

God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement

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David Miller, Executive Director of the Yale Center for Faith & Culture at Yale Divinity School and Assistant Professor (Adjunct) of Business Ethics, spent sixteen years in senior executive positions in international business and finance prior to going into the academic world. He is an ordained Presbyterian minister (USA) and received a M.Div. and a Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary. This book builds off his excellent 2003 doctoral dissertation.

Miller's unique background puts him in good position to offer a very helpful and thorough analysis of the Faith at Work (FAW) movement. This is a scholarly book that is focused on the U.S. context. It gives an in-depth history of FAW as well as constructive critiques and prescriptive ideas for the movement. Miller also addresses the inadequate response of the church and academia to the movement as well as faith-work integration in general. The book is a good read for academicians or serious practitioners who would like a deep understanding of the faith at work movement and its related issues.

The book has eight chapters. In chapter 1, Miller gives an introduction to FAW and defines its key terms. Faith is used in order to transcend the various controversies over the implications of religion and spirituality. Work is human activity that has extrinsic and intrinsic value and can be done for remuneration or not. However, Miller says in the current FAW movement work essentially relates to jobs or remunerated employment. He says FAW is a bona fide social movement because it contains the three commonly accepted components of a movement, namely (1) loose network of people, (2) reaction against something unsatisfactory, and (3) grounded in a common identity or organizing principle. FAW is (1) a loose network of individuals and organizations, (2) is reacting against the church's inadequate response to life in the marketplace, and (3) is based on the common desire to integrate faith and work and live a meaningful, holistic life.

In chapters 2 and 3, Miller traces FAW's historical development from the late nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. Chapter 2 deals with what is referred to as the Social Gospel era (also referred to as wave one) from 1890 to 1945. Sociologists have identified three orientations

toward the spiritual and the material: compartmented, harmonious and conflictual. Miller identifies three substreams of the Social Gospel Era: (1) conservative social Christianity, (2) radical social Christianity and (3) progressive social Christianity. Conservative social Christianity stressed individual conversion and leads to a compartmented view of faith-work issues. Radical social Christianity is the opposite and focuses almost solely on society; this leads to a conflictual view. Progressive social Christianity works for the transformation of the individual and society, thus producing a harmonious view. He cites Walter Rauschenbusch, the primary architect of the Social Gospel, as the person who came closest to presenting a harmonious view. This time period also saw the development of three streams important to FAW: (1) the Social Gospel, (2) special-purpose groups, and (3) the popularization of Jesus.

Chapter 3 discusses the period that Miller calls the Ministry of the Laity Era (wave two) from 1946 to 1980. This era is marked by a shift from institutional church and an emphasis on the ministry of laypeople. During this time the harmonious orientation (described above) waned in influence and was replaced by increasing emphasis on conflictual understandings that led to more compartmentalized views. However, this time period saw rise of a fourth orientation—integration. There were three general streams of FAW activity: (1) the ecumenical movement (the Bossey Institute in Switzerland), (2) special purpose lay ministry groups, and (3) the popularization of lay ministry. He closely discusses special interest groups such as The Full Gospel Businessmen’s Fellowship International and the Fellowship of Christian Companies International as well as leading lay thinkers like Anglican Mark Gibbs, Lutheran William Diehl, and Southern Baptist Howard Butt. Despite increased awareness, the movement faltered during this time for a variety of reasons (six are given on pp. 59–60).

Chapter 4 covers what Miller calls the Faith at Work era. He considers the era to have started in the mid-1980s and to be gaining significant momentum today. Miller does not point to a specific date or singular reason for the rise of FAW; rather, it is the result of the compilation of a variety of economic, social, technological and religious factors. Wave three is marked by a quest for integration. There are four major types of integration (referred to as the Four E’s): (1) ethics, (2) evangelism (or expression), (3) experience, (4) enrichment. This means, for example, the ethics type sees their faith as integrating with their work in that biblical ethics are a basis for practical application at work. The evangelism type sees the workplace as a mission field for verbally proclaiming their faith to non-Christian colleagues. The experience type sees work as something of intrinsic theological value; as such it is a spiritual experience. The

enrichment type has a more inward focus. He or she seeks spiritual growth, sometimes almost therapeutic, from small groups within the workplace.

Chapter 5 addresses the inadequate response of the church and the academy. When there has been a response, it is generally focused on macroeconomics and with general suspicion of capitalism and its participants. Residual effects of Christian socialism and liberation theology, among other things, are part of the reason. He says Christian universities are not addressing faith-work integration and appear unaware of the issues. He notes that conservative, evangelical schools are more likely to see the relevance of theology to work. Miller points out that ironically FAW has been more accepted by the Academy of Management. The result has been that Christians are not taught by their pastors and feel a genuine disconnect between their faith and their work.

In chapter 6, Miller makes his case that FAW should be sociologically considered a movement. Primarily he cites the confessional range of its participants as well as the response at seminars and growth of special interest groups. He also cites many of the more influential articles and books.

Chapter 7 constructs and proposes a new framework and language for FAW. Miller uses the Four E's (from chapter 4). He says that most people have a natural orientation to one of these modalities. He also asserts that the language of the Four E's can be helpful for Christians to understand their orientations as well as to explain to non-Christian colleagues and employers their desire to live a holistic life in which their faith is integrated with their work.

Chapter 8 follows with constructive critiques of the present movement and prescriptive ideas for the future. Primarily, he calls on seminaries to train pastors on faith-work issues and to start research centers dedicated to FAW. He says clergy should seek to minister in the workplace (comparing this to ministry in hospital wards). Finally, he points to further research that is needed on the topic.

This book should be of interest to economists interested in knowing more about the various intersections of our faith and our work. It is a tremendous resource for those who would like to become more informed about and perhaps involved with interdisciplinary approaches addressing faith-work issues. I have done extensive reading on this topic for several years and was amazed at the bibliographic resources and depth of the book.

Miller does a good job of fairly representing the various intents and theological traditions of people in FAW and this work is honestly ecumenical. I would have preferred to see suggestions for the future of the

movement that were not so limited to the seminary or professional ministers arena. For example, how should Christian universities be engaging these issues in their business programs? What about interdisciplinary interaction between business and economics professors with theologians and professors of mission? What can be done outside of the church leadership realm to further and support this promising movement? Discussions on these questions would have been helpful and appropriate.

Nevertheless, the book is fully recommended for those interested in the topic. Though *God at Work* may be considered by some to be heavy on theology and contains little in terms of macro- or microeconomics, it nevertheless lays a solid foundation for practitioners and academicians alike who are serious about these concerns. It will serve faith-work integrationists as a valuable resource for years to come.

Reference

Miller, David. 2003. *The Faith at Work Movement: Its Growth, Dynamics, and Future*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton Theological Seminary. ■