo-Christian biblical roots demands that we abandon it. I am not suggesting that we should follow the modern inversion of the traditional order between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa* and subordinate *vita contemplativa* completely to *vita activa*.⁸ I am not even suggesting that we should place them on an equal footing. I do propose, however, that we treat them as two basic, alternating aspects of the Christian life that may differ in importance but that cannot be reduced one to another, and that form an inseparable unity.⁹

As soon as we ascribe inherent and not simply instrumental value to the *vita activa* (and thereby also to human work) we have answered the question of whether theological reflection on work is fundamental or marginal to the task of theology. Now another question faces us: What form should the necessary theological reflection on work take? Would an ethic of work suffice (as Christian theologians have thought through the centuries)? Or is a theology of work required? After arguing in the following section for a

theology of work, I will deal with the way it should be crafted. I will end this chapter with a brief discussion of the formal characteristics a theology of work will have if developed in the framework of the concept of new creation.

A THEOLOGY OF WORK

Both the inherent importance of human work and the need to respond to the contemporary crisis in work in an emerging information society¹⁰ call for the development of a *comprehensive contemporary theology of work*. The term "theology of work" is of recent date. According to M.-D. Chenu, who was one of the first to develop a theology of work, the term appeared first in the early 1950s.¹¹ It was introduced to express an important shift in the theological approach to the problem of work.

Work and Sanctification

Traditionally, the doctrine of *sanctification* has provided the context for theological reflection on the problem of work. This approach was introduced by the early church fathers, who developed some of the dominant features of the biblical understanding of work. In spite of treating the problem of work only as a subordinate theme, they provided the basic direction for most subsequent theological thinking about work. What we read in the writings of later theologians is for the most part variations on the church fathers' basic themes while they take into account a slightly changing historical situation.

Traditional Approach

Taking the doctrine of sanctification as their starting point, the early church fathers reflected on work from two main perspectives. First and foremost, they discussed *what influence the new life in Christ should have on a Christian's daily work*. Against the Greek philosophical depreciation of work, they affirmed that there is nothing disgraceful or demeaning about manual labor. Following the Old Testament, which portrays Adam in the Garden of Eden as working and caring for it (see Gen. 2:15), Clement of Alexandria,

for instance, declared that it was "respectable for a man to draw water himself, and to cut billets of wood which he is to use."¹²

The early church fathers affirmed not only the nobility of work but also the obligation to work diligently and not be idle. Echoing the apostolic injunction to work with one's own hands (see 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:10), they stressed that Christians should be "ever labouring at some good and divine work."¹³ At the same time, they warned about the dangers of excessive work, admonishing their readers not to be "busy about many things, bending downwards and fettered in the toils of the world,"¹⁴ but to take time for rest and worship. For Jesus Christ himself said that Mary, who sat at his feet and listened to his teaching, had chosen a better portion than her busy sister Martha (see Luke 10:38ff.). Early church fathers polemicized against human reliance on the results of work (wealth) as opposed to an attitude of dependence on God. They maintained that a Christian should not carry possessions "in his soul, nor bind and circumscribe his life with them."¹⁵ From Jesus' story of the rich fool they learned that "a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (Luke 12:15).

They also stressed that Christians should not work only to satisfy their own needs but also in order to have something to share with their needy fellow human beings (see Eph. 4:28). For they believed that those who are "without pity for the poor" and who are "working not for him who is oppressed with toil" followed the "way of the Black One."¹⁶

Early church fathers also insisted that there are occupations incompatible with Christians' new life in Christ, such as that of soldier. In disarming Peter (Matt. 26:52), the Lord "unbelted every soldier," making it clear that there can be "no agreement between the divine and human sacrament (i.e., military oath)." Hence a Christian may not make war, nor "serve even in peace."¹⁷

The second approach to work we find in the early church fathers is reflection on the *influence of work on Christian character*. Occasionally we encounter in their writings the quasi-heretical idea of the atoning function of work. For example, the Epistle of Barnabas affirms "working with thine hands for the ransom of thy sins."¹⁸ But the more dominant (and orthodox) understanding of the influence of work on Christian character stressed that it served *ad corpus domandum*—to muzzle the evil and disobedient flesh. Espe-

cially later in monasticism, laziness was disparaged as "the enemy of the soul"¹⁹ and work, particularly if burdensome, was esteemed "as a spiritual exercise and discipline, a penitential practice."²⁰ For monks believed that work "allays concupiscence, forestalls temptation, and promotes humility and monastic equality."²¹ Even Luther, who was no great friend of monasticism and its understanding of work,²² valued the disciplining function of work and maintained that Christians are called not to idleness but "to work, against the passions."²³

Reshaping Traditional Reflection

Reflection on work from the perspective of the doctrine of sanctification is indispensable to Christian ethics. This approach to work is essential if Christians are to arrive at ethical guidelines for their conduct as workers. But if we want to be faithful to biblical revelation and relevant to the contemporary world of work, we will need to modify this approach at some points and place it in a broader theological framework.

As testified to by the new proposals by various theologians over the past several decades, modifications are needed in the traditional approach both to the influence of a Christian's new life on her work and the consequences of work on the Christian character. Work in the military industry is an example of the first matter. In contrast to the time of the church fathers, our context of the growing militarization of economies,²⁴ which runs parallel to the progressive impoverishment of the poor, makes it necessary for us today to reflect carefully on work in the military industry. Christians at the turn of the twenty-first century need to consider not only whether they can serve as soldiers (as the church fathers also discussed), but, further, to what extent working (directly or indirectly) for the military industry is compatible with their faith. To be sure, the opinions of Christians on this issue will differ (depending on their valuation of the just-war theory). But they cannot avoid asking, for instance, what consequences should be drawn from the fact that the results of work in the armament industry "have often proved to be one of the most potent causes of war," as Barth wrote not long after World War II.²⁵

With respect to the influence of work on Christian character, we would, for instance, have to supplement the negative (and poten-

tially anthropologically misleading) notion that work serves *ad corpus domandum* with the positive idea that human beings achieve fulfillment through work.²⁶ Ethical reflection on work traditionally done in the framework of the doctrine of sanctification also needs to be supplemented with reflection from the perspective of anthropology. It is imperative, for example, to discuss which forms of work are incompatible with the dignity of human beings as God's free and responsible creatures, and which forms of work develop their personality and which stifle it.

Work and God's Purpose with Creation

Necessary as such modifications in the traditional ethical approach to the problem of work are, they are only one step toward a responsible contemporary theological understanding of work. It is insufficient merely to interpret the biblical statements on work, distill from them transculturally binding ethical principles, and combine them into a consistent statement on how a Christian should work. It is also insufficient to ask what individual Christian doctrines (such as the doctrine of creation and anthropology) imply for our ethical assessment of human work. It is rather necessary to *develop a comprehensive theology of work*.

A theology of work is a dogmatic reflection on the nature and consequences of human work. It does not make ethical theological reflection on human work superfluous but provides it with an indispensable theological framework. For it situates the questions of how one should or should not work, and what one should produce, in the larger context of reflection on the meaning of work in the history of God with the world and on the place of work in human beings' relation to their own nature, to their fellow human beings, and to the natural world.

Why should we not be satisfied with ethical theological reflection on human work? First, the biblical witnesses themselves not only prescribe how human beings should or should not work, but also cast light on the ultimate meaning of human work. They do not consider human work only under the rubric of sanctification, but place it in the broader perspective of God's purposes with creation (see Gen. 1 and 2).²⁷ Second, the nature and the consequences of human work themselves require a broader horizon of theological

reflection on work than the doctrine of sanctification provides. As human beings work, they change themselves as well as their social and natural environment in the course of history. Ethical questions about work can thus be properly addressed only in the context of a broad reflection on the anthropological, social, and cosmological dimensions of work: hence the need to interpret and evaluate work and its consequences from a dogmatic perspective.

Since various and sundry "theologies of . . ." have been mushrooming over the two past decades, two explanations about the character of a theology of work are needed. First, one should not take the theology of work for another "fad theology" (as was, for instance, the theology of the death of God). Since human work is not a fad, theological reflection on it cannot be a fad either. Cultural fads come and go, but work remains as long as human beings remain. In spite of all the changes in the nature of work throughout history, work has been and will continue to be a fundamental condition and dimension of human existence. No theology that wants to take human existence seriously will be able to circumvent theological reflection on human work.

Second, it is important to distinguish carefully between the ways the word "theology" is used in the syntagmas "theology of work" and, for example, "theology of liberation." Theology of liberation elevates liberation to the status of the methodological principle for the whole of theological reflection. Theology of liberation is not a theological reflection on a particular aspect of human life (a genitive theology), but a new way of doing theology as a whole.²⁸ The task of a theology of work is much more modest. It is a genitive theology; for it does not seek to make work the governing theological theme, but to treat it from a dogmatic perspective. The effort to organize theological reflection around the theme of work would be misplaced because it would amount to theological acquiescence to the near-total dominance of work in many contemporary societies. In one crucial respect, such a theology of work would be a mere reflection of the present world of work and thus would forfeit its function as a critical partner in the contemporary discussion about work.

My intention in writing this book is not to add another volume to the flood of ethical theological literature on human work published in recent years (especially on the ethical aspects of the unemploy-

ment problem). The purpose of this book is to *develop a new—pneumatological—theology* of work. Especially from Protestant pens, theologies of work are in short supply. Protestant publications on work as a rule ignore the dogmatic perspective on the question of work or assume that nothing more needs to be said about it.²⁹ This book is written from the persuasion that dogmatic reflection on human work is essential to an adequate theological treatment of the subject, and that there is a host of unresolved questions demanding further investigation; and, above all, that the dominant paradigm for understanding work in Protestant theology is inadequate.

My main task will be to develop a theological framework for understanding human work and to elucidate the implicit ethical principles that should guide our efforts to assess and restructure the world of work. For lack of space and because of my interest and specialization, I have chosen to refrain from making proposals about how these ethical principles should be translated into concrete policies. The complex task of such a translation I take to be the creative assignment of Christian economists and social scientists (to be carried out in dialogue with theologians).

I am aware of the problems involved in keeping safely hidden behind normative theological generalities—not the least of them being the fact that “we have not yet fully understood the claims of any moral philosophy until we have spelled out what its social embodiment would be.”³⁰ But one of the worst ways to avoid these problems would be to rush, theological student that I am, into the economists’ and social scientists’ fields of competence with policy-shaping proposals that claim to bear the stamp of divine approval. Short of engaging in a truly interdisciplinary project, one of the best ways to avoid this problem is for a theologian to stick to her own discipline and formulate normative principles while taking carefully into account the concrete realities in which these principles have to be implemented. This I have striven to do.

ON CRAFTING A THEOLOGY OF WORK

How does one arrive at a theology of work? In the past, theologians have frequently attempted to formulate a Christian understanding

of work by analyzing and combining individual passages of the Bible that speak about human beings and their daily work. The procedure was intended to be strictly inductive, and it resulted in books and articles about *biblical teaching* on work.³¹ If one attempts to develop a theology of work in such a way, one runs up against three major problems.

First, the New Testament, the key source for developing a Christian theology of work, addresses the topic of human work only occasionally, and as a subordinate theme at that.³² The few relevant New Testament passages consist of specific instructions about how Christians should work but make no fundamental affirmations about the meaning of human work. Taken together, these passages simply do not add up to a *theology* of human work. Some Old Testament passages (like Gen. 1 and 2) look more promising at first sight since they include a more comprehensive perspective on work. But they provide us at best only with some elements of a theology of work. Moreover, even these elements are not useful for a *Christian* theology of work just as they stand. To integrate them into a Christian theology, we have to interpret the Old Testament statements on human work in the light of the revelation of God in Christ.³³

Second, a deep divide separates the world of work in biblical times from work in present industrial and information societies.³⁴ This ever-widening gap precludes developing a theology of work relevant to our time through the “concordance method” without placing biblical references within a larger theological framework. The explicit biblical statements about work are, for instance, more or less irrelevant to fundamental contemporary questions such as the connection between work or unemployment and human identity, the character of humane work in an information society, and the relationship between work and nature in an age of permanent technological revolution. As Moltmann correctly (given a degree of exaggeration) observes, “anyone who inquires about the work ethos of the Bible runs up against the cultural history of past societies if he or she only investigates the statements on human work.”³⁵ So even if there were enough material in the biblical records to construct a theology of work by the concordance method, a theology of work crafted in such a way would be of limited relevance to the modern world of work.

Third, even when biblical statements about work are applicable to the present, it is still not immediately obvious what significance should be ascribed to each statement in relation to the others and hence, also, precisely how they should inform Christian thinking and behavior. This information is provided by the theological framework in which we place these statements. Representatives of divergent views on economic issues will, for instance, rarely disagree on whether or not the prophet Amos denounced exploitation and the resulting poverty. But they will differ radically about the urgency of combating exploitation and about the most efficient ways of doing so. The reasons for these differences are manifold, but there is no doubt that one reason is the different overarching theologics in whose light disagreeing Christians read Amos' denunciations.³⁶ The theological framework is, therefore, crucial for determining the import of individual biblical statements on work.

The inductive approach to developing a theology of work is inadequate because of the scarcity of biblical materials, their limited relevance to the modern world of work, and their ambiguous nature. It is illusory to think that we can treat the biblical statements about work as pieces of a large jigsaw puzzle that we only have to arrange according to the pattern implicit in the pieces themselves in order to get a theology of work that is both biblical and relevant. We need instead to proceed deductively: we need to set up a theological framework in which we then can integrate the biblical statements on work. As a matter of fact, a theological framework is always operative in the interpretation of biblical texts, whether or not the interpreter is conscious of such an influence. Interpretation takes place from within particular theological traditions, which "almost always take the form of *ways of understanding the message of the Bible as a whole*—they take the form of overarching *theologies*."³⁷ To develop a theology of work means to consciously place biblical statements about work in the context of a reading of the Bible as a whole and to apply both these individual statements and the overarching reading of the Bible to the contemporary world of work.

I am, of course, not suggesting that one can set up a theological framework independently of the relevant biblical statements. It is an essential characteristic of all authentic Christian "theological puzzles" that the individual pieces that come from the biblical

materials also contribute normatively to the shape of the framework of the puzzle. If we cannot arrive at a theology of work simply by combining the individual biblical statements and ethical principles about work that can be derived from them, still less can we do so by manipulating them to fit our preconceived pattern, and certainly not by ignoring them altogether. No aspect of a theology of work is acceptable if it can be biblically patently falsified (granted the difficulties of 'patent falsification' pointed out by philosophers of science).

THEOLOGY OF WORK AND NEW CREATION

The broad theological framework within which I propose to develop a theology of work is the concept of the *new creation*. I will not attempt at this point to give detailed justification for this step or unfold its implications for understanding human work. It should suffice here to say that I am following the basic insight of Moltmann's *Theology of Hope* that at its very core, Christian faith is eschatological. Christian life is life in the Spirit of the new creation or it is not Christian life at all. And the Spirit of God should determine the whole life, spiritual as well as secular, of a Christian. Christian work must, therefore, be done under the inspiration of the Spirit and in the light of the coming new creation.³⁸ The rest of the book consists of the elaboration on this theme. I believe that the reasons for opting for an "eschatological" and pneumatological theology of work are best given in the process of its development.

In the remainder of this chapter I want to point out some formal features of a theology of work based on the concept of new creation and indicate how the contemporary reality of work requires a framework of such breadth.

A Christian Theology of Work

The first and most basic feature of a theology of work based on the concept of new creation is that it is a *Christian* theology of work. It is developed on the basis of a specifically Christian soteriology and eschatology, essential to which is the anticipatory experience of God's new creation and a hope of its future consummation.

Under the assumption that Christian faith makes sense, Christian theological reflection about work has an important advantage over secular philosophies of work in that it is furnished with an adequate basis for moral discourse about work. Dostoyevsky (and before him, Nietzsche) rightly maintained that everything is allowed if there is no God. It seems that judgments about right and wrong can be adequately justified only in the context of religious discourse (which does not mean that those who do not accept a religious world view cannot demonstrate exemplary moral qualities, in spite of their lack of adequate justification for their behavior).³⁹ The belief that reason can establish values is likely to be one of "the stupidest and most pernicious illusion[s]."⁴⁰

But there is also a disadvantage in having a Christian foundation for ethical reflection on work. The problems of work are common problems for all the peoples of the world today. Ours is a pluralistic world, and only a minority of its inhabitants give intellectual assent to Christian beliefs. Even fewer people feel committed to the moral implications of Christian beliefs. Some of my readers who do not share my Christian presuppositions might think that no fruitful exchange of ideas can take place between them and me. So it might seem that I can have the advantage of a solid foundation for ethical reflection only at the price of forfeiting its relevance and persuasiveness to a non-Christian audience.

This is not the place to try to convince non-Christians that Christian faith makes sense (which I believe it does). I only want to remind them of what is commonplace in the philosophy of science; namely, that valid insights can be gained from erroneous and even absurd metaphysical beliefs (which they might believe mine are).

A Christian theologian who takes the concept of new creation as a framework for theological and ethical reflection should, at any rate, be hesitant in qualifying non-Christian moral persuasions as erroneous or absurd *tout court*. This framework does not require a black-and-white view of the world. For the Spirit of God is at work not only in the present anticipation of the new creation in the Christian community, but also in the world. Moreover, in the Christian community the new creation is presently being realized only in an anticipatory form. Since the Last Day is yet to come, a theologian can never pronounce theological judgments from the seat of the Final Judge, so to speak. A theologian's views are not

absolute. Furthermore, as she relativizes her own statements, a theologian must always be ready to hear the voice of the Spirit of God in the moral discourse of non-Christians (without forgetting, however, to apply a "hermeneutic of suspicion" here, too). Christian moral discourse is exclusive in the sense that it is based on the concept of new creation ushered in by Christ, but it is also inclusive in the sense that it respects other traditions and is ready to learn from them because it is ready to hear from them also the voice of the Spirit of Christ.⁴¹

A Normative Theology of Work

A theology of work based on the concept of new creation purports to be a *normative* understanding of work. As I see it, in writing this book, I am not merely stating what I, or anybody else, subjectively considers to be a preferred state of affairs. The book is not primarily about what I desire human work to be. It is also not about how a particular subculture desires to structure its world of work. It is about what human beings *should* desire their work to be.

I believe the principle to be wrong that the "sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable is that people actually desire it."⁴² The principle is incorrect whether one understands it in terms of utilitarianism (as did Mill, who formulated it) or in terms of ethical egoism. Because for Christian theology each individual does not determine his own moral universe, the factuality of desires—either individual desires or common desires reached by consensus—by no means establishes their objective desirability. What people desire is objectively desirable only when it corresponds to what the loving and just God desires for them as God's creatures. And God desires the *new creation* for them. New creation is the end of all God's purposes with the universe, and as such, either explicitly or implicitly is the necessary criterion of all human action that can be considered good. For this reason, normative principles are implied in the concept of new creation, which should guide Christians in structuring the reality of human work.

I am not saying that the desires of the people are *politically* irrelevant but that they are not *ethically* decisive. No one may impose the goals implicit in the concept of new creation either on the majority or a minority of population against their will. Such an

imposition would violate the freedom of people and hence be in contradiction with these goals themselves. Human freedom must be respected as an end in itself because it is an essential dimension of human personhood, which is an end in itself. Norms may be politically implemented only when they become public preferences through truly democratic processes (which are not to be confused with a pseudo-democratic civil war of interests in which the majority—whether moral or immoral—wins by use of “civilized” brute force, but must be grounded in public preferences that are based on persuasive public moral discourse). In any case, disregard for the preferences of people in social interaction characterizes a dictatorship, and in that sense it is politically and ethically unacceptable. But the preference satisfaction and its distribution across a community is not what fundamentally matters in the formulation of *ethical norms*.⁴³

If anyone is offended by my objectivist approach to ethical discourse, I suggest that she interpret what I consider to be objective normative statements as my own subjective preferences or as the preferences of a subculture to which I belong. From my standpoint this would not so much be a wrong interpretation of my views as an inadequate one. For I am not only talking about what I believe to be good objectively but also about what I and (possibly) some of my fellow Christians subjectively consider to be good. Hence I can accept (with some dissatisfaction) a critical reading of this book that is content to measure the extent to which my subjective preferences here expressed make sense in the framework of the individual or communal moral sensitivity of my reader.

It is crucial to determine more precisely the normative function of the concept of new creation. To this end I would like to draw attention to the traditional ethical distinction between justice and love. The concept of new creation implies certain principles that cannot be set aside if justice is to prevail. This we might call the “ethical minimum.” But the new creation also implies principles that point beyond the way of justice to the way of love, which we might call the “ethical maximum.” All responsible Christian behavior has to satisfy the ethical minimum and, inspired by the sacrificial love of Christ demonstrated on the cross and guided by the vision of the new creation, move toward the ethical maximum. The

ethical minimum is the *criterion* for structuring the world of work, the ethical maximum the necessary *regulative ideal*.

The ethical maximum may not be zealously transmuted from regulative ideal to sacrosanct criterion. As one uses the ethical maximum to optimize structures, one must take soberly into account what is practically realizable.⁴⁴ Otherwise one is likely to distort what is meant to be a beneficial critical instance into a tyrannical ideology. At the same time it is crucial not to set love aside as useless in social ethics. Even if one does not operate only with a procedural understanding of justice (as I do not),⁴⁵ the practice of justice alone will not be sufficient to create a humane society. For without love, there is no *shalom*.

A Transformative Theology of Work

Since a theology of work has normative ethical implications, its task is not merely to interpret the world of work in a particular way, but to *lead* the present world of work “towards the promised and the hoped-for transformation”⁴⁶ in the new creation. To be sure, theological interpretations of work are not pointless; even less should they be simply denounced as a devous attempt to “befog the brain with supernatural, transcendent doctrines.”⁴⁷ But a theological interpretation of work is valid only if it facilitates transformation of work toward ever-greater correspondence with the coming new creation.

The transformative function of a theology of work demands that, in developing it, we not only attentively read its sources (biblical revelation on work) and carefully analyze the nature of the object of study (the contemporary situation of work), but also reflect critically on the praxis that can follow from the formulations produced by a theology of work. Since it is impossible to make theological statements that cannot be misused, however, it may seem unjust to require a theology of work to take into account the potential consequences of its theological formulations; that requirement seems to put a theology at the mercy of people’s willingness or unwillingness to understand and practice it properly. But the point is surely not to pay attention to the interpretive whims of individuals, but to take into consideration broad tendencies toward misin-

terpretation that are rooted in the logic of the cultural context in which theological statements are uttered.

It might also be objected that concern for the practical consequences of theological formulations easily degenerates into an approach that takes these consequences as an independent basis for theologizing. The purpose of critical reflection on the function of theology, however, is not to make the desired reflection of theological formulations determine their content, but to ensure that theological formulations serve the function that their content dictates.

In facilitating a transformation of human work, a theology of work cannot operate with an *evolutionist* understanding of social realities. The concept of new creation precludes all naïve belief in the permanence of human moral progress. A truly *new* creation can never result from the action of intrahistorical forces pushing history toward ever-superior states. Although we must affirm the continuity between present and future orders,⁴⁸ that affirmation should not deceive us into thinking that God's new creation will come about in linear development from the present order of things. The implied normativeness of new creation enables us to evaluate (and appreciate) present achievements of the human race, and the radical newness of God's future creation frees us from having to press history into a utopian developmental scheme. Holding to the theological framework of the new creation allows us to perceive progress in certain aspects of social life or in certain historical periods, and it allows us also at other times to share Luther's view that "the world [as a whole, or a particular 'world'] is deteriorating from day to day."⁴⁹ The concept of the new creation allows us to *combine* the normative approach to social life with what might be called a "kaleidoscope" theory of social life, according to which social arrangements shift in various ways under various influences (divine, human, or demonic) without necessarily following an evolutionist or involuionist pattern.

A Comprehensive Theology of Work

A theology of work based on the concept of new creation needs to be *comprehensive*. Since the new creation is a universal reality (the creation of a new heaven and a new earth), a theology of work based on it needs to answer the question of how human work is

related to all reality: to God, human beings, and their nonhuman environment.

Such an all-inclusive framework for a theology of work is demanded by the significance of human work itself. It is possible to see the whole of human history as a result of the combined work of many generations of human beings. Human work, properly understood theologically, is related to the goal of all history, which will bring God, human beings, and the nonhuman creation into "shalom" harmony. Neither personal development (self-realization) nor communal well-being (solidarity) alone are adequate contexts for a theological reflection on human work. To do justice to the nature of its subject (work) and its source (Christian revelation), a theology of work must investigate the relation of work to the future destiny of the whole creation, including human beings as individual and social beings, and the nonhuman environment. The appropriate theological framework for developing a theology of work is not anthropology, but an all-encompassing eschatology.

Because of the universality of new creation, a theology of work needs to be comprehensive by relating work, not only to all dimensions of reality—God, human beings, and nature—but also to humanity and nature in their entirety. It needs to be a *global* theology.⁵⁰ Because the world of human work is a global world, a theology of work must attempt to reflect on work in a global context.

The interdependence created by the first division of labor at the dawn of history has grown to include almost the entire human race and shows a tendency toward further increase. The wealthy and technologically developed North and the destitute South are increasingly dependent on one another for resources; the North being unable to function without the South's raw materials and markets, the South needing the North for technology and know-how. The emerging world economy is transforming our world from a set of self-sustaining tribes and nations into a global village (or a global city). The unity of the human race is no longer merely an abstract notion. The same is true of the natural environment: powerful technology (created both *for* the emerging world economy and *by* it) has had the ecological effect of fusing more or less self-contained geographical units into a single global environment.

A theology of work must be comprehensive not only in the synchronic sense (given the global village and environment) but also

in a diachronic sense. As a network of interdependently working individuals and communities, the present-day generation is unalterably shaping the world for future generations. Through the cumulative effects of modern technology on the human environment, a new world is being created, a new world that is potentially no less a nightmare-world than a dream-world. For this reason we need a theology of work that reflects on the present situation in view of the future that the present is giving birth to. If we base a theology of work on the concept of new creation, we can think of the work of the present generation and that of coming generations as two aspects of one reality, as the combined work of the single human race. A theology of work adequate to the modern world of work must be cross-cultural and cross-historical, a pan-human theology of work.⁵¹

A Theology of Work for Industrial Societies

A theology of work based on the concept of new creation is open to the contributions of *individual cultural units*. New creation is a universal reality that realizes itself in history through the Spirit of God. It does not destroy history or obliterate the diversity of the individual cultures it includes. The new creation is mediated in different ways in different cultures. It is well known, for instance, that what people think and feel about work, the extent to which work is gratifying, frustrating, or merely endurable to them, depends at least partly on the particular culture in which they live.⁵² This variety of cultural forms and their partial preservation in the new creation implies that a diversity of valid theologies of work conditioned partly by the character and the understanding of work in a given culture could exist.

To acknowledge diverse theologies of work is not to succumb naively to cultural and historical relativism. Such relativism is not only philosophically problematic⁵³ in Christian theology it would be out of place. For the notion of new creation implies universally valid normative principles. Some aspects of work that seem meaningful in a particular culture will be at odds with these principles. One can imagine that the work of some slaves was gratifying to them (the "pleasant slavery" Marx spoke of⁵⁴), yet as a mode of economic arrangement of interhuman relations, slavery is clearly

morally unacceptable. When culture conflicts with new creation, it is culture that has to go. There are, however, aspects of human work that are ethically neutral, but valuable nevertheless as expressions of a particular culture (such as some technological and aesthetic aspects of work). Such culturally conditioned ways of doing work could be validly integrated into the concept of meaningful work. The normative character of a theology of work does not preclude different *accents* specific to a particular culture in a theology of work constructed for that culture.

My concern, however, is not so much with the culturally specific aspects of a theology of work as with its normative claims and with their realization. Reflection on the realization of the normative principles must take into consideration the specific situation in which those principles are to be realized. In that sense, too, a responsible theology of work will necessarily be colored by the character and the understanding of work in the contemporary societies for which it is being developed.

This book deals with the reality and understanding of work of industrializing and industrialized societies, which are experiencing a slow but irreversible transformation into information societies. These include not only the societies of the so-called First World but also some of the developing societies of the Second and Third Worlds (for example, my home country, Yugoslavia). The conditions and the character of work in industrial societies are becoming increasingly characteristic of work elsewhere as a genuine world economy is being created.

I am writing, therefore, for a particular context (industrializing and industrialized societies), which nevertheless has a universalizing tendency. Since a theology of work should have a global character, I will also try to bear in mind the implications of my proposals for presently existing societies or segments of societies still in the pre-industrial phase. Often a tension is felt between a particular context and the universal outlook. This tension can never be removed completely, but we can and should strive to reduce it. A dialogue between thinkers from different contexts who nevertheless have a universal perspective could facilitate clearer formulation of the tensions between all the different particular interests and thus contribute toward their reduction. This in turn is a precondition for peaceful living in a world whose inhabitants are growing increasingly interdependent.

CHAPTER 4

Work, Spirit, and New Creation

The foregoing analysis of the dominant theories of work in the world today and of the changing present reality of work (Chapters 1 and 2) served to place the object of our study in focus. I then pleaded in Chapter 3 for developing a theology of work instead of an ethic of work and indicated some formal features of a proposed pneumatological theology of work cast within the framework of the concept of "new creation."

In the present chapter, I will lay a foundation for such a theology of work and sketch its basic contours. The first major section deals with the ultimate *significance* of work by discussing the question of the continuity or discontinuity between the present and the eschatological orders, and with the fundamental *meaning* of work by arguing in favor of understanding work as cooperation with God. In the second major section I will first give reasons why a pneumatological theory of work is possible. Then, in a critical dialogue with the dominant Protestant view of work as vocation developed within a protological framework, I will argue for a pneumatological understanding of work based on a theology of *charisms*, which suggests that the various activities human beings do in order to satisfy their

WORK, SPIRIT, AND NEW CREATION

89

own needs and the needs of their fellow creatures should be viewed from the perspective of the operation of God's Spirit. I will end by defending the pneumatological understanding of work from a possible criticism of being a Christian ideology of work.

WORK AND NEW CREATION

The question of continuity or discontinuity between the present and future orders¹ is a key issue in developing a theology of work. The ultimate significance of human work depends on the answer to this question, for it determines whether work as occupation with transitory things and relations (*vita activa*) has an inherent value or whether it merely has instrumental value as a means to make possible the occupation with eternal realities (*vita contemplativa*).²

Eschatology and the Significance of Human Work

If we leave aside the more modern—and in my view theologically and religiously not very persuasive—ethical and existential interpretations of the cosmological eschatological statements, Christian theologians have held two basic positions on the eschatological future of the world. Some stressed radical discontinuity between the present and the future orders, believing in the complete destruction of the present world at the end of the ages and creation of a fully new world. Others postulated continuity between the two, believing that the present world will be transformed into the new heaven and new earth. Two radically different theologies of work follow from these two basic eschatological models.

Work and the Annihilatio Mundi

If the world will be annihilated and a new one created *ex nihilo*, then mundane work has only earthly significance for the well-being of the worker, the worker's community, and posterity—until the day when "the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire" (2 Pet. 3:10). Since the results of the cumulative work of humankind throughout history will become naught in the final apocalyptic catastrophe, human work is devoid of direct ultimate significance.

Under the presupposition of eschatological *annihilatio mundi*, human work can, of course, indirectly serve certain goals whose importance transcends the death of either the individual or the whole cosmos. One can, for instance, view work as a school for the purification of the soul in preparation for heavenly bliss. Christian tradition always insisted on the importance of work for individual sanctification.³ For, as Thomas Aquinas put it, it removes "idleness whence arise many evils" and "curbs concupiscence."⁴ One can also maintain (as Karl Barth did) that work is indirectly ultimately significant because it keeps the body and the soul together, thus enabling Christian faith and service: in order to believe and serve, human beings have to live, and in order to live, they have to work.⁵ According to such views, human work and its results are necessary, for without them the Christian *opus propterium* (faith, sanctification, or service) cannot take place. Yet, being merely prerequisites for this *opus propterium*, human work and its results are eschatologically insignificant independent of their direct or indirect influence on the souls of men and women.

When one refuses to assign eschatological significance to human work and makes it fully subservient to the vertical relation to God, one devalues human work and Christian cultural involvement (I use the word in the broad sense inclusive of social and ecological involvement). It is, of course, logically compatible both to affirm that the world will be annihilated at the end and at the same time to strive to improve the life of individuals, to create adequate social structures, and even to be motivated to care effectively for the environment. There is nothing contradictory in wanting to use the world and delight in it as long as it lasts (or as long as human beings last in it). Because it is possible to affirm enjoyment in the world while believing in its destruction, it is also possible to consider one's cultural involvement as a way of integrally loving one's neighbor. If Bach, for instance, were an annihilationist, should he have had quams about composing his music?⁶ Of course not. He could have done this out of a desire to spiritually elevate his audience and thereby glorify God.⁷

Belief in the eschatological annihilation and responsible social involvement are logically compatible. But they are *theologically inconsistent*. The expectation of the eschatological destruction of the world is not consonant with the belief in the goodness of creation: what God will annihilate must be either so bad that it is

not possible to be redeemed or so insignificant that it is not worth being redeemed. It is hard to believe in the intrinsic value and goodness of something that God will completely annihilate.

And without a *theologically grounded belief in the intrinsic value and goodness of creation, positive cultural involvement hangs theologically in the air*. Hence Christians who await the destruction of the world (and conveniently refuse to live a schizophrenic life) shy away as a rule—out of theological, not logical, consistency—from social and cultural involvement. Under the presupposition that the world is not intrinsically good, the only theologically plausible justification for cultural involvement would be that such involvement diminishes the suffering of the body and contributes to the good of the soul (either by making evangelism possible or by fostering sanctification). Comfort, skill, or beauty—whether it is the beauty of the human body or of some other object—could have no more intrinsic value than does the body itself; they could be merely a means to some spiritual end. To return to our example, even if annihilationist presuppositions need not discourage Bach's work, his composing in order for people to take pleasure in his music could not be theologically motivated. He would have no theological reason for this important way of loving others. This problem would not arise, however, if Bach believed in the intrinsic goodness of creation. And he could do this only if he believed in the eschatological transformation rather than destruction.

Work and the Transformatio Mundi

The picture changes radically with the assumption that the world will end not in apocalyptic destruction but in eschatological transformation. Then the results of the cumulative work of human beings have intrinsic value and gain ultimate significance, for they are related to the eschatological new creation, not only indirectly through the faith and service they enable or sanctification they further, but also directly: the noble products of human ingenuity, "whatever is beautiful, true and good in human cultures,"⁸ will be cleansed from impurity, perfected, and transfigured to become a part of God's new creation. They will form the "building materials" from which (after they are transfigured) "the glorified world" will be made.⁹

The assurance of the continuity between the present age and the age to come (notwithstanding the abolition of all sinfulness and

transitoriness that characterize the present age) is a "strong incentive to . . . cultural involvement."¹⁰ For the continuity guarantees that no noble efforts will be wasted. Certainly, cultural involvement is not the most important task of a Christian. It would indeed be useless for a woman to conquer and transform the world through work but through lack of faith lose her soul (see Mark 8:36). Yet, as faith does not exist for the sake of work (though it should stimulate, direct, and limit work), so also work does not exist merely for the sake of faith (though one of its purposes is to make faith possible). Each in its own way, faith and human work should stand in the service of the new creation. Not that the results of human work should or could create and replace "heaven." They can never do that; though, charmed with success, people often forget that simple truth. Rather, after being purified in the eschatological *transformatio mundi*, they will be integrated by an act of divine transformation into the new heaven and the new earth. Hence the expectation of the eschatological transformation invests human work with ultimate significance. Through it human beings contribute in their modest and broken way to God's new creation.

The ascription of intrinsic value and ultimate significance to positive cultural involvement is not the only benefit of developing a theology of work within the framework of belief in eschatological continuity. In addition, such a belief gives human beings important inspiration for action when their efforts at doing good deeds, at finding truth about some aspect of reality, and at creating beauty are not appreciated. The question is not merely whether Bach would have qualms about composing music if he were an annihilatist. The question is also whether all those unappreciated small and great Van Goghs in various fields of human activity would not draw inspiration and strength from the belief that their noble efforts are not lost, that everything good, true, and beautiful they create is valued by God and will be appreciated by human beings in the new creation.

The New Testament on the Significance of Work

It might seem that discussing eschatological annihilation and transformation is a roundabout way to reflect theologically on the significance of human work. Should not the explicit New Testament statements about work determine our perspective on the issue? If they did, we would come to a rather different valuation of cultural

involvement than the one implied in the idea of *transformatio mundi*. For we search in vain in the New Testament for a cultural mandate, let alone for the "gospel of work."¹¹ Jesus left carpenter's tools when he started public ministry, and he called his disciples away from their occupations. Only indirectly did he affirm the need to work: when he said that people will be judged on the basis of their efforts to satisfy basic human needs of the poor (food, drink, clothing; Matt. 25:34ff.).¹² Later, we find in the epistles an explicit command to work, but with the clear specification that work should serve the needs of the workers and their neighbors (see 2 Thess. 3:6ff.; Eph. 4:28). The explicit New Testament statements about work view it very soberly as a means of securing sustenance, not as an instrument of cultural advancement.

The key question is how to interpret the silence of the New Testament about the possible broader significance of human work. Is it an implicit discouragement of cultural involvement or merely an expression of a singleminded *concentration* on a different kind of work needed in a particular period of salvation history (see Matt. 9:37f.)? In answering this question it is good to remember that in the Old Testament, the "scripture" for the early Christians, the purpose of work was not merely sustenance, but also cultural development, which included activities ranging from perfecting building techniques to the refinement of musical skills (See Gen. 4:17ff.). Moreover, Genesis views the diversification of employments required by such cultural development as a result of divine blessing.¹³ The Old Testament view of work should caution us against concluding too hastily that a positive valuation of cultural development is incompatible with a New Testament understanding of Christian faith.

Important as this argument from the Old Testament is, it is not decisive. The answer to the question of how to translate into a Christian theology of work the silence of the New Testament about any broader significance of work than mere sustenance depends ultimately on the nature of New Testament eschatology. For the significance of secular work depends on the value of creation, and the value of creation depends on its final destiny. If its destiny is eschatological transformation, then, in spite of the lack of explicit exegetical support, we *must* ascribe to human work inherent value, independent of its relation to the proclamation of the gospel (human work and the proclamation of the gospel are each in its

own way directed toward the new creation). Since much of the present order is the result of human work, if the present order will be transformed, then human work necessarily has ultimate significance. The interpretation of the explicit New Testament statements about the significance of work depends, therefore, on the eschatological framework in which they are set. So the search for a direct answer in the New Testament to the question about a possible broader significance of work than securing sustenance leads us to return to our initial discussion about the continuity between the present and future orders.

Eschatological *Transformatio Mundi*

Both explicit and implicit theological arguments can be adduced for the idea of the eschatological *transformatio mundi* and hence for the continuity between the present and the future orders.

Kingdom of God for This Earth

One can argue indirectly for the eschatological transformation of the world instead of annihilation by pointing to the *earthly locale of the kingdom of God*.¹⁴ R. H. Gundry has argued persuasively that in Revelation the saints' dwelling place is the new earth. It is "quite clear that the Book of Revelation promises eternal life on the new earth . . . not ethereal life in the new heaven."¹⁵ In correspondence to the saints' earthly dwelling place, the promise to the church at Smyrna—"but you are rich" (2:9)—calls for a "materialistic reading": it refers to "a redistribution of property . . . to the saints."¹⁶ Moreover, Revelation complements the economic aspect of the promise by adding a political aspect: the saints will rule as "new kings of the earth, all of them, the whole nation of kings."¹⁵

The same emphasis on the new earth as the eschatological dwelling place of God's people found in Revelation is also present in the Matthew gospel. The prayer for the coming of the kingdom (6:10) is a prayer for God's "rule over all the earth," and seeking the kingdom (6:33) "means desiring the final coming of his rule on earth."¹⁶ Similarly, the "earth" in the promise of inheriting the earth given to the meek (5:5) can only refer to "the earthly locale of God's kingdom."¹⁷ In the *eschaton*, the resurrected people of God will inhabit the renewed earth.

The stress on the earthly locale of the kingdom of God in the New Testament corresponds not only to the earthly hopes of the Old Testament prophets (Isa. 11:6-10; 65:17-25), but even more significantly to the Christian doctrine of the resurrection of the body. Theologically it makes little sense to postulate a nonearthly eschatological existence while believing in the resurrection of the body.¹⁸ If we do not want to reduce the doctrine of the resurrection of the body to an accidental part of Christian eschatology, we will have to insist (against Thomas Aquinas, for instance) that perfect happiness does depend on the resurrected body.¹⁹ And if the concept of "body" is not to become unintelligible by being indistinguishable from the concept of the "pure spirit," we must also insist that "external goods" are necessary for perfect happiness.²⁰ The resurrection body demands a corresponding glorified but nevertheless material environment. The future *material* existence therefore belongs inalienably to the Christian eschatological expectation.²¹

Liberation of Creation

Some New Testament statements explicitly support the idea of an eschatological *transformatio mundi* and indicate that the apocalyptic language of the destruction of "all these things" (2 Pet. 3:11) should not be taken to imply the destruction of creation. In Romans 8:21 Paul writes that the "creation itself . . . will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God."²² The liberation of creation (i.e. of "the sum-total of sub-human nature, both animate and inanimate"²³) cannot occur *through its destruction but only through its transformation*. As F. F. Bruce rightly points out, "if words mean anything, these words of Paul denote not the annihilation of the present material universe on the day of revelation, to be replaced by a universe completely new, but the transformation of the present universe so that it will fulfill the purpose for which God created it."²³ When God ushers in his final kingdom, the striving of "everything in heaven and on earth . . . after renewal" will be fulfilled.²⁴

The biblical statements that affirm continuity between the present and future orders are theologically inseparable from the Judeo-Christian belief in the goodness of divine creation. The belief in the continuity between the present and the new creation is an eschatological expression of the protological belief in the goodness of

creation, you cannot have one without having the other. It makes little sense to affirm the goodness of creation and at the same time expect its eschatological destruction. And goodness is a predicate not only of the original but also of the present creation, the reality of evil in it notwithstanding. God cannot, therefore, ultimately "reject" creation, but will—as we read in the Pastorals in relation to food—"consecrate" it (1 Tim. 4:4).

It is, of course, possible to believe that the goodness of the material creation is merely instrumental, in which case eschatological annihilation would not deny the goodness of creation. Like food, all material objects would be good because they are necessary for keeping the human body alive, and the human body would be good because it provides a temporary dwelling place for the soul. Alternatively, one can posit the instrumental goodness of the material creation by affirming that it is only a temporary means of manifesting God's greatness and glory. There is no reason to deny or denigrate the instrumental goodness of the material creation. But the material creation is more than a means; it is also an end in itself. For one, we encounter in the biblical texts what might best be described as the "soteriological independence" of the material creation: creation too will participate in the liberty of the children of God (Rom. 8:21; see Gen. 9:10ff).²⁵ Furthermore, anthropologically we have to maintain that human beings do not only have a body; they also are body.²⁶ It follows that the goodness of the whole material creation is intrinsic, not merely instrumental. And the belief in the intrinsic goodness of creation is compatible only with the belief in the eschatological continuity.

Human Works in the Glorified World?

Belief in the eschatological transformation of the world gives human work special significance since it bestows independent value on the results of work as "building materials" of the glorified world. As I have shown above, it makes theological sense to talk about human contribution to the glorified world. But is such talk logically plausible? Is it not a contradiction to ascribe eternal permanence to what corruptible human beings create?²⁷ A chair becomes broken in a year, bread is eaten in a day, and a speech forgotten in an hour.

Most of the results of human work will waste away before they see the day of eschatological transformation.

We should not think only in terms of the work of isolated individuals, however, but also of the cumulative work of the whole human race. The work of each individual contributes to the "project" in which the human race is involved. As one generation stands on the shoulders of another, so the accomplishments of each generation build upon those of the previous one. What has wasted away or been destroyed often functions as a ladder that, after use, can be pushed aside.

Second, although on the one hand much of human work serves for sustenance and its results disappear almost as soon as they have appeared, on the other hand, much human work leaves a permanent imprint on natural and social environments and creates a home for human beings without which they could not exist as human beings. Even if every single human product throughout history will not be integrated into the world to come, this home as a whole will be integrated.

Third, work and its perceived results define in part the structure of human beings' personality, their identity.²⁸ Since resurrection will be not a negation but an affirmation of human earthly identity, earthly work will have an influence on resurrected personality. Rondet rightly asks whether Gutenberg in a glorified state would be Gutenberg apart from any eschatological relation to the discovery that made him famous.²⁹ One might go on to ask whether all human beings who have benefited from Gutenberg's discovery would in their glorified state be the same without his discovery. It could be argued that such an understanding of the direct ultimate significance of human work is also possible if one holds to the doctrine of the annihilation of the world. Strictly speaking, this is true. But it seems inconsistent to hold that human creations are evil or insignificant enough to necessitate their destruction and that their influence on human personality—which should be carefully distinguished from the influence the process of work has on the individual's sanctification—is good enough to require eschatological preservation.

It is plausible that the statement in Revelation about the saints resting "from their labors (*kopón*), for their deeds (*ergá*) follow them" (Rev. 14:13; cf. Eph. 6:8) could be interpreted to imply that

earthly work will leave traces on resurrected personalities. Since the preservation of the results of work is not in view in this passage, it seems that their deeds can follow the saints only as part and parcel of their personality.³⁰ Human work is ultimately significant not only because it contributes to the future environment of human beings, but also because it leaves an indelible imprint on their personalities.

Cooperatio Dei

In the past few centuries Christian theologians have come to view human work as *cooperatio with God*. In both Protestant and Roman Catholic traditions there is agreement today that the deepest meaning of human work lies in the cooperation of men and women with God.³¹ To view work as cooperation with God is compatible with belief in eschatological annihilation (one cooperates with God in the preservation of the world until its final destruction); belief in the eschatological transformation, however, is not only compatible with such a view of work—it requires it.

Depending on how we conceive of human cooperation with God in work, we can differentiate between two types of theologues of work. The one rests on the doctrine of creation and sees work as cooperation with God in *creatio continua*, the other rests on the doctrine of the last things and sees work as cooperation with God in anticipation of God's eschatological *transformatio mundi*. I will take a brief, critical look at both ways to understand human work as cooperation with God.

Cooperation in Preservation

The first way of interpreting work as cooperation with God starts with the Old Testament, especially the creation accounts. The first chapters of Genesis portray human beings, even in their mundane work, as partners with God in God's creative activity. True, the Old Testament stresses the uniqueness of God's act of original creation. No human work corresponds to divine creation *ex nihilo (bara)*. At the same time it draws an analogy between divine making (*asa*) and human work,³² which seems to suggest that there is a partnership between the creating God and working human beings.

The second account of creation portrays this partnership in the most vivid manner. While giving the reason for the lack of vegeta-

tion on earth, it addresses the relation of God's creation and human work: "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth; and there was no man to till the ground" (Gen. 2:5). The growth of vegetation demands cooperation between God, who gives rain, and human beings, who cultivate the ground. There is a mutual dependence between God and human beings in the task of the preservation of creation. On the one hand, human beings are dependent upon God in their work. As the psalmist says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1a; cf. Ps. 65:11-13). On the other hand, God the Creator chooses to become "dependent" on the human helping hand and makes human work a means of accomplishing his work in the world. As Luther said, human work is "God's mask behind which he hides himself and rules everything magnificently in the world."³³

As Luther's statement indicates, cooperation with God need not be a conscious effort on the part of human beings. In other words, work must objectively correspond to the will of God, but it need not be done subjectively as God's will. According to biblical records, God made even those whom he will later judge for the work they have done cooperate with him in accomplishment of his will (see Isa. 37:26ff.). Furthermore, cooperation with God can even occur through alienated forms of work, if the results are in accordance with God's will. Although the concept of new creation does demand striving to overcome alienation in work,³⁴ such nonalienated work is not a necessary precondition of human cooperation with God.

Cooperation in Transformation

There is another, more recent, theological tradition that bases theology of work on human proleptic cooperation in God's eschatological *transformatio mundi*. It includes the essential elements of the understanding of work as cooperation with God in preservation of creation and places them in the eschatological light of the promised new creation. True, the world is presently under the power of sin and is transitory. For that reason human work cannot create God's new world, no matter how noble human motives might be.³⁵ The description of the "New Jerusalem"—the new people of God—in Revelation makes this plain.³⁶ The New Jerusalem is the city (which stands for "the people") of God and comes "down out of heaven" (Rev. 21:2; cf. 1 Pet. 1:4; Matt. 25:34). As a divine creation

it is "a living hope" freed from all evil and corruptibility, and it infinitely transcends everything human beings can plan or execute.³⁷ The origin and character of the "New Jerusalem" show that the new creation as a whole is fundamentally a gift, and the primary human action in relation to it is not doing but "waiting" (2 Pet. 3:12; cf. Matt. 6:10; Rev. 22:17).

But one should not confuse waiting with inactivity. In the New Testament the injunction to wait eagerly for the kingdom is not opposed to the exhortation to *work diligently for the kingdom*. "Kingdom-participation" is not contrary, but complementary, to "kingdom-expectation" and is its necessary consequence.³⁸ Placed in the context of kingdom-participation, mundane human work for worldly betterment becomes a contribution—a limited and imperfect one in need of divine purification—to the eschatological kingdom, which will come through God's action alone. In their daily work human beings are "co-workers in God's kingdom, which completes creation and renews heaven and earth."³⁹

It might seem contradictory both to affirm human contribution to the future new creation and to insist that new creation is a result of God's action alone. The compatibility of both affirmations rests in the necessary distinction between God's eschatological action in history and his eschatological action *at the end of history*. Through the Spirit, God is already working in history, using human actions to create provisional states of affairs that anticipate the new creation in a real way. These historical anticipations are, however, as far from the consummation of the new creation as earth is from heaven. The consummation is a work of God alone. But since this solitary divine work does not obliterate but transforms the historical anticipations of the new creation human beings have participated in, one can say, without being involved in a contradiction, that human work is an aspect of active anticipation of the exclusively divine *transformatio mundi*.

Both the protological and the eschatological understanding of cooperation with God in daily work briefly analyzed above are valid theologically. One can develop a biblically responsible theology of work by using either an eschatological or a protological framework. For a number of reasons, however, I prefer the eschatological framework. Some of the reasons will become clear later, both through the critique of Luther's notion of vocation (which he

developed in a protological framework) and through the reasons to be given for the proposed pneumatological understanding of work.⁴⁰ Here I want to mention only four.

First, the eschatological nature of Christian existence makes it impossible, to my mind, to develop a theology of work simply within the framework of the doctrine of creation (protological framework).⁴¹ The second reason is the nature of the relation between the first and the new creation. True, because of the eschatological continuity, the new creation is not simply a negation of the first creation but is also its reaffirmation. For this reason we cannot construe a theology of work apart from the doctrine of creation.⁴² The new creation is, however, not a mere restoration of the first creation. "The redemption of the world, and of mankind, does not serve only to put us back in the Garden of Eden where we began. It leads us on to that further destiny to which, even in the Garden of Eden, we were already directed."⁴³ For this reason the doctrine of creation as such is an insufficient basis for developing a theology of work. It needs to be placed in the broad context of the (partial) realization and of the expectation of the new creation. A proponent of an eschatological theology of work will, therefore, not treat the protological and eschatological understandings of *cooperatio Dei* as alternatives. Rather, they complement each other. Since the new creation comes about through a transformation of the first creation, cooperation with God in the preservation of the world must be an integral part of cooperation with God in the transformation of the world.

The third reason for preferring the eschatological to the protological framework is the conceptual inadequacy of "protological" theologies of work for interpreting the modern work. For them, the ultimate purpose of human work as cooperation with God is the *preservation of the world*. Although much of human work has still the purpose of preserving workers and the world they live in, by using powerful modern technology, human beings not only maintain the world as their home but also radically alter the face of the earth. Modern work transforms the world as much as it preserves it, and it preserves it only by transforming it. The static framework of preservation cannot adequately incorporate this dynamic nature of human work (unless we use the framework of preservation to radically call into question the present results of human work and

limit the purpose of work to sustenance). Finally, the protological theologies of work tend to justify the *status quo* and hinder needed change in both microeconomic and macroeconomic structures by appealing to divine preservation of the world: as God the Creator preserves the world he has created, so also human beings in their work should strive to preserve the established order.

WORK AND THE DIVINE SPIRIT

A Pneumatological Theology of Work?

One cannot talk about the new creation without referring to the Spirit of God. For the Spirit, as Paul says, is the "firstfruits" or the "down payment" of the future salvation (see Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22) and the present power of eschatological transformation in them. In the Gospels, too, Spirit is the agent through which the future new creation is anticipated in the present (see Matt. 12:28). Without the Spirit there is no experience of the new creation! A theology of work that seeks to understand work as active anticipation of the *transformatio mundi* must, therefore, be a *pneumatological* theology of work.

Work and the Spirit

But what does the Spirit of God have to do with the mundane work of human beings? According to most of Protestant theology, very little. It has been "inclined to restrict the activity of the Spirit to the spiritual, psychological, moral or religious life of the individual."⁴⁴ One can account for this restriction by two consequential theological decisions. To use traditional formulations: first, the activity of the Spirit was limited to the sphere of salvation, and second, the *locus* of the present realization of salvation was limited to the human spirit. In another part of this book I will try to show that the Spirit of God is not only *spiritus redemptor* but also *spiritus creator*.⁴⁵ Thus when the Spirit comes into the world as Redeemer he does not come to a foreign territory, but "to his own home" (John 1:12)⁴⁶—the world's lying in the power of evil notwithstanding. Here, however, I want to discuss briefly the limitation of the Spirit's salvific operation on the human spirit. For my purposes, this is the crucial issue. The question of whether one can reflect on human work within the framework of the concept of the new

creation and develop a pneumatological theology of work depends on the question of whether the Spirit's salvific work is limited to the human spirit or extends to the whole of reality.

The exclusion of the human body and materiality in general from the sphere of salvation in Protestant thought⁴⁷ is well illustrated by Luther's *The Freedom of a Christian*, a "small book" that, in Luther's own opinion, nevertheless contained his view of "the whole of Christian life in a brief form."⁴⁸ Later Protestant theologians have followed Luther rather closely in regard to the materiality of salvation.⁴⁹ In *The Freedom of a Christian* Luther makes the well-known distinction between the "inner man" and the "outward man."⁵⁰ For the discussion of the materiality of salvation it is crucial to determine what, exactly, Luther means by these expressions. The matter is not as simple as it looks, because he equivocates and makes a *twofold* distinction in his use of those terms.⁵⁰

First, and most obviously, Luther makes an *anthropological* distinction. The exact nature of this anthropological distinction is not easy to establish. In particular, it is not clear what he means by the "inner man." Fortunately, Luther is very clear on what he means by the "outward man": it is the aspect of the human being that is sick or well, free or imprisoned, that eats or hungers, drinks or thirsts, experiences pleasure or suffers some external misfortune.⁵¹ The outward man is a person with respect to his bodily existence in the world. That leaves the inner man stripped of all corporeality as "the naked self which exists concealed in his [human being's] heart."⁵² Whatever "the naked self," or as Luther says, the "soul,"⁵³ is, one thing is certain: for Luther it does not denote a human being's bodily existence.

Superimposed on the anthropological distinction between inner and outward man is the second, *soteriological* distinction between "new man" and "old man." Significant for the study of the materiality of salvation is the fact that Luther applies the soteriological distinction between new and old only to the inner man. "*Outward man*" is and (until the day of the resurrection of the dead) will remain "*old man*"—in the case of both the Christian and the non-Christian. Only the inner man can become a new man. The anthropological *locus* of salvation is the inner man.⁵³ The outward man and the whole material reality remain outside the sphere of the salvific activity of God.⁵⁴

We need to look no further than the Gospels to see that the exclusion of materiality from the sphere of the present salvific activity of the Spirit is exegetically and theologically unacceptable. The Gospels widely use soteriological terminology (e.g., the term *sōzein*) to designate deliverance from the troubles and dangers of bodily life.⁵⁵ More significantly, they portray Jesus' healing miracles as signs of the inbreaking kingdom.⁵⁶ As deeds done in the power of the Spirit, healings are not merely symbols of God's future rule, but are anticipatory realizations of God's present rule. They provide tangible testimony to the materiality of salvation; they demonstrate God's desire to bring integrity to the whole human being, including the body, and to the whole of injured reality.⁵⁷ In a broken way—for healed people are not delivered from the power of death—healings done here and now through the power of the Spirit illustrate what will happen at the end of the age when God will transform the present world into the promised new creation.

When the ascended Christ gave the Spirit, he "released the power of God into history, power which will not abate until God has made all things new."⁵⁸ The Spirit of the new creation cannot be tied to the "inner man."⁵⁹ Because the whole creation is the Spirit's sphere of operation, the Spirit is not only the Spirit of religious experience but also the Spirit of worldly engagement. For this reason it is not at all strange to connect the Spirit of God with mundane work. In fact, an adequate understanding of human work will be hardly possible without recourse to pneumatology.⁵⁹

Work and Charisms

In a sense, a pneumatological understanding of work is not new. There are traces of it even in Luther. He discussed the *vocatio externa* not only in the context of the Pauline concept of the Body of Christ (which is closely related to Paul's understanding of charisms) but also—and sometimes explicitly—in the context of the gifts of grace: "Behold, here St. Peter says that the *graces and gifts* of God are not of one but of varied kind. Each one should understand what his gift is, and practice it and so be of use to others."⁶⁰

In recent years authors from various Christian traditions have suggested interpreting human work as an aspect of charismatic life.⁶¹ The document of the Vatican II *Gaudium et spes* contains probably the most notable example of a charismatic interpretation

of Christians' service to their fellow human beings through work: "Now, the gifts of the Spirit are diverse. . . . He summons . . . [people] to dedicate themselves to the earthly service of men and to make ready the material of the celestial realm by this ministry of theirs."⁶² To my knowledge, however, no one has taken up these suggestions and developed them into a consistent theology of work.

The pneumatological understanding of work I am proposing is an heir to the vocational understanding of work, predominant in the Protestant social ethic of all traditions.⁶³ Before developing a pneumatological understanding of work, it is therefore helpful to investigate both the strengths and weaknesses of the vocational understanding of work. Similarly to any other theory, a particular theology of work will be persuasive to the extent that one can show its theological and historical superiority over its rivals.

Work as Vocation

Both Luther and Calvin, each in his own way, held the vocational view of work. Since Luther not only originated the idea but also wrote on it much more extensively than Calvin, I will develop my theology of work in critical dialogue with Luther's notion of vocation (which differs in some important respects from Calvin's,⁶⁴ and even more from that of the later Calvinists).

The basis of Luther's understanding of vocation is his doctrine of justification by faith, and the occasion for its development, his controversy with medieval monasticism. One of Luther's most culturally influential accomplishments was to overcome the monastic reduction of *vocatio* to a calling to a particular kind of religious life. He came to hold two interrelated beliefs about Christian vocation: (1) *all* Christians (not only monks) have a vocation, and (2) *every type of work* performed by Christians (not only religious activity) can be a vocation. Instead of interpreting *vocatio* as a call of a select group within the larger Christian fellowship to a special kind of life, Luther spoke of the double vocation of every Christian: spiritual vocation (*vocatio spiritualis*) and external vocation (*vocatio externa*). Spiritual vocation is God's call to enter the kingdom of God, and it comes to a person through the proclamation of the Gospel. This call is common to all Christians and is for all Christians the same ("*communis et similis*").⁶⁵ External vocation is God's

call to serve God and one's fellow human beings in the world. It comes to a person through her station in life or profession (*Stand*).⁶⁶ This call, too, is addressed to all Christians, but to each one in a different way, depending on his particular station or profession ("*macht ein unterschied*").⁶⁷

In *Kirchenpostille 1522*—a work in which Luther uses "vocation" for the first time as a *terminus technicus* "for a purely secular activity"⁶⁸—Luther gives an explanation of external vocation while answering the question of someone who feels without a vocation: "What if I am not called? What should I do? Answer: How can it be that you are not called? You are certainly in a station (*Stand*), you are either a husband or a wife, son or daughter, male or female servant."⁶⁹ To be a husband, wife, child, or servant means to be called by God to a particular kind of activity, it means to have a vocation. When God's spiritual call through the proclamation of the gospel reaches a person in her station or profession, it transforms these into a vocation. The duties of the station become commandments of God to her. In this way, Luther links the daily work of every Christian inseparably with the center of Christian faith: for a Christian, work in every profession, and not only in ecclesiastical professions, rests on a divine calling.

Two important and related consequences follow from Luther's notion of vocation. These insights make up the *novum* of Luther's approach to human work. First, Luther's notion of vocation ascribed much greater value to work than was previously the case. As Weber rightly observed, Luther valued "the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume. . . . The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world."⁷⁰ Second, Luther's notion of vocation overcame the medieval hierarchy between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.⁷¹ Since every vocation rests on God's commission, every vocation is fundamentally of the same value before God.

Limits of the Vocational Understanding of Work

A responsible theology of work should seek to preserve Luther's insight into God's call to everyday work with its two consequences.

The way Luther (and especially later Lutheranism) developed and applied this basic insight is, however, problematic. Luther's notion of vocation has serious limitations, both in terms of its applicability to modern work, and in its theological persuasiveness.

Critique of Vocation

(1) Luther's understanding of work as vocation is *indifferent toward alienation* in work. In his view, two indispensable features sufficiently qualify a particular work theologically as vocation. The two features are the call of God and one's service to fellow human beings. The origin and purpose of work, not the inherent quality of work, define vocation. Hence it seems that virtually every type of work can be a vocation, no matter how dehumanizing it might be (provided that in doing the work one does not transgress the commandments of God).⁷² Although it could never be one's vocation to be a prostitute because it entails breaking God's commandment, the vocational understanding of work does not in any way prevent mindless work on the assembly line at a galloping pace from being considered as a vocation. Such broad applicability might seem a desirable feature for an understanding of work, especially since (as Calvin pointed out) it can give "singular consolation" to people whose work is "sordid and base."⁷³ But one can have broad applicability and the benefits of consolation only at the expense of the transforming potential for overcoming alienation in situations when transformation is both necessary and possible. If even the "fitting of a single straw" is a "completely divine"⁷⁴ work, there is no reason why the same description could not apply to the most degrading types of work in industrial and information societies.

(2) There is a *dangerous ambiguity* in Luther's notion of vocation. In his view, spiritual calling comes through the proclamation of the gospel, while external calling comes through one's station (*Stand*). It has proven difficult for Lutheran theology to reconcile the two callings in the life of an individual Christian when a conflict arises between them. "The history of Lutheranism as well as Lutheran ethics shows that Luther's bold identification of vocation [i.e., *vocatio externa*] with the call [i.e., *vocatio spiritalis*] led again and again to the integration of the call into vocation and vocation into occupation, and thus to the consecration of the *vocational-occupational*."

tional structure. "Vocation began to gain the upper hand over the call; the Word of God on the right (gospel) was absorbed by the word of God on the left (law)."⁷⁵

(3) The understanding of work as vocation is easily *misused ideologically*. As already indicated, Luther elevated work in every profession to the level of divine service.⁷⁶ The problem arises when one combines such a high valuation of work with both indifference to alienation and the identification of calling with occupation. Since the notion of vocation suggests that *every* employment is a place of service to God⁷⁷—even when human activity in work is reduced to "soulless movement"—this notion functions simply to enoble dehumanizing work in a situation where the quality of work should be improved through structural or other kinds of change. The vocational understanding of work provides no resources to foster such change.

(4) The notion of vocation is not applicable to the increasingly mobile industrial and information society. Most people in these societies do not keep a single job or employment for a lifetime, but often switch from one job to another in the course of their active life. The half-life of most job skills is dropping all the time, so they have to change jobs. And even if they could keep their jobs, they often feel that being tied down to a job is a denial of their freedom and of the opportunity for development. Industrial and information societies are characterized by a *diachronic plurality of employments or jobs* for their members. Luther's understanding of external vocation corresponds necessarily to the singleness and permanence of spiritual calling. As there is one irrevocable spiritual calling, so there must be one irrevocable external calling.

Given Luther's affirmation of the singleness and static nature of external vocation, it is easy to understand why he regularly relates his comments about external vocation to a conservative interpretation of the body of Christ and adds the injunction: "Let each one remain in his vocation, and live content with his gift."⁷⁸ The injunction to "remain" and "be satisfied" is a logical consequence of the notion of vocation.⁷⁹ To change one's employment is to fail to remain faithful to God's initial commandment. The only way to interpret change of employment positively and at the same time hold to the notion of vocation is to assume a diachronic plurality of external vocations. The soteriological meaning of vocation, which

serves as a paradigm for the socioethical understanding of vocation, however, makes such an assumption anomalous. For singularity and permanence are constitutive characteristics of the soteriological understanding of vocation.

(5) In industrial and information societies people increasingly take on more than one job or employment at the same time. *Synchronic plurality of employments or jobs* is an important feature of these societies. In Lutheran theology, *vocatio externa* as a rule refers to a single employment or job, which people hold throughout their lives. This corresponds, of course, to the singularity of *vocatio spiritualis*. Unlike much of Lutheran theology, Luther himself maintained that, since a person mostly belonged to more than one *Stand* (she might have been daughter, mistress, and wife, all at the same time), a person had more than one external vocation.⁸⁰ His sense of reality led him to break loose from the exegetical and dogmatic framework set up with the concept of vocation. He is more consistent with this concept when he exhorts a person not to "meddle" in another's vocation.⁸¹ Strictly speaking, one may take work to be *vocatio* only if one assumes that a Christian should have just one employment or job.⁸²

(6) As the nature of human work changed in the course of industrialization, vocation was reduced to gainful employment. Lutheran social ethic followed this sociological development and, departing from Luther but in analogy to the singularity of the *vocatio spiritualis*, reduced its notion of vocation to gainful employment.⁸³ The reduction of vocation to employment, coupled with the belief that vocation is the primary service ordinary people render to God, contributed to the modern fateful elevation of work to the status of religion. The religious pursuit of work plays havoc with the working individual, his fellow human beings, and nature.

Reinterpretation of Vocation?

In responding to these criticisms, one might be tempted to reinterpret the understanding of work as vocation in order to free it from theological inadequacies and make it more applicable to industrial and information societies. There are, however, both exegetical and theological arguments against doing so.

(1) Exegetes agree that Luther misinterpreted 1 Corinthians 7:20, the main proof text for his understanding of work. "*Calling* in this

verse is not calling *with* which, to which, or by which a man is called, but refers to the state in which he is *when* he is called to become a Christian.⁸⁴ Except in I Corinthians 7:20 (and possibly I Cor. 1:26), Paul and others who share his tradition use the term *klesis* as a *terminus technicus* for "becoming a Christian." As I Peter 2:9 shows, *klesis* encompasses both the call of God out of "darkness into his wonderful light" that constitutes Christians as Christians, and the call to conduct corresponding to this "light" (see I Pet. 1:15), which should characterize life of Christians.⁸⁵ Thus, when *klesis* refers not to becoming a Christian but to living as a Christian, it does not designate a calling peculiar to every Christian and distinguishing one Christian from another, as Luther claimed of *vocatio externa*. Instead, it refers to the quality of life that should characterize *all Christians as Christians*.

(2) Theologically it makes sense to understand work as *vocatio externa* only if one can conceive of this *vocatio* in analogy to *vocatio spiritualis*. One has to start with the singularity and permanence of *vocatio spiritualis*, which individualizes and concretizes itself in the process of human response in the form of a *singular and permanent* *vocatio externa*. Even Luther himself, in a social ethic designed for a comparatively static society, could not maintain this correspondence consistently. One could weaken the correspondence between *vocatio spiritualis* and *vocatio externa* and maintain that when the one call of God, addressing all people to become Christians, reaches each individual, it branches out into a plurality of callings for particular tasks.⁸⁶ I do not find it helpful, however, to deviate in this way from the New Testament and from a dogmatic soteriological use of *vocatio*, especially since the New Testament has a carefully chosen term—actually a *terminus technicus*—to denote the multiple callings of every Christian to particular tasks both inside and outside the Christian church. I refer to the term *charisma*.

I propose that a theology of charisms supplies a stable foundation on which we can erect a theology of work that is both faithful to the divine revelation and relevant to the modern world of work. In the following pages I will first give a theological reflection on the Pauline notion of *charisma*, and second apply it to a Christian understanding of work, while developing further the theology of charisms as the application demands.

A Theological Reflection on Charisms

In recent decades the subject of charisms has been the focus of lively discussion, both exegetical and theological. As I argue here briefly for a particular understanding of charisms, my purpose is not merely to analyze Paul's statements but to develop theologically some crucial aspects of his understanding of charisms, and in this way set up a backdrop for a theology of work.

(1) One should not define *charisma* so broadly as to make the term encompass the whole sphere of Christian ethical activity. E. Käsemann has argued that the whole ethical existence of the Christian, the *nova obœcœlenia*, is charismatic.⁸⁷ No doubt, the whole new life of a Christian must be viewed pneumatologically, but the question is whether it is legitimate to describe it more specifically as *charismatic*. I cannot argue for this point within the confines of a book on work,⁸⁸ but must simply assert that it seems to me more adequate to differentiate, with Paul, between the *gifts and the fruit* of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit designates the general character of Christian existence, "the lifestyle of those who are indwelt and energized by the Spirit."⁸⁹ The gifts of the Spirit are related to the specific tasks or functions to which God calls and fits each Christian.

(2) One should not define *charisma* so narrowly as to include in the term only ecclesiastical activities. One interpretation limits the sphere of operation of charisms to the Christian fellowship, insisting that one cannot understand "charismatically the various activities of Christians in relation to their non-Christian neighbors."⁹⁰ But, using individual charisms as examples, it would not be difficult to show the impossibility of consistently limiting the operation of charisms to the Christian church. The whole purpose of the gift of an evangelist (see Eph 4:11), for instance, is to relate the gospel to *non-Christians*. To take another example, it would be artificial to understand contributing to the needs of the destitute (see Rom 12:8) as *charisma* when exercised in relation to Christians but as simple benevolence when exercised in relation to non-Christians. As the firstfruits of salvation, the Spirit of Christ is not only active in the Christian fellowship but also desires to make an impact *on the world through* the fellowship.⁹¹ All functions of the fellowship—whether directed inward to the Christian community or outward to the world—are the result of the operation of the Spirit of God and are thus charismatic.

The place of operation does not define charisms, but the manifestation of the Spirit for the divinely ordained purpose.

(3) Charisms are not the possession of an elite group within the Christian fellowship. New Testament passages that deal with charisms consistently emphasize that charisms "are found throughout the Church rather than being restricted to a particular group of people."⁷² In the Christian fellowship as the Body of Christ there are no members without a function and hence also no members without a *charisma*. The Spirit, who is poured out upon all flesh (Acts 2:17ff.), imparts also charisms to all flesh: they are gifts given to the Christian community irrespective of the existing distinctions or conditions within it.⁷³

(4) The tendency to restrict charisms to an elite group within the Christian fellowship goes hand in hand with the tendency to ascribe an elite character to charisms. In widespread pneumatologies in which the Spirit's function is to negate, even destroy the worldly nature,⁷⁴ "charismatic" is very frequently taken to mean "extraordinary." Ecclesiologically we come across this restricted understanding of charisms in some Pentecostal (or "charismatic") churches that identify charismatic with the spectacularly miraculous.⁷⁵ A secular version of this "supernaturalistic reduction" confronts us in the commonly accepted Weberian understanding of *charisma* as an extraordinary quality of leadership that appeals to nonrational motives.⁷⁶ One of the main points of the Pauline theology of charisms is the overcoming of such a restrictive concentration on the miraculous and extraordinary. For this reason it is of great importance to keep the term *charisma* as a generic term for both the spectacular and the ordinary.⁷⁷

(5) Traditional view of the impartation of charisms can be described as the addition model: "the Spirit joins himself, as it were, to the person, giving 'something' new, a new power, new qualities."⁷⁸ It might, however, be better to understand the impartation of charisms according to the interaction model:⁷⁹ a person who is shaped by her genetic heritage and social interaction faces the challenge of a new situation as she lives in the presence of God and learns to respond to it in a new way. This is what it means to acquire a new spiritual gift. No substance or quality has been added to her, but a more or less permanent skill has been learned.

We can determine the relationship between calling and charisma in the following way: the general calling to enter the kingdom of God and to live in accordance with this kingdom that comes to a person through the preaching of the gospel becomes for the believer a call to bear the fruit of the Spirit, which should characterize all Christians, and, as they are placed in various situations, the calling to live in accordance with the kingdom branches out in the multiple gifts of the Spirit to each individual.

Work in the Spirit

But is there a connection between charismata and the mundane work? If there is, can a theology of work be based on a theology of charismata? And if it could, would such a theology of work have any advantages over the vocational understanding of work so that we could with good conscience leave the second in favor of the first? Can it be applied to work of non-Christians or is it a theology of work only for a Christian subculture? Does not a pneumatological understanding of work amount to theological ideology of human achievement? To these questions I now turn.

Theological Basis

If we must understand every specific function and task of a Christian in the church and in the world charismatically, then everyday work cannot be an exception. The Spirit of God calls, endows, and empowers Christians to work in their various vocations. The charismatic nature of all Christian activity is the *theological* basis for a pneumatological understanding of work.

There are also some *biblical* references that can be taken to suggest a pneumatological understanding of work. We read in the Old Testament that the Spirit of God inspired craftsmen and artists who designed, constructed, and adorned the tabernacle and the temple: "See, the Lord has chosen Bezalel . . . and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with skill, ability and knowledge in all kinds of crafts . . . and . . . the ability to teach others" (Exod. 35:2-3). "Then David gave his son Solomon . . . the plans of all that the Spirit had put in his mind for the courts of the temple of the Lord" (1 Chron. 28:11-12). Furthermore, judges and kings in Israel are

often said to do their tasks under the anointing of the Spirit of God (see Judg. 3:10; 1 Sam. 16:13; 23:2; Prov. 16:10).¹⁰⁰

As they stand, these biblical affirmations of the charismatic nature of human activity cannot serve as the basis for a pneumatological understanding of *all* work, for they set apart people gifted by the Spirit for various extraordinary tasks from others who do ordinary work. But we can read these passages from the perspective of the new covenant in which *all* God's people are gifted and called to various tasks by the Spirit. In this case they provide biblical illustrations for a charismatic understanding of the basic types of human work: intellectual (e.g. teaching) or manual (e.g. crafts) work, *poietis* (e.g. arts and crafts) or *praxis* (e.g. ruling). All human work, however complicated or simple, is made possible by the operation of the Spirit of God in the working person; and all work whose nature and results reflect the values of the new creation is accomplished under the instruction and inspiration of the Spirit of God (see Isa. 28:24-29).

Work as Cooperation with God

If Christian mundane work is work in the Spirit, then it must be understood as *cooperation with God*. *Charisma* is not just a call by which God bids us to perform a particular task, but is also an inspiration and a gifting to accomplish the task. Even when *charisma* is exercised by using the so-called natural capabilities, it would be incorrect to say that a person is "enabled" irrespective of God's relation to him. Rather, the enabling depends on the presence and activity of the Spirit. It is impossible to separate the gift of the Spirit from the enabling power of the Spirit.¹⁰¹ When people work exhibiting the values of the new creation (as expressed in what Paul calls the "fruit of the Spirit") then the Spirit works in them and through them.

The understanding of work as cooperation with God is implied in the New Testament view of Christian life in general. Putting forward his own Christian experience as a paradigm of Christian life, Paul said: "it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God" (Gal. 2:20). That Paul can in the same breath make such seemingly contradictory statements about the acting agent of Christian life ("I no longer live, *Christ lives in me*" and "*I live my life in the flesh*")

testifies unmistakably that the whole Christian life is a life of cooperation with God through the presence of the Spirit. A Christian's mundane work is no exception. Here, too, one must say: I work, and the Spirit of the resurrected Christ works through me.

Since the Spirit who imparts gifts and acts through them is "a guarantee" (2 Cor. 1:22; cf. Rom. 8:23) of the realization of the eschatological new creation, cooperation with God in work is prophetic cooperation with God in God's eschatological *transformatio mundi*. As the glorified Lord, Jesus Christ is "present in his gifts and in the services that both manifest these gifts and are made possible by them."¹⁰² Although his reign is still contested by the power of evil, he is realizing through those gifts his rule of love in the world. As Christians do their mundane work, the Spirit enables them to cooperate with God in the kingdom of God that "completes creation and renews heaven and earth."¹⁰³

A Pneumatological Approach to Work:

Does It Solve Anything?

In the last two chapters I will develop some of the most important aspects of a pneumatological understanding of work. Here I want to show that this understanding of work is not weighed down by the serious deficiencies of the vocational understanding of work.

(1) The pneumatological understanding of work is free from the portentous ambiguity in Luther's concept of vocation, which consists in the undefined relation between spiritual calling through the gospel and external calling through one's station. The resurrected Lord alone through the Spirit calls and equips a worker for a particular task in the world. Of course, neither the Spirit's calling nor equipping occur in a social and natural vacuum; they do not come, so to speak, directly from Christ's immaterial Spirit to the isolated human soul. They are mediated through each person's social interrelations and psychosomatic constitution. These mediations themselves result from the interaction of human beings with the Spirit of God. Yet charisms *remain different from their mediations* and should not be reduced to or confused with them.¹⁰⁴ For the Spirit who gives gifts "as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:11) by social and natural mediation is not the Spirit of human social structures or of a persons' psychosomatic makeup, but the Spirit of the crucified and resurrected Christ, the firstfruits of the new creation.

(2) The pneumatological understanding of work is *not as open to ideological misuse* as the vocational understanding of work.¹⁰⁵ It does not proclaim work meaningful without simultaneously attempting to humanize it. Elevating work to cooperation with God in the pneumatological understanding of work implies an obligation to overcome alienation because the individual gifts of the person need to be taken seriously. The point is not simply to interpret work religiously as cooperation with God and thereby glorify it ideologically, but to transform work into a charismatic cooperation with God on the "project" of the new creation.

(3) The pneumatological understanding of work is easily applicable to the increasing *diachronic plurality* of employments or jobs that characterize industrial and information societies. Unlike Christian calling, *charisma*—in the technical sense—is not "irrevocable" (see Rom. 11:29). True a person cannot simply pick and choose her *charisma*, for the sovereign Spirit of God imparts charisms "as he wills" (1 Cor. 12:11). But the sovereignty of the Spirit does not prohibit a person from "earnestly desiring" spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31; 14:1,12) and receiving various gifts at different times.¹⁰⁶ Paul presupposes both a diachronic and a synchronic plurality of charisms.

The diachronic plurality of charisms fits the diachronic plurality of employment or jobs in modern societies. Unlike in the vocational understanding of work, in the pneumatological understanding of work one need not insist that the occupational choice be a single event and that there be a single right job for everyone¹⁰⁷ (either because God has called a person to one job or because every person possesses a relatively stable pattern of occupational traits). People are freed for several consecutive careers in rapidly changing work environments; their occupational decisions need not be irrevocable commitments but can be repeatedly made in a continuous dialogue between their preferences and talents on the one hand, and the existing job opportunities on the other.¹⁰⁸

In any case, one can change jobs without coming under suspicion of unfaithfulness. If the change is in harmony with the *charisma* given, then changing can actually be an expression of faithfulness to God, who gave the *charisma* and readiness to serve fellow human beings in a new way. There is no need to worry that in the absence of a permanent calling, human life will be "turned topsy-turvy"¹⁰⁹

(as Calvin thought) or that human beings will "spend more time in idleness than at work"¹¹⁰ (as the Puritans feared). Rather, freedom from the rigidity of a single, permanent vocation might season with creativity and interrupt with rest the monotonous lives of modern workaholics.

(4) It is also easy to apply the pneumatological understanding of work to the *synchronic plurality* of jobs or employments. In Paul's view every Christian can have more than one *charisma* at any given time. His aim is that Christians "excel in gifts" (1 Cor. 14:12), provided they exercise them in interdependence within the community and out of concern for the common good. The pneumatological understanding of work frees us from the limitation of being able to theologially interpret only a single employment of a Christian (or from the limitation of having to resort to a different theological interpretation for jobs that are not primary). In accordance with the plurality of charisms, there can be a plurality of employments or jobs without any one of them being regarded theologially as inferior, a mere "job on the side." The pneumatological understanding of work is thus also open to a redefinition of work, which today's industrial and information societies need.¹¹¹

Spirit and Work in *Regnum Naturae*

As I have sketched it, the pneumatological understanding of work is clearly a theology of *Christian* work. The significance and meaning of Christians' work lie in their cooperation with God in the anticipation of the eschatological *transformatio mundi*. The power enabling their work and determining its nature is the Holy Spirit given when they responded in faith to the call of God in Christ.

But what about the work of non-Christians? Traditionally theologians simply bypassed the issue as uninteresting. Although Luther, for instance, did not apply the concept of vocation to the work of non-Christians,¹¹² he reflected little in his writings on the theological significance of their work. This is understandable, given the identity of church and society in the *Corpus Christianum* that Luther and other seminal theologians of the past presupposed. In much of the world throughout history, however, church and society were never identified, and the cradle of the *Corpus Christianorum* is becoming its grave: in the Western world a clear and ir retrievable

separation between church and society is taking place. Since Christians today live in religiously pluralistic societies, their theologies of work must incorporate reflection on the work of non-Christians. Hence my next step is to indicate the implications of a pneumatological theology of work for understanding non-Christians' work.

What is the relation of the work of non-Christians to the new creation? The answer to this question is implicit in the way I have determined the relation between the present and the future orders. If the world will be transformed, then the work of non-Christians has in principle the same ultimate significance as the work of Christians: insofar as the results of non-Christians' work pass through the purifying judgment of God, they, too, will contribute to the future new creation. In Revelation one reads that the kings of the earth and the nations will bring their splendor, glory, and honor into the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:24, 26). It makes perhaps the best sense to take this enigmatic statement to mean that all pure and noble achievements of non-Christians will be incorporated in the new creation.

But is it possible to understand the work of non-Christians *pneumatologically*? Charisms are specifically ecclesiastical phenomena. They are gifts given to those who acknowledge Jesus as Lord. How, then, can anything we learned about the nature of work from the theology of *charisms* apply to the work of non-Christians? The answer depends on how we conceive of the relationship between the Spirit of God and the non-Christians. I can only sketch an approach to this extremely complex and not sufficiently investigated subject here.

First, if we affirm that Christ is the Lord of all humanity—indeed, of the whole universe—and not only of those who profess him as their Lord, and that he rules through the power of the Spirit, then we must also assume that the Spirit of God is active in some way in all people, not only in those who consciously live in the Spirit's life-giving power. As Basil of Caesarea observes in his *De Spiritu Sancto*, creation possesses nothing—no power, no motivation, or ingenuity needed for work—that it did not receive from the Spirit of God.¹¹³ There is hence an important sense in which all human work is done "in the power of the Spirit."

Second, one and the same Spirit of God is active both in the Church and in the world of culture. As the firstfruits of the new

creation, the Spirit is active in the Church, redeeming and sanctifying the people of God. In the world of culture the Spirit is active sustaining and developing humanity. The difference in the activity of the Spirit in these two realms lies not so much in the different purposes of the Spirit with the two groups of human beings, as in the nature of the receptivity of human beings. Third, the goal of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world is the same: the Spirit strives to lead both the realm of nature (*regnum naturae*) and the realm of grace (*regnum gratiae*) toward their final glorification in the new creation (*regnum gloriae*).¹¹⁴

Since in the realm of grace the Spirit is active as the firstfruits of the coming glory, which is the goal of the realm of nature, we must think of the Spirit's activity in the realm of nature as analogous to its activity in the realm of grace. What can be said of the work of Christians on the basis of the biblical understanding of charisms can also be said by analogy of the work of non-Christians. Revelation of the future glory in the realm of grace is the measure by which events in the realm of nature must be judged. To the extent that non-Christians are open to the prompting of the Spirit, their work, too, is the cooperation with God in anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world, even though they may not be aware of it.

A CHRISTIAN IDEOLOGY OF WORK?

Work as cooperation with God in the eschatological transformation of the world! Work in the Spirit! These are lofty words about human work. But is it not true that work reflects not only the glory of human cooperation with God but also the misery of human rebellion against God? This is, indeed, a testimony of Genesis 2 through 3, which explains how pleasant work in a garden (2:15) became futile toil outside of it (3:17ff.). The experience of most working people confirms it. The statement Wolterstorff makes about art is *a fortiori* true of work: it "reeks of murder, and oppression, and enslavement, and nationalism, and idolatry, and racism, and sexism."¹¹⁵

Given the drudgery of much of modern work, the exploitation of workers, and the destruction of nature through human work, does

not the talk about working in the Spirit and about the eschatological significance of work sound suspect? Does it not amount to a glorification of work that conceals the debasement of workers? Is a theology of work only an ideology of work in disguise?

God's Judgment of Human Work

The understanding of work as cooperation with God in the *transformatio mundi* is not a general theory of all human work. It is not applicable to every type of work and to every way of working, for the simple reason that the new creation will not incorporate everything found in the present creation. When God creates a new world he will not indiscriminately affirm the present world. Such promiscuous affirmation would be the cheapest of all graces, and hence no grace at all. The realization of the new creation cannot bypass the Judgment Day, a day of negation of all that is negative in the present creation.¹¹⁶

Paul's reflection on the ultimate significance of missionary work in the face of God's judgment (1 Cor. 3:12-15) might give us a clue to understanding God's judgment in relation to human work in general. Like the test of fire, God's judgment will bring to light the work that has ultimate significance since it was done in cooperation with God. Like gold, silver, and precious stones (see 1 Cor. 3:12), such work will survive the fire purified. But the Judgment Day will also plainly reveal the work that was ultimately insignificant because it was done in cooperation, not with God, but with the demonic powers that scheme to ruin God's good creation. Like wood, hay, and straw, such work will burn up, for "nothing that is impure will ever enter" the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:27). Every understanding of work as cooperation with God that does not include the theme of judgment is inadequate. As we have to pattern our work according to the values of the new creation, so we also have to criticize it in the light of the eschatological judgment.

In relation to God's judgment on human work, it is important to distinguish between what might be called the moral and the ontological value of human work. I have already argued against ascribing eschatological significance merely to the attitude of love exhibited in work.¹¹⁷ It would also be insufficient to attach eschatological significance only to the results of work done in love.¹¹⁸ Man's envy of

his neighbor" (Eccles. 4:4), as the realistic ecclesiast puts it, spurs him on to many of the best human achievements. Do they lose their inherent value because they were done out of ethically impure motives? Every noble result of human work is ultimately significant. It is possible that the fire of judgment will not only burn up the results of work, the worker herself escaping "the flames" (1 Cor. 3:15),¹¹⁹ but that the flames of "the absolutely searching and penetrating love of God"¹²⁰ will envelop the evil worker while her work is purified and preserved.

The reality of Judgment makes it clear that relating human work positively to God's new creation does not amount to an ideological glorification of work. It lies in the affirmation that the work has meaning in spite of the transitoriness of the world. If human work is in fact "chasing after wind" (Eccles. 4:4)—whether or not one experiences it subjectively as meaningful—it is not so because of the transitoriness of the world, but because of the evilness of the work. All work that contradicts the new creation is meaningless; all work that corresponds to the new creation is ultimately meaningful. This should serve as an encouragement to all those "good workers" who see themselves in the tragic figure of Sisyphus. In spite of all appearances, their work is not just rolling a heavy rock up a hill in this earthly Hades; they are preparing building blocks for the glorified new creation. Furthermore, all those weighed down by the toil that accompanies most of human work can rest assured that their sufferings "are not worth comparing with the glory" of God's new creation they are contributing to (Rom. 8:18).

Work Against the Spirit

What is the relationship between the Spirit of God and the work that deserves God's judgment? There is a sense in which all human work is done in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit is the giver of all life, and hence all work, as an expression of human life, draws its energy out of the fullness of divine Spirit's energy. When human beings work, they work only because God's Spirit has given them power and talents to work. To express the same thought in more traditional terminology, without God's constant preserving and sustaining grace, no work would be possible.

But a person can misuse his gifts and exercise them against God's

will. Through his work he can destroy either human or natural life and hence contradict the reality of the new creation, which preserves the old creation in transfigured form. The circumstance that the gifts and energies that the Spirit gives can be used against the will of the Spirit results from the Spirit's condescension in history: by giving life to the creation, the Spirit imparts to the creation the power for independence from the Spirit's prompting. Because the Spirit creates human beings as free agents, work in the power of the Spirit can be done not only in accordance with but also in contradiction to the will of the Spirit; it can be performed not only in cooperation with the Holy Spirit who transforms the creation in anticipation of the glorious new creation, but also in collaboration with that Unholy Spirit who strives to ravage it.

CHAPTER 5

Work, Human Beings, and Nature

The basic contention of the previous chapter and the main thesis of this book is that Christians should understand their mundane work as "work in the Spirit": the Spirit of God calls and gifts people to work in active anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world. But what does that mean concretely? What view of work and of human beings do we get when we apply Pauline teaching on charisms to mundane work? From a pneumatological perspective, how should we conceive of the relationship of work to leisure, to human needs, and to nature? How does this view of work deal with the problem of alienation and the humanization of work? In the remainder of the book I will attempt to answer these questions.

A comprehensive theology of work would need to discuss these issues much more exhaustively than I am able to do here. If I were to attempt to develop a full-blown theology of work, I would far exceed the limits of this book. What I intend to do here is only to sketch some basic aspects of work's relation to human beings—to their nature, their needs, and their other significant activities—and to their natural environment.¹ I will deal first with the question of