

ARMITAGE LECTURE : SHORE SCHOOL DR TREVOR COOLING – 19.9.2008

SETTING THE VISION : THE CALLING OF THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

THE SACRED-SECULAR DIVIDE

Is problematic. Mediaeval idea of work scorned ordinary work and established sacred ministry dichotomy.

Research - 17% only of Christians found church supported them in daily work. Ministry in ordinary life seen as just job.

There is belief faith based scholarship not credible and is inconsistent with academic objectivity.

TEACHING AS A CHRISTIAN CALLING

Theological colleges rate ordained ministry more highly. Can be strong sense dislocation, or divided self

- 40% teachers in UK who trained in 2006 not teaching one year later (but only 5% doctors 10 years after)
Reasons:
 - lack of sense of skills and qualifications
 - can lead to crisis of faith - dissonance inner calling and realities working life as teacher
- teachers' inner life and emotional state are what count in changing profession, including basic beliefs.

WHAT IS IT TO BE CALLED?

Primary and secondary callings

- primary is calling to be faithful to God
- secondary is means by which express incl. career.

To treat job as primary calling is mistake; to change one's job is not to change one's primary calling.

Fit and Fulfilment

- fit is match personality and ability with job requirements
- fulfilment is match passion and job.

Calling exists when fit and fulfilment match

Theology of work and spiritual gifts

- work becomes vocation when enabled draw on and use Christian gifts given by God
- Christian duty discover and utilise gifts God given
 - more do this, more fulfil primary calling, in vocation in life.
- can do by examining gifts, not just reflecting on life setting

This makes seeking vocation the responsibility of every Christian.

No good arguing God called to teaching if don't have gifts.

TEACHING AS CALLING

Five key issues:

1. Teaching needs honouring as Christian ministry. Is challenging, cross-cultural Christian task. Training needed.
2. If to take seriously teaching as Christian vocation, must stop saying church-based ministry is more significant.
3. Vocation as fulfilling our gifts needs to be supported. Is quiz on Transforming Lives website that helps people check gifts.
4. Discovering own vocation is a lifelong journey.
5. Teachers need support. View that church is where life really happens is problematic but common.

VOCATION AS CHRISTIAN TRANSFORMATION

Through work, humans can contribute in modest and broken way to God's creation.

Teachers' work is very important as has eternal consequences

- witness → salvation
- work shaped by understanding of doctrine of last things, especially bodily resurrection
 - with Jesus, future hope has come forward into present (Tom Wright, *Surprised by Hope*)

Christian teachers are agents of transformation.

- Distinctive or unique
 - am I being faithful is more important than am I being different.

DANIEL

Like him, Christians increasingly aliens

How be faithful to God amidst godlessness?

How avoid assimilation?

World increasingly embraces values of celebrity society and me focus

Was in thick of things, not sitting around lamenting state of society

In culture not sharing our worldview, can be salt and light.

CRITIQUE – DR BILL SALIER

No secondary calling notion in New Testament

Is not individual's responsibility to determine fit but community's

Idea of fulfilment draws too much from self-actualisation, me at centre culture

Work is dominion from creation, and due to sin is toil, and will be frustrating (Eccles.)

Is danger that fulfilment will determine fit.

John Collier