



Faith in Business

quarterly

The Journal of the Ridley Hall Foundation and Industrial Christian Fellowship (ICF)



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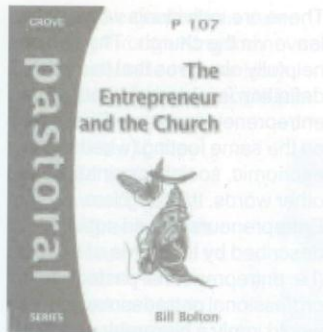
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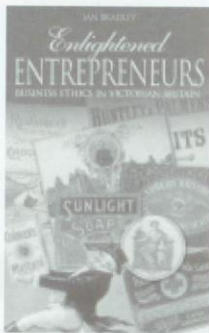
Volume 11.2
ISSN 1369-635X



The Entrepreneur and the Church

Grove Books Limited, 2006, 28 pp., £2.95
ISBN 1 85174 634 X

by Bill Bolton



Enlightened Entrepreneurs: Business Ethics in Victorian Britain

Lion Hudson, 2007 (first published in 1987), 211 pages, £9.99
ISBN 978 0 7459 5271 0

by Ian Bradley

reviewed by Richard J. Goossen

The two publications that are the subject of this review should both be of interest to people who are striving to practice their faith in the marketplace.

The first, a short booklet of only 28 pages, is written by Dr. Bill Bolton, a Lay Reader in the Chelmsford Diocese who has served on the General Synod and is described on the back cover as an 'international consultant in enterprise development and entrepreneurship'. The other is a 211-page book written by Ian Bradley, a Reader in Church History and Practical Theology at the University of St. Andrews and

the Associate Minister of Holy Trinity Church, St. Andrews.

Beyond the connection of the two publications through relating to entrepreneurship, they are quite different in terms of scope and content.

The Entrepreneur and the Church is one of the Grove Booklets series that claim to be 'fast moving explorations of Christian life and ministry' and 'written by practitioners, not theorists.' The booklet is an interesting and brief primer and Bolton is clearly an experienced entrepreneurship consultant.

The booklet consists of 8 brief chapters that develop the author's thesis of *the entrepreneurial imperative*. Bolton argues that

"Releasing the entrepreneurial talent among God's people is the greatest task facing the church today. It is the Entrepreneurial Imperative... The aim of this booklet is to help you understand this imperative and then to do something about it" (p.4).

Bolton provides a description of 'our entrepreneurial heritage.' At this point he should have defined what he means by entrepreneurship. Within both academic and trade literature, the meaning of the term has been widely debated and variously defined. The lack of a definitional reference point undercuts his subsequent discussion.

Bolton makes the following references to entrepreneurial

heritage: there is a 'strong entrepreneurial theme running through the Bible', 'Noah took instructions from his entrepreneurial God' and Jacob "fits the entrepreneurial stereotype" (p.5). Several Old Testament characters are described as entrepreneurial by using terminology like 'risk taker', "positive", 'innovative' and "gathered a team". While these descriptions may have a mustard seed of truth, without a clear definition of entrepreneurship there is no clarity or unity among these comments. In a longer



■ Paul, Entrepreneur ■

book format, a more detailed description of this entrepreneurial heritage could be very enlightening. But without the proper context, many of the author's bold statements stand as opinions unsupported by explanation. Bolton notes, for example, that 'Paul was the church's first real entrepreneur' (p.6). The reader is left to guess at what is meant by this statement.

Approximately half way through the booklet, the author defines his meaning of an entrepreneur. He

offers a definition devised by himself and Prof. John Thompson: "An entrepreneur is a person who habitually creates and innovates to build something of recognised value around perceived opportunities" (p.12). While this definition captures the aspect of innovation, it is too narrow. For example, beyond 'habitual' (sometimes referred to as 'serial entrepreneurs'), there are so-called 'in-and-outers' and those who make a career change to entrepreneurship later in life after having been downsized.

The author then discusses different forms of capital. Beyond economic capital, he explains the notion of Social capital as "a set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permits cooperation among them" (p.19). He next describes 'spiritual capital' as "All the Father's riches made available to the disciples of his Son, Jesus Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer" (p.21). The use of the term 'spiritual' is troublesome as in many contexts it refers to a generic, neutral (and clearly non-Christian) adherence to an external form of meaning. Nonetheless, the author draws on Francis Fukuyama to highlight an important concept, that economic capital is enhanced by social capital, which is further developed by spiritual capital. He concludes, "We thus have a cascade of capital from spiritual to social to economic" (p.22).

The author next proposes the term 'Kingdom Entrepreneur'.

These are individuals who can be leaven in the church. The author helpfully observes that this definition is intended to put all entrepreneurs who are Christians on the same footing (whether economic, social or spiritual). In other words, the Kingdom Entrepreneurs should not be described by their area of activity (i.e. entrepreneurial pastor, professional or tradesman) as this would imply a hierarchy of calling. Instead, they can all be 'Kingdom Entrepreneurs'.

Bolton's experience (which underscores the value of a



■ Jacob, Entrepreneur ■

practitioner's approach) is reflected in his discussion of the challenge for Kingdom Entrepreneurs. He cites two issues for Kingdom Entrepreneurs: taking advantage of situations and the controlling facet of ego (e.g. Jacob). He suggests that growth-oriented entrepreneurs should reflect on what they are building and for whom. "Entrepreneurs have to come to the point where they recognize that the enterprise they are building is not theirs but the Lord's" (pp.24-5).

Bolton concludes in his final chapter that "the church and its

associated organizations came into being through Kingdom Entrepreneurs led by the Holy Spirit. These are the people that we need to re-engage with if we are to meet the challenges of today's world" (p.26). While I agree with this conclusion, insufficient groundwork has been laid for such a sweeping statement.

The back cover of the book uses the Grove tag line: 'Not the last word...but often the first'. In short, *The Entrepreneur and the Church* is a worthwhile booklet to the extent it offers some valuable insights and may lead some readers to consider the role of entrepreneurs in the church more carefully and prod them to action.

The book by Ian Bradley is superficially connected to the first through the use of 'entrepreneur' in the title. It features biographical summaries of ten Victorian industrialists: Thomas Holloway; Sir Titus Salt; Samuel Morley; George Palmer; Jeremiah James Colman; Andrew Carnegie; George Cadbury; Joseph Rowntree; Jesse Boot; and William Hesketh Lever. They are well-known for their dynamic impact on the manufacturing of confectionery, pharmacy, steel and textiles, among many other business sectors. Bradley notes in his Introduction that "common to all of them was an ability to seize on some

relatively simple technique which had not been tried before and which brought spectacular results" (p.10).



■ William Hesketh Lever ■

The author highlights five themes among these Victorian industrialists. First, their humanitarian bias. Six of the ten Victorian industrialists moved their workers from inner cities to better

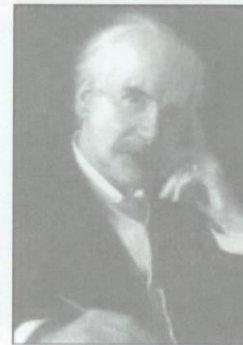
housing. Bradley explains that "Although Andrew Carnegie would hardly be said to be a model enlightened employer and the evidence about Thomas Holloway's treatment of his workforce is too scanty for us to be able to pass judgment, the other eight industrialists featured in this book showed an active and practical concern for their workers which was quite remarkable in its scope and which has been matched by few employers since" (p.11). Second, the industrialists were "...very democratic and even egalitarian in their attitudes" (p.11). They generally lived modest lives, didn't pursue social

engagements and spent money on others. Thirdly, "The business of giving money away was a dominant occupation...they shared a conviction that they held their wealth as trustees and that it should be used for the good of the community as a whole" (p.12).



■ Jeremiah James Colman ■

Fourth, the author delves into the motivations of the Victorian industrialists. He explains that "Two belief systems, one political and the other religious, underlay both their commercial enterprise and their philanthropic enlightenment" (p.12). The author explains that most of the Victorian Industrialists were impacted by Victorian Liberalism and Protestant Christianity. He thinks that "the former exerted a stronger hold..." (p.12). Fifth, the author references the role of the Nonconformist conscience. He explains that, "For more powerful even than their Liberal principles were the promptings of



■ Jesse Boot ■

their Nonconformist consciences" (p.13). This, however, seems to contradict the earlier statement from page 12. He notes that only two of the Victorian industrialists were outside the Nonconformist fold (Holloway of the Church of England and Carnegie of indeterminate faith).

The book usefully summarises some interesting information about some memorable individuals from a bygone era, but has a number of shortcomings.

First, despite the title of 'Enlightened Entrepreneurs' the

concept of entrepreneurship and the meaning of an 'entrepreneur' is not directly addressed anywhere in the book. In fact, the word 'entrepreneur' is not even cited in the Index. The first reference to the ten individuals featured in this book is a reference to them as 'Victorian industrialists' (p.9). The author later refers to them as 'enlightened entrepreneurs', without any explanation as to the meaning of either 'enlightened' or



■ Andrew Carnegie ■

'entrepreneur'. Lever, the last featured industrialist, is described as a "man who in every respect fits into the mould of an enlightened Victorian entrepreneur" (p.178). There is still no definition of entrepreneur.

Second, an immediate issue with any book featuring a limited number of individuals is to be convinced of the validity of the selection process. The author does not adequately address this issue; in fact, the differences

among the group are regularly pointed out. The result is that the 'enlightened entrepreneurs' do not have sufficient specific similarities to provide a reasonable basis for insights. The ten industrialists are from diverse religious backgrounds; and, in fact, some have little religious inclination. The frustration for a reader is that without a clear case for the selection of individuals, noting specific beliefs and then tracing those in the practice of their business, we cannot understand the link between the source of their 'enlightenment' (whether faith or a generic belief system) and their specific actions.

Third, there are contradictory references to the Victorian industrialists throughout the book. The author claims that "there could hardly be better exemplars of those Protestant virtues than our ten enlightened entrepreneurs". He doesn't explain, however, how Holloway and Carnegie were exemplars of Protestant virtues. The author later notes with respect to Holloway that, "...religion does not seem to have been the driving force either in his working life or in his philanthropic activities" (p.19).

Fourth, while the sub-title of the book refers to 'business ethics', the topic is never addressed. The author refers to 'ethics' only once at the start of the book (p.9) but never picks up the topic again. While the book has an Introduction which highlights

some of the themes of the book, there is no proper conclusion. A paragraph tacked on to the final profile in the book appears to be a *de facto* conclusion for the book (pp.203-4).

While the author concludes that we still have much to learn today from the Victorian industrialists,



■ Thomas Holloway ■

the reader has not been presented with compelling analytical insights. The book—and this should be reflected in a more appropriate title—is essentially a collection of brief biographies of ten successful Victorian industrialists (many of whose brand names are still recognisable today) who made a significant social impact. Nevertheless, the book will have achieved a valuable purpose if it provides some inspiration to present-day business people from this "golden age of private philanthropy in Britain" (p.17). ■

Richard J. Goossen

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