

# FAITHFUL LIVES

Christian Reflections on the World – Faithful Work



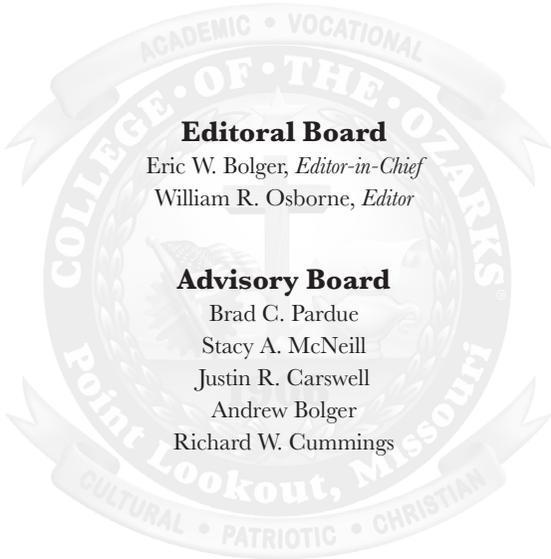
# FAITHFUL LIVES



Christian Reflections on the World – Faithful Work

The mission of College of the Ozarks is to provide the advantages of a Christian education for youth of both sexes, especially those found worthy, but who are without sufficient means to procure such training.

*Faithful Lives: Reflections on the World* is an annual journal produced by College of the Ozarks. The goal of the publication is to foster deep and substantive Christian thought in all areas of life by publishing articles that assume and explore the truthfulness of the Christian worldview perspective.



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# From the Editors

“One thing conservative Christians don’t seem to realize is that [the] Bible clearly sees work as a curse (see Genesis story) & not a good thing,” tweeted a senior editor of a major news publication earlier this year. Being taken aback by the absolute lack of biblical knowledge revealed in this statement, I perused the unending stream of replies and then breathed a deep sigh of relief. Thankfully, thoughtful responses from concerned Christians addressed this falsity with fervor. It was evident the author of the tweet had clearly neglected the issue of work as it is addressed in the Bible, but it was equally clear that there were many who had thought deeply about the issue.

The last three decades have seen a true resurgence in vocation theology, resulting in Christians who are well-equipped to correct assumptions like the one above. From monographs to conferences, think tanks to sermon series, the topic of work has invaded Christian worldview thinking. Despite this widespread progress in thinking “Christianly” about work, sadly, a true Christian understanding of work still evades many.

While the topic of work has only recently garnered the attention it deserves in the evangelical Christian world, it is not new to Christian thought. Some of the greatest minds of the last two thousand years have wrestled with the questions of how creation, the image of God, Christian calling, Christ’s death and resurrection, the Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the new heavens and new earth affect the way we do our jobs on a given Tuesday morning in October. Do these truths change the way we think about our work? Absolutely. And it is these questions and more that have prompted this themed issue of *Faithful Lives* focusing upon faithful work.

One thinker who profoundly shaped this discussion is Abraham Kuyper (1837–1920). A famous Dutch theologian, Kuyper published two newspapers, started a university (The Free University of Amsterdam), and later served as the Prime Minister of the Netherlands. It is staggering to think of emulating Kuyper’s accomplishments in a twenty-first century context! But it is precisely this breadth of experience that forced Kuyper to integrate his Christian convictions into every arena in which he found himself—business, church-state relations, higher education, and national politics.

Kuyper’s unified perspective on work and faith is wonderfully captured in a sentence that has shaped the last thirty years of evangelical thought on work: “There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry: ‘Mine!’” (*Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. James D. Bratt [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998], 488). Taken from Kuyper’s inaugural address at the dedication of the Free University, this idea exposes the unifying principle that governed his worldview thinking—the sovereign reign of Christ.

We live in a culture that celebrates the theme of diversity—and, in many respects, rightly so. God is a marvelous creator: “O LORD, how manifold are your works!” (Ps 104:24). Indeed, the world is diverse, Christianity as a global faith is diverse, and certainly our country is diverse. But what happens when Christians elevate diversity above all other themes? How do we make sense of the pieces? In our culture, diversity is made to serve the greater goal of tolerance. But is tolerance a compelling reason for human purpose and existence? “Recognize and celebrate diversity so we can tolerate each other.” Despite the bumper sticker campaign, coexistence is hardly a compelling reason to live and work.

Surely there is a better unifying story that is big enough to absorb . . . make sense of . . . give value to . . . all of the diversity in our world. The Pauline version of Kuyper’s quote reads: “For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross” (Col 1:19–20, ESV). Through Christ, God is reconciling every square inch of life to himself—work included. When Christians neglect this unifying vision, damaging theological assertions such as the tweet above present work as merely a curse to be tolerated and endured.

Reflecting on the theme of work as it applies to the Christian life is not a foreign idea for many of us, but that is especially true for our learning community at College of the Ozarks. Founded in 1906 by Presbyterian missionaries with the philosophy of working for an education, the school has been striving to live out “faithful work” since its inception. College of the Ozarks is unique in that every student on campus works 15 hours a week at a designated campus work station alongside regular academic requirements. As a result, students do not pay tuition. As striking as this is in the midst of soaring tuition rates, the work program of the college does far more than offset operating costs and enable students to graduate debt-free. The college creates a

community of learning and work that points students toward viewing their weekly work assignment as a worshipful task that serves both the Lord and their neighbors.

In our efficiency-driven, technologically-fractured culture, perhaps now more than ever we need to present young men and women with a unified view of the world, so whether they are milking cows, serving tables, cleaning classrooms, or shelving books, they can see how their work is valuable in God's eyes and contributing to his cosmic plan of reconciliation. This journal and these essays are the product of much work carried out by many people, and it is our hope that they will encourage the faithful so that we might live out the words of Paul: "whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31).

College of the Ozarks is publishing this journal because at the heart of the College's mission is providing a distinctively "Christian" education, especially to worthy students who have significant financial need. *Faithful Lives* is one way the College can extend this distinctively Christian education to its alumni and friends.

Living in a manner faithful to Jesus Christ in the twenty-first century requires careful and biblically-grounded thinking on significant issues. Our first edition addresses one of these issues, the role of work in human life. Why did we choose this topic? Because it is one part of the College's "five-fold" mission, which emphasizes academic, vocational, Christian, patriotic, and cultural growth. It seems appropriate that "Hard Work U.®" would inaugurate its new publication with a focus on the topic of work.

Our plans are to publish one edition per year, typically in the early fall. Next year's edition will focus on faithful citizenship, reflecting another part of the College's five-fold mission, which is patriotic growth. Future editions will follow the same pattern.

We are blessed to be part of an educational institution that has a significant mission and that zealously guards that mission. Our prayer is that the reader might not only grow in understanding of a biblical worldview, but also in appreciation for the College's desire to serve Christ through its mission. We welcome your input and questions.

*Soli Deo Gloria*  
Eric W. Bolger  
William R. Osborne



FAITHFUL LIVES



*Essays*



*The Woman Who Remained Where She Was*  
Lisa Line  
Oil on Canvas

In *Woman Who Remained* a solitary woman (the artist) peels potatoes in a field. Humanity exists in harmony with both the cultivated and the natural. The Appalachian mountains in the background give a solidity and timelessness to the painting, which reinforces the seemingly timeless, ever present process of work. Today's potatoes are peeled; tomorrow's await. This work is from the exhibition *WORK Curse or Calling?* For a more complete review of the exhibition, see pg. 83.

# Edenic Endeavors: Sacred Service in the Garden of Eden

James M. Todd, III\*

Throughout the millennia, work—being as basic to human existence as sleep and sustenance—has consumed a significant portion of our time as human beings on this earth. However, just as we are prone to misunderstand and misuse other good things, so too we often misconstrue and distort work. In our present day, many do not understand the Bible’s teaching regarding work’s purpose and importance. Our current misunderstandings of work tend to express themselves in a couple common extremes. On one end of the spectrum are the many people who dread going to work each day. For them, work’s frustrations far outweigh any benefits their jobs might offer them. Work is simply a means to a paycheck, and countless popular songs reflect the workweek’s drudgery by celebrating the freedom of the weekend. On the other end of the spectrum are those who find their identity in their work. For these individuals, work provides them with a sense of value and worth. Work is much more than a paycheck to them; it is the purpose of their existence.

However, many people fall somewhere between these two extremes. For these individuals, work provides a sense of fulfillment as they accomplish goals and do what they love, yet even in the midst of the joys of work, they experience frustration and hardship. While some struggle

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with this perpetual tension, Christians should understand the reasons for this blend of blessings and curses, successes and failures, better than others. Not only do Christians experience this tension in their own work, but they also have theological explanations for it. The biblical story affirms work's value and yet shows why humans experience frustrations, setbacks, and struggles as they work. It reveals that work is neither ultimate nor evil. Hating it or worshipping it only reveals a lack of understanding concerning work's intended design and purpose.

The best place to discover God's design for work is the story of God's creation of humanity in Genesis 1–2. In particular, the Eden narrative gives a snapshot of man's work before sin and its associated consequences entered the world. My goal here is to simply draw back the curtains of time and examine the nature of work initially in the garden of Eden. I will discuss the royal, priestly, and undemanding characteristics of work in God's grand design, with the hope that our view of work will become more conformed to His intended purpose for our vocations. As I discuss each characteristic of work in Eden, I will draw implications for our work in the present age as we anticipate the complete restoration of all things, including work in the new heavens and new earth.

## *Work as a Royal Task*

When discussing creation, one cannot separate the Eden narrative (Gen 2:4–3:25) from the creation narrative of Gen 1:1–2:3. The Eden narrative, especially Gen 2:4–25, gives a more detailed description of the events that transpired on Day 6 of creation (Gen 1:24–31). Genesis 1 focuses on man's cosmic responsibilities while the Eden narrative focuses more specifically on man's responsibilities in the garden. Therefore, any examination of man's task in Eden must take into consideration the tasks God appointed for man in Genesis 1.

Genesis 1:26–31 records God's creation of human beings. As the last component of God's creative work, human beings are the pinnacle of God's world. In addition, by creating human beings in his own image, God distinguished them from the rest of his creation. The biblical text does not give a formal definition of what theologians call the *imago dei* (or the "image of God"), but the text does emphasize the role God's image-bearers played in his world. God's creation of humans (Gen 1:27)

is sandwiched between two verses wherein God outlines his purposes for humans. Verses 26 and 28 both emphasize man's dominion over the other animals, and in verse 28, God instructs the humans in the following manner: "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it" (v. 28).

As humanity multiplied and spread across the world (v. 28), God expected them to exercise dominion over his creation. The great King of the universe granted his royal authority to those who bore his image, thus making them his vice-regents. Two specific things in Gen 1:26–28 indicate that God viewed humans as his vice-regents. First, interpreting the image of God as a royal designation coheres with a common understanding of the king in the ancient Near East. Egyptian and Mesopotamian societies often referred to their king as the "image of God."<sup>1</sup> Second, the Hebrew word translated "have dominion" (vv. 26, 28) often appears in contexts that refer to a king's rule.<sup>2</sup> Psalm 8 confirms the royal portrait of humans in Genesis 1 when it reads, "You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet" (v. 6).

What bearing does this have on one's understanding of mankind's work in Eden? First, God's transfer of power to human beings emphasizes the stewarding aspect of Adam's and Eve's existence. As vice-regents, their authority had its limits. Their lordship was not ultimate but was subject to the King who created the world in which they worked. Their work should have accorded with God's character and purposes for his world. Second, Adam's and Eve's royal work reflected and extended God's creative work in Genesis 1. God created a world that was good, but he also required humanity to develop his creation. When God commanded Adam and Eve to "subdue" the earth, he intended for them to extend their rule throughout the entire earth. As they extended their rule, they would reflect their King's creative and good nature. In fact, the Eden narrative provides an example of this creative aspect of Adam's royal dominion. After God "formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens" (Gen 2:19), he brought these animals before Adam and tasked Adam with giving them names.

Understanding our role as God's vice-regents helps us view our work as an extension of God's creative work. As we work in ways that reflect

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1 T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land* (3rd ed.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 125.

2 Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26* (New American Commentary 1a; Nashville: B&H, 1996), 169.

his character and excellence, we properly reflect his image in a fallen world. Our tasks have meaning and purpose because they have been commissioned by the King and serve his purposes for extending his reign throughout the world. Such purposes are not limited to professional pastors and missionaries, but apply to all people, since all human beings are created in the image of God. However, Christians, whom God is transforming into the image of his Son (Rom 8:29), have the ability to showcase God's ideal intentions for royal work in a world that has rebelled against the King and thus perverted his good purposes.

## *Work as a Priestly Task*

Many scholars have observed significant parallels between the description of Eden and later biblical descriptions of the tabernacle and temple. The following list represents some of these common features.<sup>3</sup>

1. The Lord walked in Eden and later sanctuaries (Gen 3:8; Lev 26:12; Deut 23:15; 2 Sam 7:6–7).
2. The entrance faces east and is guarded by cherubim (Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18–22; 26:31; 1 Kings 6:23–29).
3. The river flowing out of Eden serves as a prototype for Ezekiel's vision of a river that flows out of a new temple and refreshes the Dead Sea (Gen 2:10–14; Ezek 47:1–12).
4. Gold and onyx stones were used to decorate the tabernacle/ temple and the priestly garments (Gen 2:11–12; Exod 25:7, 11, 17, 24, 29, 36; 28:9, 20; 1 Kings 6:21–22).

Because of these common features, scholars have identified Eden as the first divine sanctuary. Eden, therefore, was not just a garden, it was the place where heaven and earth were one, the place where God dwelt with mankind, and naturally a fitting prototype for the later worship sites Israel would build.

The parallels between Eden and later sanctuaries also extend to the man's role in the garden. When God put Adam in the garden, he assigned the man two roles. Genesis 2:15 reads, "The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it."

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Gordon J. Wenham, "Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story" *Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies* 9 (1986): 400–402.

The Hebrew words translated “work” (*‘abad*) and “keep” (*šamar*) each appear a second time in the Eden narrative. The word “work” appears in Gen 2:5, when the text, in giving the reason for the lack of certain vegetation, states, “there was no man to work the ground.” Genesis 2:15 therefore provides the remedy for the problem of Gen 2:5. God put Adam in the garden and commanded him to work the garden so that the ground could produce vegetation.

The word “keep” appears after the fall of Adam and Eve and their subsequent expulsion from the garden. Genesis 3:24 describes the cherubim at the entrance of the garden and explains their purpose. The cherubim possessed a flaming sword in order “to guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen 3:24). In this verse, the English translations commonly translate the word *šamar* as “guard.” Such a translation raises the question of Adam’s keeping in Gen 2:15. The word is not synonymous with “work” but carries the connotation of “watching over” something.<sup>4</sup> From the immediate context of the passage, it appears that Adam’s responsibility in the garden was to work and watch over the garden.

When we read the Eden narrative in the larger context of the Pentateuch, we discover that Adam’s tasks run deeper than simply tilling the ground and watching out for critters. The words that describe Adam’s responsibility frequently occur together in descriptions of the priests’ responsibilities in the tabernacle (Num 3:7–8; 8:26; 18:4–6). The priests ministered before God in the tabernacle, guarded the tabernacle from non-priests, and maintained holiness in the camp. The use of priestly language to describe Adam’s task in the garden underscores his priestly role.<sup>5</sup> Since the garden was God’s sanctuary, God appointed Adam as his priest to serve in his sanctuary. Like the later priests whose service was sacred, Adam’s work in the garden was not simply an activity by which Adam passed the time. It was a sacred service to the King in whose temple Adam resided.

Furthermore, Adam’s “watching over” the garden takes on a much deeper meaning when one understands his role as God’s priest. God

4 Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and M. E. J. Richardson, eds., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Accordance electronic edition; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 4:1581–4.

5 U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis I* (trans. Israel Abrahams; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1978), 122–3, interprets the parallel language to mean that working the ground was not part of Adam’s task in the garden, but a component of the fall. However, instead of removing the groundwork part of Adam’s task, the parallels between Adam and later priests underscore the sacredness of Adam’s groundwork

commanded Israel's later priests to guard the tabernacle from those not authorized to enter it (Num 3:7–8; 18:4–6). Therefore, Adam's "watching over" the garden was probably much more important than simply trimming the rose bushes. Adam's "watching over" the garden was more like the cherubim's guarding the garden after God expelled Adam and Eve. The cherubim protected the garden from those who did not belong in it (ironically, those who did not belong in it were Adam and Eve). Likewise, Adam's guarding the garden meant that he should maintain the holiness of God's sanctuary. Thus, we should interpret Adam entertaining the serpent's proposals as a failure to complete his task of guarding the holiness of God's sanctuary.<sup>6</sup>

When Adam and Eve disobeyed God in the garden, they forfeited their right to serve as priests in God's sanctuary. Hence, God later set apart a certain group of people to serve as priests in his sanctuaries. Ultimately, these Old Testament sanctuaries pointed toward God's true temple, Jesus Christ (John 2:19–21). As the embodiment of God's presence, Christ "dwelt among us" (John 1:14). After Jesus' ascension into heaven, the Holy Spirit came and filled all believers with the divine presence, thus making the church a temple (Eph 2:21–22) and all believers priests (1 Peter 2:9).<sup>7</sup> As God's temple and priesthood, the church, like Israel's priesthood, mediates God's blessings to the entire world by proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, since Christians serve as God's priests, all of life becomes sacred, including our work. Therefore, the compartmentalized categories of sacred and secular do not exist for kingdom workers.

## *Work as an Undemanding Task*

In the previous two sections, I have emphasized Adam's role as God's king-priest in his Edenic sanctuary. For many readers, such information is sufficient, but they want more details about work in Eden. Did Adam and Eve sweat? Did their backs hurt? What was it like to work in a garden without weeds? Numerous questions arise when we read the narrative, and unfortunately, we cannot answer all the specific

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6 Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 127.

7 For a good discussion of how Christians live as God's priests, see G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2004), 395–402.

questions. However, the Eden narrative does provide some further clues regarding the nature of work in the garden.

Adam and Eve had it all. They had a beautiful garden in which to work and play; they had dominion over all things; and most importantly, they had unhindered access to God's presence. Yet, Adam and Eve failed to enjoy the paradisiacal place God had given them. They chose to disobey God's command and thereby forfeited the blessings of the garden. In response, God punished them. Their punishments, along with the serpent's cursing, appear in Gen 3:14–24. Of the various punishments, Adam's punishment (Gen 3:17–19) is the most significant for our present investigation.

After reminding Adam of his sin (3:17), God curses the ground because of Adam (Gen 3:17). God's curse of the ground relates directly back to his creation of Adam from the ground in 2:7 and Adam's tasks in 2:15. Since Adam's work dealt primarily with the ground, God's curse of the ground directly affected Adam's work. By looking at the description of the ground's curse, we can deduce what Adam's work might have been like before his fall.

Genesis 3:17–19 outlines the results of the cursed ground by describing what the ground would now produce and how such a change affected Adam's work. In addition to vegetation and trees that provided food for mankind (Gen 1:29), the ground would also produce "thorns and thistles," vegetation that contrasts the trees of the garden, which were "pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen 2:9). In order to get what he needed for sustenance, Adam would now face resistance from unpleasant and fruitless plants. The passage also describes how Adam's work would change. Genesis 3:17 describes his work as "pain"<sup>8</sup> or "toil," and Gen 3:19 states that he would eat with a sweat-covered forehead. Taken together, these two descriptions of Adam's work indicate that his work would be toilsome and unpleasant.

The ground's curse ushered in significant changes in the nature of Adam's work, changes which help interpreters clarify the nature of Adam's work before the fall. First, the description of Adam's work as painful helps us understand that Adam's work in Eden was not "anxious toil," but easy work.<sup>9</sup> The grit, grime, and grind of work as we know

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8 The same word appears in Genesis 3:16 to describe the pain of childbirth.

9 Koehler, Baumgartner, and Richardson (2:865) translate this word as "anxious toil, hardship."

it did not exist before the fall. Second, the mention of Adam's sweat-covered forehead underscores the ground's resistance. Adam's work in the garden probably required physical exertion, but in contrast to work outside the garden, it did not result in physical exhaustion. The work in the garden was probably a refreshing, relaxing activity that not only renewed the ground, but also renewed the one working the ground. Unlike work after Adam's and Eve's expulsion from the garden, work in Eden did not cause Adam and Eve to cry out for comfort (cf. Gen 5:29).

During difficult or exhausting times of work, we may be tempted to blur the lines between work itself and the fall's impact on our work, consequently viewing work as part of the fallen world. The Eden narrative reminds us that our work is not a product of the fall, and like all things in the present age, suffers from the distorting effects of a cursed creation. Just as Lamech longed for comfort from the hardships of the cursed ground in his day (Gen 5:29), we should look forward to the day when God removes creation's curse (Rom 8:18–23) and our work becomes an undemanding task in the renewed creation (Rev 21–22).

## *Work in the Second Eden*

After Adam and Eve leave the garden, the biblical story continues by describing God's plan of redemption and ultimate restoration. Throughout the Old Testament, God gives numerous prophecies regarding his future restoration of all things. This plan centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ, who began restoring all things by suffering for the world's sins. Although Jesus inaugurated God's kingdom with his first coming, believers still wait for the kingdom's consummation at Jesus' second coming. The book of Revelation gives a vivid description of God's consummated kingdom. Attentive readers will notice that the consummated kingdom has some familiar imagery. Revelation 21:1–22:5 describe the new heavens and the new earth. In this section, John focuses primarily on the new Jerusalem (Rev 21:2–27) and the beautiful park in its midst (Rev 22:1–5), a park that resembles the original Eden. Like the first Eden, the second Eden contains a Tree of Life, has a river, is devoid of sin's curse, and is God's dwelling place on earth. Eden has returned and is even better than the first Eden.

Christians often wonder about life in the new Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> What will we do? What will we look like? Revelation does not give many details about human activities on the new earth, but it is likely that many activities will parallel those in the garden. Given the intentional and clear parallels with the Eden narrative, we may safely assume that work will be a part of our eternal existence in the new Jerusalem. As Adam and Eve had a sacred task in the garden, so too the inhabitants of the new earth will have sacred tasks. In fact, John's description of the new Jerusalem echoes the three-fold nature of work outlined in this article. First, Rev 22:5 states that God's servants "will reign forever and ever," thus echoing Adam's royal task in the garden. Second, Rev 22:3 states, "his [God's] servants will worship him." The Greek word translated "worship" refers to carrying out religious duties, in particular, priestly duties.<sup>11</sup> Such activity parallels Adam's priestly role in the garden.<sup>12</sup> Finally, Rev 22:3 states that the curse will not be present in the new Jerusalem. The absence of the curse explains why there will be no more pain (Rev 21:4). The lack of the curse and pain demonstrates that man's work in the second Eden will once again be undemanding work in God's dwelling place. Eternity for believers is not sitting on clouds with wings; it is working, worshipping, and reigning on a new earth in God's presence. If we find ourselves worrying about eternity being a bit boring, we have embraced a faulty view of work and its place in God's kingdom.

In those moments of our work, when we experience deep satisfaction, fulfillment, and joy, it should remind us in two ways of the future work we will do in the new earth. First, the pleasure of work should engender in our souls a desire for ultimate fulfillment and joy in the new earth. C.S. Lewis, in discussing how many of our desires cannot be satisfied in the present world, writes, "If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. . . . Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing."<sup>13</sup> Second, the fulfilling moments of our work should also

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10 For a more extensive treatment of this topic, see John Jefferson Davis, "Will There Be *New* Work in the New Creation?" *ERT* 31:3 (2007): 256–273.

11 Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Edited by Frederick W. Danker; Accordance electronic edition; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 587.

12 The royal and priestly roles of the saints also appear in Rev 5:10.

13 C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 121.

remind us of the new earth, wherein the frustrations and hardships of the present world will be no more and every moment of God-glorifying work will be free from the thorny grip of sin's curse.

### **Recommended Resources**

“Theology of Work.” [www.theologyofwork.org](http://www.theologyofwork.org)

Alexander, T. Desmond. *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008.

Mathews, Kenneth A. *Genesis 1–11:26*. New American Commentary. Vol. 1a. Nashville: B & H, 1996.

Schmutzer, Andrew and Alice Mathews. “Genesis 1–11 and Work.” *Theology of Work Commentary*. 2013.

Walton, John. *Genesis*. The NIV Application Commentary. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001.

# The Idea of Vocation from a Historical Perspective

Brad C. Pardue\*

*“Paul by vocacion the Apostle of Jesus Christ thorowe the will of god.”*

-William Tyndale’s 1526 translation of 1 Corinthians 1:1

*“We are commaunded by Gods word to apply our selues to goodness,  
every one in his callyng”*

-Hugh Latimer in his Frutefull Sermons of 1572

*“Why Hall tis my vocation Hall: tis no sinne for a man  
to labor in his vocation.”*

-Falstaff from Shakespeare’s Henry IV (1597)<sup>1</sup>

Since at least the time of the Italian Renaissance in the fifteenth century, Western scholars have recognized the dynamic nature of language and of the words that we use to communicate. The meaning of words can change over time and what a term meant in one period can be strikingly at odds with its use in another. An obvious example would be the word “fantastic,” which originally meant fanciful and imaginary but which now conveys the idea of excellence. Often the rich and complex history of a word is made evident in the present through a wide range of meanings, a reality that is apparent

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1 These passages are all quoted in the *Oxford English Dictionary* entries for “vocation” and “calling.”

when one considers the case of the related English terms “vocation” and “calling.”<sup>2</sup> The quotes above, taken from a variety of sixteenth-century sources, reveal a spectrum of meanings that are still with us today, ranging from a sense of religious calling to the more mundane category of occupation.

In his anthology of Christian reflections on the idea of vocation William Placher observes, “One lesson to be learned from the history of Christian ideas of vocation is that there is not just one account of what vocation means. Christians have been called simply to be Christians, with all the risks that that has sometimes entailed. They have felt vocations to the monastic life, or the priesthood, or secular jobs, or their roles in family life. We do not have to limit ‘vocation’ or ‘calling’ to one meaning and then vote it, in that sense, up or down. We can draw on the range of options the tradition offers us.”<sup>3</sup> Placher argues for four broad periods in which Western understandings of vocation have been characterized by different emphases—the Early Church (100-500 AD), the Middle Ages (500-1500), the Reformation/Early Modern Period (into the later 1800s), and the Post-Christian Era—and I will follow his division in the discussion that follows.

## *Early Church to Medieval Monasticism*

During the period of the Early Church the idea of vocation or calling was most often used in the context of the call to faith. The Greek word *klēsis* is used eleven times in the New Testament, mostly in letters by Paul or those influenced by him.<sup>4</sup> Romans 1:1 speaks of “Paul, servant of Christ Jesus, called by God to be an apostle” while 2 Thessalonians 1:11 prays that “God may count you worthy of your calling.” This early Christian usage draws on a well-established tradition of calling narratives from the Old Testament including those of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah. During this period Christians

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2 “Vocation” comes from the Latin *vocāre*, meaning “to call or summon.” Its Greek equivalent is *kaleo*, also meaning “to call.” In 1 Corinthians 7:20 Paul instructs his readers, “Everyone should remain in the condition [*klēsis*] in which he was called” (all Biblical quotations are from the Revised English Bible unless otherwise noted).

3 William Placher, ed., *Callings, Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 329-30.

4 Placher, *Callings*, 4-5.

were usually a minority within their communities and the decision to profess one's faith often came at great personal cost. This was an age of often dramatic conversion experiences, from Paul's on the Damascus road to Augustine's in his garden in Milan.

After Constantine extended religious toleration to Christians and Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire in the fourth century, the situation began to change. Despite the disruptions attending the Germanic invasions and the collapse of Roman political institutions, Christianity continued to gain ground and by the early Middle Ages most people in Western Europe found themselves living within the world of Christendom, baptized into the Catholic Church as infants. In an environment where everyone was at least nominally a Christian, the idea of vocation began to be applied more narrowly to those called to become priests or monks. Not only was this a distinction of function, but in the sacramental system it was an ontological distinction between the laity and the clergy.

Throughout much of the medieval period, it was the monastic life which was regarded as the highest calling and the purest manifestation of Christianity. It is interesting to observe that medieval monks, in addition to a special sense of religious calling, also recognized the connection between vocation and work, a meaning that has become more significant in subsequent centuries. Today Benedictine monks often use the short Latin phrase "*Ora et Labora*" (prayer and labor) to summarize their lifestyle. Although this phrase does not appear in Benedict's *Rule*, it reflects the fact that medieval monks engaged in both spiritual activities such as prayer and in manual labor, considering each an important part of their vocation. Monks did much to open up uncultivated land and to spread the borders of civilization in the Middle Ages, but their commitment to manual labor also helped to undermine a view of work as degrading which had been inherited from the ancient world.

## *Martin Luther and Vocation*

Long-standing medieval assumptions about the nature of vocation were challenged in the early sixteenth century during the Protestant Reformation. The most famous figure from this period, Martin Luther, was himself a product of the monastic tradition, having joined the strict Augustinian order as a young man. Luther's rejection of the medieval

Catholic tradition was multifaceted. First, he rejected the fundamental distinction between clergy and laity and argued instead for the “priesthood of all believers.”<sup>5</sup> Luther argued in his *Appeal to the Ruling Class of the German Nation* (1520), “To call popes, bishops, priests, monks, and nuns, the religious class, is a specious devise . . . all Christians whatsoever really and truly belong to the religious class, and there is no difference among them except in so far as they do different work.”<sup>6</sup>

Luther’s views on vocation were not just a product of his ecclesiology, they were also tied directly to his soteriology. Having experienced personally the inability to earn right standing with God through his activities as a monk, he rejected the monastic tradition as a form of works righteousness. Luther declared, “[N]one of these orders is a way to salvation. There is only one way, which is above all these, namely faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, he argued that monks were also doing a great disservice to their fellow man by substituting acts of asceticism for the acts of service that Christian love demanded.

Although Luther’s theology denied human work(s) a role in the process of salvation, in other ways it elevated the various occupations in which most ordinary people were engaged into legitimate vocations ordained by God. In the words of Gustaf Wingren, “The freedom of faith does not dissolve vocation. On the contrary, it sustains it and gives it new life.”<sup>8</sup> Luther argued in a sermon from the early 1520s, “For being a Christian does not consist in external conduct, neither does it change anyone according to his external position; rather it changes him according to the inner disposition, that is to say, it provides a different heart, a different disposition and will. For a Christian knows that it all depends upon faith; for this reason he walks, stands, eats, drinks, dresses, works, and lives as any ordinary person in his calling.”<sup>9</sup> In his translation of 1 Corinthians 7:20, Luther rendered Paul’s *klēsis* with the German *Beruf*, which he interpreted as including occupations but also such responsibilities as parenting.

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5 After 1530 Luther emphasized this aspect of his thought less often and subsequent church history has witnessed a re-clericalization of ministers in many Protestant traditions.

6 John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Selections From His Writings* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 1962), 407.

7 Quoted in Gustaf Wingren, *The Christian’s Calling: Luther on Vocation* (London, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1958), 64.

8 Wingren, *The Christian’s Calling*, 66.

9 Placher, *Callings*, 214.

## *Post-Reformation Protestantism's View of Vocation*

Later Protestants followed Luther's lead. The Puritan theologian and Cambridge scholar William Perkins (d. 1602) wrote a work entitled *A Treatise on the Vocations*. He concluded that vocations "are of two sorts: General and Particular. The general calling of Christianity which is common to all that live in the Church of God. The particular is that special calling that belongs to some particular men: as the calling of a Magistrate, the calling of a Minister, the calling of a Master, of a father, of a child, of a servant, of a subject, or any other calling that is common to all."<sup>10</sup> Richard Baxter, another prominent seventeenth-century Puritan, produced a book entitled *Directions about Our Labor and Callings*, which offered advice about discovering and living out one's calling.

One of the ironies of history is that while Protestant ideas about vocation served to re-infuse ordinary occupations with spiritual significance, in the long term they also contributed to a radical change in the idea of vocation over the last few centuries. The nineteenth century was particularly significant as the nature of work changed due to the Industrial Revolution. As Douglas Schuurman observed, "Secularism and capitalism strip[ped] paid work and many other aspects of life of their deep religious and moral connotations."<sup>11</sup> For many people today vocation simply means one's occupation, the job that one performs in order to make a living. Organizational psychologists, recognizing the purely pragmatic nature of many people's approach to occupation, have begun to recognize the value of "intrinsic motivation," the heightened productivity of workers who see their jobs as a special calling.<sup>12</sup>

## *Contemporary Lessons from History*

For contemporary Christians, often disengaged from the rich tradition of early periods of Christian history, several problems present

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<sup>10</sup> Placher, *Callings*, 264-65.

<sup>11</sup> Douglas Schuurman, "Protestant Vocation Under Assault: Can It Be Salvaged?," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics* 14 (1994): 24.

<sup>12</sup> See Luigino Bruni & Alessandra Smerilli, "The Value of Vocation: The Crucial Role of Intrinsically Motivated People in Values-based Organizations," *Review of Social Economy* 67, 3 (September 2009): 271-88.

themselves. As in the Middle Ages, many people seem to restrict the idea of Christian vocation to those who feel a call to full-time ministry as pastors or missionaries. This is just one manifestation of a compartmentalization that also takes the form of separating one's Christianity from one's occupation in the secular sphere. In *Courage and Calling: Embracing your God-Given Potential* (2011) Gordon Smith argues that modern Christians often give in to three classic temptations when it comes to their vocational thinking in that they are primarily motivated by "the desire for *power*, the desire for *material security* and comfort, and the desire for fame and *prestige*."<sup>13</sup>

Fortunately, many Christian thinkers in recent years have called for a broader and more nuanced understanding of vocation which draws on the rich resources of Christian tradition and reflection. Authors such as Cornelius Plantinga and Gabe Lyons have sought to place the various jobs that Christians perform within the broader context of God's project of restoration of the fallen world in which we live.<sup>14</sup> Lyons describes what he calls the "seven channels of cultural influence" and argues, "The spread of ideas—specifically, the Christian idea of restoration—will happen best and most powerfully when every channel of culture is leveraged."<sup>15</sup> Through their vocations, ordinary Christians can have an extraordinary impact on the world around them.

At the same time, a truly Christian perspective reminds us that our identity should not be tied entirely to our career and to the jobs that we do. Sometimes people feel as if they have "missed their calling" and although we are certainly suited to thrive in certain pursuits, we may find ourselves serving in many capacities. As Thomas Merton once observed, "Our vocation is not a supernatural lottery but the interaction of two freedoms, God's and ours."<sup>16</sup> Despite the emphasis that our culture places on our career, it is also important to remember that our calling transcends our occupation. Some individuals may not work

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13 Gordon T. Smith, *Courage & Calling: Embracing your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2011), 135.

14 Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), particularly Chapter 5, "Vocation in the Kingdom of God" (pp. 101-33); Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: The Good News about the End of Christian America* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2010), particularly Chapter 7, "Called, Not Employed" (pp. 109-26).

15 Lyons, *The Next Christians*, 115.

16 Quoted in Carl Michalson, "The Crisis of Vocation," *The Christian Scholar* 41, 2 (June 1958): 98.

outside the home (stay-at-home moms or dads), others experience little fulfillment or meaning in the jobs they manage to find, and many will live for decades after they retire. A robust Christian understanding of vocation, as seen throughout the history of the church, will encompass people in all situations and stages of life.

### **Recommended Resources**

Gabe Lyons, *The Next Christians: The Good News about the End of Christian America* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2010).

William Placher, ed., *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005).

Cornelius Plantinga, *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002).

Douglas Schuurman, "Protestant Vocation Under Assault: Can It Be Salvaged?," *Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, Vol. 14 (1994), pp. 23-52.

Gordon T. Smith, *Courage & Calling: Embracing your God-Given Potential* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

Gustaf Wingren, *The Christian's Calling: Luther on Vocation* (London, UK: Oliver and Boyd, 1958).



# Five Reasons Christians Should Embrace Economic Freedom<sup>†</sup>

by Anne Bradley\*

**W**hat is economic freedom, and why do we need to embrace it? As Christians, we are called to be good stewards of the resources that God gives us. Stewardship is not just about tithing or caring for the earth; it is about every choice we make. It is then inextricably tied to flourishing. If we are not good stewards, we cannot possibly practice true sustainability by creating more than we are given and caring for one another. Markets facilitate stewardship by helping us to fulfill the great commandment, which calls us to love our neighbor.<sup>1</sup>

## *What is Flourishing?*

In the Old Testament, the concept of flourishing is best described by the Jewish word *shalom*. Biblical scholars tell us that *shalom* signifies a number of things, including salvation, wholeness, integrity, soundness, community, connectedness, righteousness, justice, and well-being.

*Shalom* denotes a right relationship with God, with others, and with God's good creation. It is the way God intended things to be when he

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<sup>†</sup> Originally published by the Institute for Faith, Work & Economics (<https://tifwe.org>).  
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<sup>1</sup> Matt 22:39, NIV.

created the universe.<sup>2</sup> In most of our English Bibles, we translate *shalom* as peace, but it means much more than just an absence of conflict. The idea of flourishing as *shalom* in the widest sense of the word is a significant theme in the Old Testament:

- When the Lord brings *shalom*, there is prosperity.<sup>2</sup>
- There is health.<sup>3</sup>
- There is reconciliation.<sup>4</sup>
- There is contentment.<sup>5</sup>
- When the *shalom* of the Lord is present, there are good relationships between the nations and peoples. God's *shalom* has a social as well as a personal dimension.<sup>6</sup>

*Shalom* means universal flourishing, wholeness, and delight, representing the way things ought to be. The Old Testament prophets pictured *shalom* as the lion lying with the lamb, weapons becoming farming tools, deserts blooming, and the mountains streaming with red wine.

One aspect of *shalom* is material prosperity. It is no accident that over the last two hundred years we have experienced explosive growth in the Western world, providing a level of abundance and prosperity unthinkable even to kings and queens just a short time ago. Most of human history up to that point was marked by poverty and a struggle for subsistence. The path to flourishing has been uphill, but Christians have, and can play, a big part in bringing about more flourishing for all mankind.

Productivity per person, when tracked over human history, follows an exponential pattern. It was not until 1500 AD that we started to see even the slightest increase in GDP per person.<sup>7</sup> Prior to 1500 AD, net productivity hovered slightly above zero.

Most of the advances in technology, longevity, and prosperity are quite recent in human history. These innovations and advancements

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2 Ps 72:1-7

3 Isa 57:19.

4 Gen 26:29.

5 Gen 15:15; Ps 4:8.

6 1 Chr 12:17-18.

7 J. Bradford DeLong, "Estimates of World GDP, One Million B.C.-Present," last modified May 24, 1998, [http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/1998\\_Draft/World\\_GDP/Estimating\\_World\\_GDP.html](http://econ161.berkeley.edu/TCEH/1998_Draft/World_GDP/Estimating_World_GDP.html).

have benefited everyone, not just the rich. Aggregated by competitive markets and international free trade, they have lifted billions out of poverty and are increasingly available to larger segments of the world's population.

Yet poverty still plagues too many in the twenty-first century. The World Bank defines poverty as living on less than \$1.25 per day. In 1990, 43.1% of the world's population lived in poverty, but in 2008 that statistic dropped to 22.4%.<sup>8</sup> The spread of global markets is the reason this number continues to decline.<sup>9</sup>

Poverty is a scar on the God-given dignity of each human. How we care for the poor, enable them to use their God-given talents, and come into community with one another are all aspects of stewardship.

Good stewardship leads to flourishing, which is characterized by well-being, thriving, and abundance. It is the way God created all things before the fall, as well as what he will restore when Christ returns. In the parable of the talents, Jesus teaches that everyone is to maximize the gifts that he is given in order to contribute to the flourishing of the world.<sup>10</sup> Greater economic freedom offers more opportunities to do just that.

Stewardship involves not just what we do with our money; it entails how we govern or manage all the limited and scarce resources with which we have been gifted. While this encompasses the earth and all that is in it, it also includes our time, energy, talents, gifts, and skills. Stewardship is part of the cultural mandate found in Genesis 1:28:

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Each of us is created uniquely by God to contribute something to his kingdom. We have a special opportunity to use our particular interests and abilities to do something significant.

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8 The World Bank, “Poverty and Equity Data,” last modified July 2013, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/home/>; Laurence Chandy and Geoffrey Gertz, “With Little Notice, Globalization Reduced Poverty,” Yale Global Online, July 5, 2011, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/little-notice-globalization-reduced-poverty>; James Gwartney et al., “Economic Freedom of the World 2012 Annual Report,” Frazier Institute, 2012, <http://www.freetheworld.com/release.html>.

9 Gen 1:26.

10 Matt 25:14-30.

This larger view of stewardship encompasses every aspect of life. The job that one takes, where you live, how many children you have, and where you send your children to school all involve stewardship. Those options require us to make choices with our scarce resources, as each tradeoff presents us with a cost and becomes part of the calculus of stewardship.

Working is one way that we bear the image of God; we were indeed created for work. Our efforts can bring delight to us and to the Lord and allow us to serve the common good. Creating value through work is then a mechanism for stewardship.

In order to labor effectively, we need a robust institutional environment. Through a setting where people know and understand established rules of the game that coordinate cooperation among individuals, we may come together to serve one another effectively through our work. This sort of environment requires greater economic freedom. Economic freedom ensures that individuals can coordinate their plans most effectively which in turn helps us steward our scarce resources wisely; this in turn generates prosperity and greater wealth accumulation.

## *What is Economic Freedom?*

Economic freedom is a measure of the ability of people from any race, gender, or faith to trade and use their gifts and skills in order to serve others. It is the best known path to unleash the creativity of each individual.

Each year, economic freedom is measured empirically using an index. The authors of the *Economic Freedom of the World Report* describe it this way:

Individuals have economic freedom when property they acquire without the use of force, fraud, or theft is protected from physical invasions by others and they are free to use, exchange, or give their property as long as their actions do not violate the identical rights of others. An index of economic freedom should measure the extent to which rightly acquired property is protected and individuals are engaged in voluntary transactions.<sup>11</sup>

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11 Gwartney et al., "Economic Freedom of the World 1996 Annual Report," 1996.

Economic freedom allows individuals to better practice the lesson of stewardship from the parable of the talents by multiplying the resources we are given.

It also gives us the best-tested chance to provide an opportunity society for all income levels, not just for the wealthy. In fact, if you care about life expectancy, child mortality, environmental performance, poverty reduction, civil rights, child labor, and unemployment, you should care about economic freedom.

Economic freedom results in:

- Higher life expectancy
- Lower levels of child mortality
- Better performing and cleaner environments
- Higher incomes for the poor
- Better protected civil liberties
- Less child labor
- Less unemployment
- Higher per capita income<sup>12</sup>

Below are five reasons Christians should be concerned with economic freedom. Though economic freedom is not an end in and of itself, it reflects certain biblical truths and provides a framework for helping Christians and others to understand how to promote higher levels of flourishing in a fallen world through their work.

## *Reason #1: We are Called to Work*

People are created in the image of God and are created to work as one way of fulfilling his design for their lives. This applies to the mechanic as well as the missionary. God gifted each person with unique skills and a unique purpose.

Snowflakes provide a helpful analogy. When someone looks out the window during a snowstorm, he sees white dots peppering the sky rather than the intricacy of the individual snowflakes. Yet if an observer puts those snowflakes under a microscope, he sees that each and every one is unique. If one watches a televised football game and sees the fans

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

in the seats from a distance, they all look very similar; however, up close, each one of them is different.

Such uniqueness is part of God's design. It allows us to come together in cooperation with each other. If we were all the same, we would have less incentive to cooperate and would also be able to do little, if anything, to help one another or to make life better. Economic freedom provides opportunities for the individual to unleash his gifts through work and to thereby serve the world.

## *Reason #2: We are Called to Serve the Poor*

We are told in Scripture that the righteous care about justice for the poor.<sup>13</sup> Christians believe that poverty is an affront to human dignity. Justice means enabling the poor to elevate their dignity by helping them escape the trappings of poverty. There is no other way of organizing society that has lifted more people out of poverty than global markets which are supported by economic freedom. According to a recent Brookings Report, nearly half a billion people escaped living at or below the poverty line between 2005 and 2010. Never before in history have so many found liberation from poverty in such a short time. The report goes on to say that the change is driven by the highest levels of sustained economic growth ever recorded in the developing world.<sup>14</sup>

The principles of economic freedom provide a blueprint for human flourishing. Markets consist not of a physical place, but of a mechanism of human coordination and cooperation. They bring unique individuals together to trade their time and talents in the service of others. For example, greater flourishing fostered by economic freedom ensures that poor women can open businesses without being overburdened by regulations and entry barriers that would keep them in poverty.

Most people in the developing world do not live in an institutional environment that supports earning an income through serving others. Many nations are plagued by corrupt governments and abject poverty.

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13 Prov 29:27.

14 Laurence Chandy and Geoffrey Gertz, "Poverty in Numbers: The Changing State of Global Poverty from 2005 to 2015," Brookings Institute, 2011, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/1/global%20poverty%20chandy/01\\_global\\_poverty\\_chandy.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2011/1/global%20poverty%20chandy/01_global_poverty_chandy.pdf).

In these countries, people are forced to focus on mere survival because the average citizen lives on less than \$1.25 per day.<sup>15</sup>

The African woman who walks four miles to get dirty water for her family and then carries it back four miles with children in tow, just to repeat the process tomorrow, needs an opportunity to earn an income through serving others. She too was born uniquely in the image of God and needs a chance to offer her skills to the world.

Enabling her to do this is the only way to generate economic growth. Christians should understand that material wealth earned through market competition is not a zero-sum game, meaning if I win it's not because you lose. Rather, wealth creation requires that both parties in a transaction benefit, persuading each party to serve the other.

### *Reason #3: We are Called to Flourish*

God does not desire that we live in conditions of despair, scarcity, poverty or minimalistic conditions, although some may be called to a life of few material goods, like Mother Theresa. Just as all riches and abundance come from God, so does the power to enjoy them.<sup>16</sup> The Psalms and Proverbs are filled with references for God's abundant desires for us. While this does not mean that God calls all of us to be rich, he desires for us to delight in the abundance of his creation and the work of our hands.

This does not mean that we never experience scarcity or poverty, but the metanarrative of Scripture clearly states that God did not create poverty as the ideal, nor will we be delivered into those conditions in the coming kingdom. The Bible relates that full *shalom* awaits God's people at the end of this age, in the last chapter of redemptive history when Christ returns to consummate his kingdom. While Christians await the return of Christ, they are called to work toward *shalom*. The effects of striving for *shalom* can be described as flourishing. Clearly, God not only desires that his followers enjoy his creation and the fruits of our labor; he in fact has commanded them to do that.

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15 The World Bank, "Poverty," last modified 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/poverty>.

16 Eccl 5:19.

The garden of Eden was perfect but unfinished. God gives us raw materials, and we use them to bring his work to completion. It is incumbent upon the redeemed to help bring about flourishing here and now. Redemption reflects the way things could be and will be upon Jesus' return. Christians must radiate that hope, giving others a picture of the way life could be.

No individual can accomplish this alone. Each person must focus on his gifts and trade his skills with others to bring about a level of flourishing otherwise unobtainable. Economic freedom provides each person with the liberty and incentive to capitalize on his individual strengths, bringing about greater flourishing and higher levels of thriving.

## *Reason #4: Private Property Rights are Biblical*

Property rights are upheld and defended in Scripture. Old Testament scholar Walter Kaiser notes that because God made men and women in his image, he has granted them dominion over the earth. In this dominion mandate we are given property rights which help us to steward our scarce resources. The eighth commandment, "You shall not steal," reinforces man's dominion, and Scripture defends the notion of private property in many other passages.<sup>17</sup>

The absence of private property rights takes away the incentives and results in a loss of the institutional environment that promotes thriving and human productivity. For example, the massive explosion of wealth in the West since the Industrial Revolution was not possible without well-defined property rights upheld by the rule of law.

Economic freedom is predicated on the property rights of individuals, starting with your talents and labor. When you use your property to innovate, you create wealth not just for yourself but for others, too.

The bright spots in the developing world exist where people can access, trade, and transfer their property as they see fit.

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<sup>17</sup> Walter Kaiser, "Ownership and Property in the Old Testament Economy," *Journal of Markets and Morality* 15 (2012); Ex 20:15, 28-36; 22:1-15; Deut, 22:1-4; 23:24-25; Prov 22:28; 23:1.

## *Reason #5: Minimal Government is Biblical*

Recognizing the function of property rights helps us understand the consequences of government sequestration of private property. Every time the government enforces a new law, regulation, or “service,” it does so through coercion. A representative government is defined as an institution that possesses the use of force by the “consent” of the governed.<sup>18</sup>

What does the Bible have to say about this use of force and when it may or may not be legitimate? Christian philosopher J. P. Moreland examines the two types of central texts on the issue of government to provide a framework for our understanding:

### **1. Old Testament prophets and the obligations of pagan rulers and nations:**

- Amos 1 and 2 provides the best example of the prophets berating pagan rulers for not protecting persons and property from the force and fraud of others (negative rights) rather than berating them for not proactively offering goods and services (positive rights). For example, they were chastised for forced deportation of a population and for murder

### **2. New Testament passages on the state in general:**

- Matthew 22:21: Jesus upholds that the church and state are separate and operate in different realms of authority.
- Romans 13:1-7: Paul tells us to submit to the governing authorities but does not tell us to obey the government. His use of “submit” implies that there are cases where one would be justified in disobeying the government. Paul clearly delineates the limits and scope of the state. The text also implies that the state should protect those negative rights when they are violated.

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<sup>18</sup> Note: Many representative and constitutional governments, including the United States, take upon themselves activities that are not consented to and that often violate their constitutional arrangements.

- 1 Timothy 2:1-2: The function of the state is to provide a stable social order in which people can live peaceably. We are to pray for our leaders to be successful in fulfilling that specific function.
- 1 Peter 2:13-14: Another limited view of government is presented as a body which is to protect the negative rights of others and punish violators of others' negative rights.<sup>19</sup>

The Scriptures emphasize limited models of government in order to protect our natural, God-given rights. Limited government broadens the path to flourishing by liberating each person to use his resources to best serve himself and others. Governments that extend beyond the protection of person and property into the provision of positive rights, such as medical care, education or a job, for some can only do so at the expense of another.

Moreover, governments do not create wealth; they are only capable of taking and transferring wealth. The more we require a government to provide positive rights, the more we expropriate from the broader abilities of the population to increase the productive capabilities of its citizens. This is especially damaging to the poorest among us, for whom we are called to care.

As Christians, we should want everyone to have a job, shelter, food, and medical care. Yet a good understanding of economics, history, and human nature helps us better understand that the government is incapable of fulfilling many of our desires, no matter how much we might wish it could.

Economic freedom, even in partial doses, has lifted millions out of poverty. In China alone, limited amounts of market reforms since 1978 have lifted 600 million people out of abject poverty.<sup>20</sup> If we fail to advocate for economic freedom, we will continue to lose it, slowing the triumph over poverty. The United States has dropped from the second most economically free country in the world to the eighteenth in the past twelve years alone.<sup>21</sup>

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19 For additional references on a biblical perspective of limited government see Chad Brand, "A Case for Limited Government"; J. P. Moreland, "A Biblical Case for Limited Government"; and Tom Pratt, "God and Government: A Biblical Perspective (The Bible and Limited Government)," <https://tifwe.org/research>.

20 The World Bank, "China Overview," last modified 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/china/overview>.

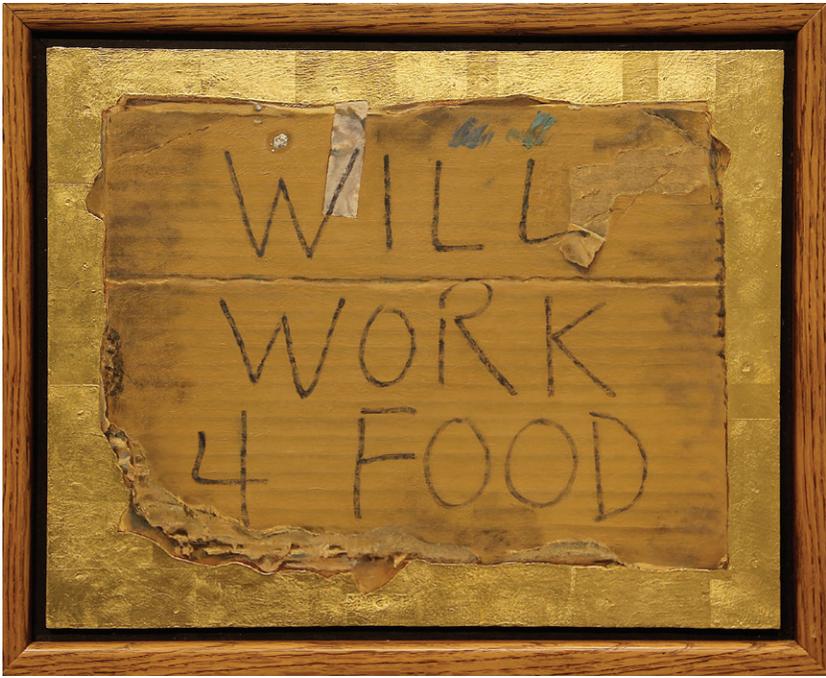
21 Gwartney et al., "Economic Freedom of the World 2012 Annual Report," 2012.

We cannot afford to further jeopardize our ability to flourish as a people, and Christians who embrace a biblical understanding of work and freedom can make a big difference.

It is by pursuing our gifts and doing what God has called us each to do that we become salt and light. In doing his job with excellence the Christian promotes flourishing and gives others a glimpse of the coming of God's kingdom and the restored earth.

To paraphrase Martin Luther, the great reformer, the most impactful way to love one's neighbor consists of doing one's job well. The assembly line worker who makes steering wheels for Hondas may not feel like he is promoting flourishing, but he is if he does it with excellence. He is part of a much bigger market economy that requires many different skills and talents to bring about greater prosperity for everyone, including the poorest of the poor. He is taking individual responsibility in embracing and promoting economic freedom by doing his job well and serving others. A free market and a limited government which upholds the rule of law provides each individual with the liberty and stability to use his gifts to support himself, serve others, and promote a flourishing society.

*Matthew Mitchell and Hugh Welchel kindly provided advice for this paper.*



*Will Work 4 Food*  
Michael Buesking  
Oil and gold leaf on wood panel  
2009

*Will Work 4 Food*, perfectly foreshadows a time when the curse of work will be lifted. Buesking's trompe l'oeil painting of a cardboard sign surrounded by gold leaf presents the necessity of work for humanity's survival, but the gold foreshadows the restoration of work to its proper intention for humanity at the restoration of creation in the new heaven and new earth. This work is from the exhibition *WORK Curse or Calling?* For a more complete review of the exhibition, see pg. 83.

# Have You Been Branded?: A Path to Healthy Christian Self-Promotion

Jim Freeman\*

As I have had the privilege to work as a career center director with students in the pursuit of their vocational dreams, one reality has become abundantly clear: many students struggle with the balance—or simple understanding—of what healthy, Christian self-promotion might look like. Often students believe that expressing personal strength is hubris and borders on outright sin. In seeking to be humble, these students often question if it is possible to have a God-honoring personal “brand” or engage in self-promotion as a Christian. This essay presents a brief look at the effects of branding for job seekers and proposes a way forward for Christians seeking a healthy approach to self-promotion.

## *Defining Branding*

So what is a brand? John Jantsch describes personal branding as, “the art of becoming knowable, likable and trustable.”<sup>1</sup> I contend

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1 J. Jantsch, “The definition of branding,” accessed June 06, 2016, <http://www.ducttapemarketing.com/blog/the-definition-of-branding/>.

that we all have been branded, regardless of whether we realize it or not. Simply stated, a personal brand is what people associate with you when they see your name, how they identify you, or what they say to others about you. In the fast-paced, social-media-driven, ever-evolving communication of the business world today, a personal brand is relied on—often viewed as a vital tool—in the selection process for employment. As one commentator recently noted:

Social media also continues to grow in importance for job seekers. In 2009, 12% of HR managers in the US said they had searched for applicants on social sites, 43% of whom reportedly reconsidered hiring candidates based in [sic.] what they found on those social sites. In 2015, that 12% has risen to 93% and 55% say they've reconsidered a candidate based on content found on their social media accounts.<sup>2</sup>

These statistics emphasize the importance of having a brand that sets the tone for what you want others to say about you. Developing or managing this process of your unique image, or name, in the mind of others is taking into consideration your “digital footprint.” AVG, a world-wide online security company founded in 1991, regularly surveys families about technology and its effect on their parenting. According to the AVG survey, “Ninety-two percent of children under the age of two already have a digital footprint.”<sup>3</sup> Simply speaking, this digital footprint is the collection of images, thoughts, and ideas that you or others have posted on any internet based media. Google yourself and see what shows up! Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, blogs, Twitter, and anything you have posted or commented on, is all reflecting your brand.

It is obvious that social media is no longer a fad and self-promotion is done every day. Interestingly, both those who are recruiting employees and those who are seeking employment are relying on social media. Often social media is seen as a tool only used to express oneself, but the recruiter uses social media in the vetting process. This fact should motivate all

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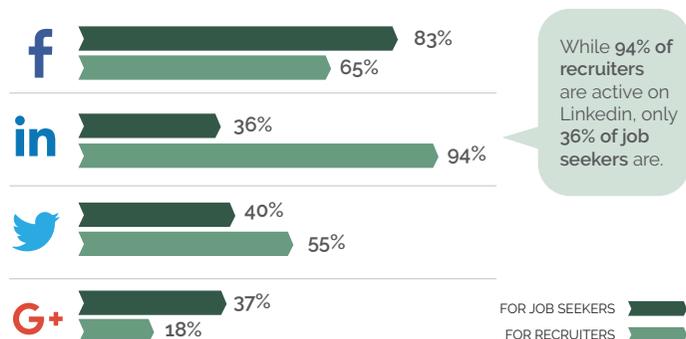
2 S. Pratt, “How Recruiters and Job Seekers Use Social Media in 2015,” *Social Talent*, accessed May 26, 2016, <http://www.socialtalent.co/blog/how-recruiters-and-job-seekers-use-social-media-in-2015>.

3 J. Samakow, “Internet Safety For Kids: Almost All Children Under 2 Have A Digital Footprint,” *The Huffington Post*, January 10, 2013, accessed May 26, 2016, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/10/children-internet-safety\\_n\\_2449721.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/10/children-internet-safety_n_2449721.html).

job seekers to be proactive in the market of self-promotion or branding. “Students who grasp the reins of their personal brand will be the first to get the attention of potential employers. When engaging in building your personal brand, you will help further define your career path.”<sup>4</sup>

While job seekers flock to Facebook, recruiters prefer LinkedIn when searching for candidates.

#### MOST POPULAR SOCIAL NETWORKS



A national survey on the use of social media in job searches indicates how much social media is used by recruiters and job seekers (see figure 1 above).<sup>5</sup> Note the high percentage of recruiters using LinkedIn compared to seekers. You can beat almost two-thirds of the competition by using just one type of social media! Personal brand development is a process of both discovering and expressing what makes you unique. This process should be taken seriously, starting with prayer and followed by hard, continuous work. “Branding being a ‘strategy’ is a limited way of thinking. Today, branding is ‘action’.”<sup>6</sup>

- 4 C. Dessi, “Why Your Personal Brand Is More Important than Ever Before,” December 23, 2015, accessed May 26, 2016, <http://www.inc.com/chris-dessi/why-this-remarkable-brand-will-dominate-in-2016.html>.
- 5 2014 *Jobvite Job Seeker Nation Study*, December 12, 2013, accessed May 26, 2016, [http://web.jobvite.com/rs/jobvite/images/2014\\_Job\\_Seeker\\_Survey.pdf](http://web.jobvite.com/rs/jobvite/images/2014_Job_Seeker_Survey.pdf).
- 6 P. Cooke, “Branding Faith,” 2009 Echo Conference, RightNow Media, accessed May 26, 2016, <https://www.rightnow.org/Training/Post/View/35594>.

## *Branding: A Christian Worldview Perspective*

Our culture is convinced that we are branded and must be actively involved in the process of branding upkeep. However, the question remains: How does being “branded” fit within the Christian worldview? Should a follower of Christ seek to develop a personal brand? If so, do we brand ourselves the same way as the surrounding culture or do we have a greater responsibility in the way we brand ourselves?

### **Created for Productivity**

First, for any of us to have a Christ-like perspective on our brand, we must realize that from creation God has intended for humans to work. It is God’s created design for people to thrive through their work, and a healthy brand reflects a balanced understanding of an individual’s God-given passions and gifts.

Not only are we created to work, it is God’s intention that humans would *enjoy* the creativity of work as it is a reflection of himself. Genesis 1:26 states that God created humans in His image. Then in Genesis 2:15, it states, “The LORD GOD took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it,” demonstrating the sharing of responsibility and care of creation.<sup>7</sup> In verse 19, God gives Adam the creative vocation of naming all the creatures and caring for the garden. In God’s design, work for Adam and Eve was a gift to humanity—a reflection of the relationship given to humans by their Creator. Thus, when we embrace God’s created purpose, we find meaning, satisfaction, and even a Godly pride (or healthy self-esteem) as people living the life that is reflective of God’s purpose for us.

### **Know Thyself . . . Really**

A healthy examination of oneself is vital in order to promote a “brand” that is fitting with the character of Christ. A lack of healthy self-examination can cause us to either over exaggerate or under represent our strengths and gifts. Hubris and false humility are the two traps that snare us and will generate a false self-identity. Hubris can be simply defined as pride, although it is much more in your face, self-focused,

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<sup>7</sup> For a more detailed look at these verses see the article in this issue by James M. Todd, III “Edenic Endeavors.”

and insolent; it is an affront or insult with no concern of being abrasive to others. One only has to look to our national political climate to witness great examples of hubris. It is the all-consuming, unquenchable fire that keeps the focus on self and tramples on others. Proverbs 16:18 makes it simple: “Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”

Recognizing hubris, at least in others, is often easily done. However, a proper understanding of humility is more difficult, and when misunderstood can lead us to similar sins of self-focus at the expense of others. David Brooks describes humility as low self-preoccupation, rather than low-esteem.<sup>8</sup> Uncle Screwtape instructs his young apprentice, and nephew, Wormwood in C. S. Lewis’s *The Screwtape Letters*, to “smuggle into man’s mind the gratifying reflection, ‘By Jove! I’m being humble’ and almost immediately pride—pride at his own humility—will appear.”<sup>9</sup> Our loving Father knows and desires for us to accept who we are according to who he says we are. Demeaning ourselves and our abilities is no more virtuous than then brazenly exaggerating them—accuracy and truth are the key. Good brand management takes godly insight and patience, but the results are rewarding and can be a testament to a person’s potential to serve, as well as God’s grace in their lives.

In my work I find that it is often difficult for college students to have a healthy view of self while in college. Self-exploration happens over a lifetime, but during the college years it is beneficial to encourage students to be proactive by taking a systematic approach to self-reflection in order to attain a unique and healthy brand. As stated earlier, this comes from much self-reflection, which is guided by intentionality, focus, and thoughtful prayer. How does one begin a journey to better understand and testify to their gifts and passions? A great place to start is by seeking the Lord for guidance and clarity in understanding who we are and how we can use our gifts in a way that will be honoring to God. Praying is an act of humility that allows us to become more focused on God and his will, which initiates the process of self-identification.

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8 D. Brooks, “Humility in the Time of ‘Me,’” Q Ideas, May 24, 2016, from <http://qideas.org/videos/humility-in-the-time-of-me/#>.

9 C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 58.

## *A Path to a Healthy Brand*

### **B.R.A.N.D.E.D.**

A clear and well-marked path always makes the journey easier and more enjoyable. I have found that an acronym can be a useful tool in remembering an important fact or truth, acting as a guide to help a person stay on track. The word “BRANDED” makes a worthwhile acronym in the development of a personal brand:

**(B) Brief** – Keep in mind that a brand is not only formed by words, but pictures, images, and symbols, which can carry more meaning than words. A brand should be concentrated around a person’s top three personal values.

**(R) Research** – Develop and follow a career map. A career map is a tool that will bring direction and focus to exploring, identifying, choosing, and developing the talents and skills needed to achieve one’s career aspirations.

**(A) Add** – A personal mission statement brings clarity to assist you in identifying and communicating your life purpose; it answers the question of who you are and how you will live.

**(N) Nurture** – Nurturing means to take care of something. Creating or refining a brand is not a “once done and forget it” task, it is a process that you consistently return to, review, and adjust.

**(D) Distinct** – Look at other brands to get ideas, but make yours unique.

**(E) Execute** – Be strategic in what and where you post on social media; work your plan.

**(D) Defend** – You must be ever vigilant to protect your brand. This is personal! You protect your physical self, so too, you *must* protect your image.

However, as followers of Christ we have a greater responsibility than to just be branded for the purpose of self-promotion and self-focus. Is it not our calling to recognize our God-given vocation and that our “brandedness” has a higher purpose, one that promotes self for the good of others? God has chosen to use people throughout history to accomplish his purposes, so that “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20). In order to achieve the goal of being others-minded, an additional acronym is useful as a check list, but more importantly, as an accountability instrument that will insure the integration of our faith into the branding process.

## **V.I.E.W.**

It is vital that we view ourselves as the Lord views us, thus the acronym “VIEW” will assist in maintaining our God-focused alignment in seeking to promote our work and abilities. V.I.E.W. = value, integrity, exult, and wisdom. The beauty of acronyms is that they help to invoke questions about the process. Good answers to direct questions have the ability to bring clear understanding of self. The following are just a few questions that should be answered: Who is this brand for, myself, others, or both? Is it focused just for career development or for personal use? What is my goal in developing a brand?

**(V) Value** – Core values should represent us, our relationship with the Lord, and how that relationship will impact others. What values does this brand communicate to the world? Does the brand express those values correctly? Does what is being promoted align with our calling? Is the brand’s focus simply self-focused, or is it oriented in how your values extend toward service for others?

**(I) Integrity** – Integrity is having the quality of high moral standards and honesty. Proverbs 10:9 states, “Whoever walks in integrity walks securely, but he who makes his ways crooked will be found out.” Honesty produces security, both psychologically and interpersonally. Our words matter. Rush Limbaugh is famous for saying, “words mean things!” In other words, we are not fooling anyone but ourselves. Is your personal brand truthful? Is it over or under stated? Does the brand emphasize

God-given gifts and talents? Are the gifts and talents expressed in a way that promotes the Lord?

**(E) Exult** – This word might not seem to fit until we consider the definition, Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary states: to be extremely joyful. The process of brand development should cause us to be jubilant and thankful for the blessings the Lord has graciously given. Rejoice and praise the Lord, for we are wonderfully and uniquely made (see Ps 139:14). If we are experiencing stress through the process of thinking through brand development and not joy we must ask, “Why?” Seeking the advice of a mentor, close friend, or professional can reduce the pressure and help us to believe the truth of who were truly are in Christ.

**(W) Wisdom** – “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him” (James 1:5). Christians share the astonishing gift of the Holy Spirit, who has been promised as a helper, and consequently, we should not be in the branding business without the guidance of the Spirit. This means from the beginning, through the middle, and at the conclusion of the branding process we must seek the understanding and clarity of the Lord. This can be accomplished through conversations with mentors or spiritual guides and filtering our desires, motivations, values, and ideas through Scripture and prayer. Proverbs 16:19 states, “The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.” Is this brand a representation of myself, or the Lord’s work in me? Is it good for others? Are there any blind spots? Is this brand helpful or harmful to God’s kingdom work?

As Christians we should not fear the process of developing our brand but embrace it as an advantageous tool that supports our faith walk. Branding through the use of social media provides a constant source of accountability; it is a blending of our personal and professional lives for all to see. In many ways our brand spans the gap between the “secular” working world and the “sacred” Christian corridors of our churches. Our lives are digitally there for all to see—work *and* worship, skills *and*

surrender, productivity *and* purpose. Our brand can be a great way to express God's love to a hurting world and help us to walk in this world as a unified personified who sees all of life as sacred.

## *Conclusion*

In developing a path toward healthy, Christian self-promotion, we have identified that understanding who we are can only be accurate when grounded in an understanding of God's intention for humanity. Vocation is a significant aspect of God's purpose for people on earth, and consequently our contribution to society must be outwardly focused. Being known as a follower of Christ is the most significant thing in developing our brand; it is the filter we sift our very lives through. However, as witnessed above, this means far more than simply adding a Bible verse to your email signature line.

Good and honest self-identification will move us to a higher level of conversation with others and give us a deeper response when asked, "Tell me about yourself?" We will be able to answer with confidence in the knowledge of who we are, and what our vital role is in God's plan for the world. We can communicate in a positive way, expressing the gifts and skills that are bestowed on us, knowing they are blessings from the Lord and are to be used for his glory in the vocation he has planned for us (see Eph 2:10). A wonderful benefit to building a godly brand is the realization that as we grow in understanding the truth of who we are and our purpose, the pressure to perform is greatly reduced. In Romans we are told, that we are set free in Christ Jesus. Thank God, we have indeed been branded!



*Construction (no. 5)*  
Jon Anderson  
Oil on birch panel  
2009

*Construction (no. 5)* elevates the presumptively utilitarian wood surface of a birch plywood panel to present a silhouette of a wood-framed building. The artist manages to capture both the beauty and utility of wood in this piece, all the while presenting evidence and documentation of a historical moment of human activity. Often we fail to see the beauty in the essential structures of things. Anderson's artistic eye invites the viewer into his created world to contemplate the inherent beauty of abstract forms that coalesce into the ubiquitous sense experiences of our daily lives. This work is from the exhibition *WORK Curse or Calling?* For a more complete review of the exhibition, see pg. 83.

# What Science Is, and What It Is Not<sup>†</sup>

John C. Lennox\*

## *What is Science? Hard or Soft?*

We're in for some hard work. I've tried to make it as easy as I can, but the topic of the nature of science is a little bit complex, but because of that, it's fascinating. Which would you rather have: a toy corvette, or a real corvette? The real car is much more complex than the toy car, and it's true with ideas. Such is the case as we look at this very important question: what is science, and what is it not? The Nobel Prize-winning physicist Richard Feynman said something that is extremely important: "I believe that the scientist, looking at non-scientific problems, is just as dumb as the next guy."<sup>1</sup> So, we need to bear that in mind as we look at what science is and what it isn't.

The term science comes from the Latin *scientia* meaning knowledge. In the Anglo-Saxon world it refers to a set of intellectual disciplines devoted to the study of nature, whereas in the German-speaking world its equivalent *Wissenschaft* refers to all branches of learning in the natural sciences and the humanities. In the natural sciences we distinguish between the exact and the non-exact sciences. A general dictionary

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<sup>†</sup> This article is an edited and abridged transcript of a larger lecture titled "What Science Is, and What It Is Not" presented by John C. Lennox during the Pensmore Dialogue on Science & Faith at College of the Ozarks on September 25, 2015. Every effort has been made to fairly and accurately represent the original content.

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1 Richard P. Feynman, "The Value of Science," *Engineering and Science* 19 (1955): 13.

entry for the former would read something like, the exact sciences are the sciences whose laws are capable of accurate, quantitative expression; or any scientific field in which accurate, quantitative techniques are used, and they are an accurate means of testing hypotheses. There's a heavy emphasis on mathematics, measurements, and numbers, and that occurs in physics, chemistry, engineering, computing, astronomy, but not so much—although increasingly so—in psychology, biology, and the social sciences. Sometimes we range scientific disciplines in a spectrum from hard to soft on the basis of factors such as rigor, and whether they are theoretical or applied; pure mathematics being theoretical, physics and chemistry being applied (they're typically among the hardest sciences), biology in an intermediate position, and social and political sciences being the softest.

Now, some people will of course disagree with this, but it is an up-and-ready, fluid picture. And it is noticeable that the so-called softer sciences do attempt constantly to harden up by using more mathematics, more statistical methods, and so on. Natural sciences, such as biology, do not always aim to generate testable predictions in the same way that physics does. And that's another reason that they're regarded as softer. It's rather amusing that in the 1980s, a very eminent mathematician Serge Lange blocked the admission of the very famous political scientist Samuel P. Huntington from the U.S. Academy of Sciences. Lange described Huntington's use of mathematics to quantify the relationship between factors such as social frustration, as pseudo-science, and Lange, rather tongue and cheek asked Huntington if he possessed a social-frustration meter.

Well, that's possibly a little bit unfair, but nevertheless, the hard sciences do tend to emphasize the production of testable predictions, performing controlled experiments, relying on quantifiable data, mathematical models, and showing a high degree of accuracy and objectivity. And of course through the centuries there have been many guesses and wrong turns because science involves hunches and guesses more often than not, and many promising theories have been completely abandoned. But now, as a result of this process, we do have a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of electromagnetic waves, gravity, and the properties of materials. Consequently, we can produce a bewildering array of things that function spectacularly well, from automobiles to aircrafts, from submarines to spacecraft, from clocks to computers, and from smartphones to heart and lung machines.

This technological spin-off has earned hard science a huge prestige and cultural authority in our society. Those kinds of things we can get a firm handle on since we can measure physical and electromagnetic forces and electric currents with high precision. That's not to say the softer sciences are unimportant, but simply that the nature of what they study does not lend itself to the quality and precision of result that we associate with the harder sciences. It's very difficult to measure the societal and political forces that lead to war, or to assess the currents of opinion that lead to one politician being elected and not another. Putting it another way, there is a spectrum, an intellectual inquiry ranging from facts to opinions, and the harder sciences tend to be more fact-dependent than opinion-dependent. So, our confidence levels can be higher because they are independent, as far as possible, of personal agency though never entirely independent.

The prestige of the natural sciences is such that the word "science" is often used to add apparent respectability to ideas that do not have real, hard scientific support. This is a particular danger when scientists of repute in their fields like physics and mathematics make extravagant claims that are well outside their field and then the unsuspecting public wrongly ascribes to their pronouncements the authority and reliability due to true scientific advance.

What is science? In our culture the term is used rather loosely. Science can mean almost anything from an organized body of descriptive knowledge to the predictive mathematical models of quantum molecular dynamics, which have been experimentally verified to an accuracy greater than one part in a billion. But informally, we might think of science as consisting of disciplined and systematic attempts to understand the universe around us. These attempts should concentrate on facts rather than personal opinions, should involve first making careful observations and then trying to see if they fit in some kind of an explanatory pattern. It should look like testing our suggestions and refining them on the basis of results of those tests.

Now, that process is actually rather difficult to formulate precisely since it often precedes by guesses and intuitions, by blunders and insights that often seem quite illogical. Philosophers of science have long since given up attempting to give you a hard-and-fast dictionary definition of science, but we can say that there are certain features that crop up all the time: observation, hypothesis, experiment, data, evidence, modified hypothesis, theory, prediction, law. So, roughly speaking, science

is knowledge derived from facts of experience, and a scientific theory is considered powerful if it has extensive, predictive power. A good theory predicts the outcome of physical events; it allows the scientist to tell what will happen next, and is therefore testable. Scientists seek to discover the rules of the game. Why is Newton's Law of Gravitation so powerful? Because you can predict the orbit of a spacecraft and do the calculations to land a person on the moon without even bothering about Einstein's refinements. The famous physicist Sir James Jeans once said, "Science advances in two ways: by the discovery of new facts, and by the discovery of mechanisms of systems, which account for the facts already known."<sup>2</sup> And the outstanding landmarks in science, he says, have always been of the second kind—that is, the accounting of facts already known by qualifying them in a mathematical description. For instance, Kepler observed that the planets move in ellipses and Newton gave a basic equation from which those elliptical orbits can be derived.

## *Worldviews Affect Definitions: Inductive or Historical?*

I want to give you an example of the difficulty in defining science that begins to move us towards the worldview influences that affect science. Michael Ruse, who is a well-known philosopher of science, says science "by definition deals only with the natural, the repeatable, and that which is governed by law."<sup>3</sup> But important areas of science do not deal with the repeatable; for example, the cosmology of the origin of the universe and the biology of the origin of life. We cannot repeat the beginning of the universe in a laboratory to see what happens; it cannot be part of that notion of repeatability. So, Michael Ruse's definition would rule out a great deal of what people think of as science.

So, we need to now make the next distinction, and that's between what we call inductive science, or repeated experimentation, and historical science. With inductive science we do the experiment today, and we get the same result today as we did yesterday. And we expect to get

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2 James Hopwood Jeans, "Relativity," in *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed. (vol. 19; New York, 1929), 89-99.

3 Michael Ruse, *Darwinism Defended* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1982), 322.

the same result tomorrow. That is what many young people particularly think science is. But then there is historical science. That is when we are investigating things that are not repeatable. And as a very clear example of that, we think of forensic medicine. The body is lying on the floor with a dagger through its heart. Well Inspector Morse can't just say, "let's just rerun the murder to see what happened." You can't do that! So, how do you proceed with a murder investigation? Well this of course is what makes Agatha Christie and Inspector Morse such fun, doesn't it? Because they say, 'Now, if now A was true, then that murder would happen, so, A's a plausible explanation of it.' And somebody else says, "Well no, if B were true, then actually it would happen with more plausibility." So, what they're doing there is a process we've all used. When investigating something that we can't repeat, we make what is called an inference to the best explanation; we assemble all the possible explanations, and we choose the best one. And that's vital in any discipline that attempts to access the past; historical aspects of cosmology, biology, forensic medicine, and archaeology. But the obvious thing is this: that historical science cannot, by its nature, carry the same authority as inductive science. If you've got a repeatable experiment, that clearly carries a great deal more authority than making an inference to the best explanation for an event or a phenomenon that you cannot repeat.

Now, some leading scientists try to deny this. Let me give you a very powerful example of that. This is from one of the world's leading geneticists Richard Lewontin. "It is time," he says, "to state clearly that evolution is fact, not theory. . . . Birds arose from non-birds and humans arose from non-humans. No person who pretends to have any understanding of the natural world can deny these facts any more than he or she can deny that the earth is round, rotates on its axis, and revolves around the sun."<sup>4</sup> Noticing the earth rotating on its axis and revolving around the sun is inductively established; we can observe it every day. But, have you ever seen a bird arising from a non-bird? Or a human from a non-bird? These things have not been observed. In other words, Lewontin is confusing the two kinds of sciences, and he's trying to give to his evolutionary theory the same authority as to the motion of the planets. This is very deceptive, and it's important to look and see exactly what people are claiming when they are stating it under the authority of scientific knowledge.

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4 Richard Lewontin, "Evolution/Creation Debate: A Time for Truth," *BioScience* 31.8 (1981): 559.

## *The Inescapable Presuppositions in Doing Science*

Many people, as we shall see in a moment, obfuscate science and define it as applied naturalism so that, as they look at the universe, every phenomenon must fit a naturalistic picture; that's exactly what happened for centuries until people like Johannes Kepler said, "Why do we not look at the universe and follow the evidence where it leads?" Now, this is utterly crucial for our understanding of what is going on in the culture today. Do we say that all solutions have to be naturalistic ones or do we say—if there is evidence of designing intelligence—we have to take that on board as well?

Francis Bacon, who lived in the late 16th and early 17th centuries, is often called the father of modern science, and he held that science should be objective. It should be empirical. It should be rational. It should be free from all religious or philosophical presuppositions. We now know that is completely impossible. However, it is remarkable how widespread the idea is that science is objective; it's free from presupposition. It isn't, because science is done by scientists.

To begin, organizing and collecting data is impossible without some prior theory of what might be important to select, or what factors are relevant. Data doesn't organize itself. What category the data goes into will depend on the ideas the scientist already maintains. If you're studying heat, you observe heat caused by combustion in a fire. Now, if you think, as scientists once did, that the sun's heat is caused by combustion, then you will also put it in that category. And that was a mistake that had to be corrected later when they discovered nuclear fusion. That's just one simple example of the fact that when you do science, you must make certain assumptions; you can't avoid it.

The number one assumption you must make is that science can be done. If you don't assume that science can be done, you'd never do any science. But translate that into what it really means. In order to do science—at the very start—you must believe, assume, or presuppose that the universe is at least in part accessible to the human mind. Now, that is a very simple thing, but it is very important because it shows us that all scientists have a credo—they believe something! The common view in the culture today is that Christians believe something; atheists don't believe anything. They have no beliefs; they are scientific. And

in reality, this is just utterly false. Therefore, to do science, you have to believe that nature is rationally intelligible. I have frequently made the point that it was Christianity that provided that basis, that foundation for scientific activity, because it said yes, you can understand creation in part because it is the work of a creator who's intelligent, and you are made in his image. This fits together perfectly.

The second thing you have to assume in doing science is that nature normally behaves uniformly. If you do an experiment tomorrow, you expect to get the same result as today. You assume a certain degree of uniformity, or else the universe would fall apart. You all assume that the sun is going to rise again tomorrow, don't you? Because you saw it arise yesterday, and so on and so forth. Now, that's something we believe! You cannot prove that nature is uniform. Some, like Harvard professor Richard Lewontin, are honest enough to say that scientists, like all other intellectuals, come to their work with a worldview, a set of preconceptions that provides the framework for their analysis of the world.<sup>5</sup> Our culture gives us a worldview, but sooner or later it is possible for us to take off our spectacles, clean them, and for many, adjust the lenses so that you can then see things more clearly. But before the spectacles come off, we need to realize that we are actually wearing them.

The inevitable upshot of all this is that science—natural science—is built on uncertainties. Many scientists, like myself, would call themselves critical realists. We believe there is truth out there, it's very real, and we can move towards it. However, we never get completely there. Galileo got somewhere. Kepler got a bit further. Newton got even further. Einstein got even further. Any respectable physicist will point out to you that there is more to be found out, but we are moving towards *something*. And one of the evidences of that, of course, is what we can produce on the basis of theories we have at the moment. But there's no abso-

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5 Richard Lewontin penned his oft-cited words in a review of Carl Sagan's *The Demon-Haunted World: Science as a Candle in the Dark*. "We take the side of science *in spite of* the patent absurdity of some of its constructs, *in spite of* its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, *in spite of* the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counterintuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door." Richard Lewontin, "Billions and Billions of Demons," in *New York Review of Books*, January 9, 1997.

lute certainty. Richard Feynman once said, “If you thought before that science was certain—well, that is just an error on your part.”<sup>6</sup> And as a mathematician, I am very leery when people say to me “Can you prove to me that God exists?” The word “proof” is ambiguous in our society, and we need to tease out what it actually means. In my field of mathematics we have rigorous proof. You start with these axioms, you use that logic, and you get these conclusions. You don’t get that in any other intellectual field, not even in physics, chemistry, or anywhere else. You cannot speak of that kind of logical proof. What you can say is that the evidence for this is very strong. The evidence for Newton’s second law is very powerful. Look at this, and this, and this, and this. This does not mean, however, that the evidence isn’t weighty enough to put your life on it. At the moment, I’ve been married for forty-seven years. I couldn’t prove to you mathematically that my wife loves me, but I would stake my life on it because I believe there’s sufficient evidence of it. People often say, “I won’t believe anything you say until you prove it.” “Well,” I say, “Then you’ll never believe anything.” If you ask me to prove A, then I’ll have to prove it on the basis of B. And then the person will ask me to prove B, and I’d have to prove that on the basis of C, and so, we go on. You have to start somewhere, you see. And that’s why, interestingly enough, Scripture starts by asserting the existence of God. In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. It doesn’t attempt to give any evidence for it, but it gives masses of that later. In other words, as you go on, the evidence is cumulative and it builds up. You start somewhere; you postulate that there is a God, and then you fill that in later. That is a perfectly valid process which is used everywhere.

### *Only Naturalism Allowed in the Laboratory?*

Most of science, let’s be realistic, is essentially worldview independent. Coming to the conclusion that Newton’s Laws hold is not a function of whether you’re a Christian or an atheist or anything else. They’re worldview independent. Worldviews, if ever, rarely enter into chemistry, mathematics, engineering, computer science, physiology, medicine, and so on. Where they do come very close is at any study of origins.

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6 Richard Feynman, *The Character of Physical Law* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967), 77.

We need to realize that most working scientists are not worrying about questions of origins all day long. They are working in sophisticated laboratories trying to find out how this works, trying to find a cure for that disease, and they're not thinking at all about the question of origins. Sometimes Christians get the impression that all that science is worried about is origins. That's simply false; that's a tiny percent. We are interested in them because of the massive implications for our conception of our own human identity. But let's realize that most scientists aren't bothered with them at all. That's not their field; they're not working in that. And so, we need to have a due sense of proportion.

However, when we come to origins, the two big worldviews that are clashing in our culture are on the one hand naturalism and on the other Christian Theism. Naturalism simply means this: nature is all that exists. There's no transcendence, there's no god, this universe or multiverse is a closed system of cause and effect. It's slightly different from materialism, but if you ask me what the difference is, I refer you to *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*,<sup>7</sup> which says it's very hard to tell the difference. The only discernable difference I can see is that some people believe that the mind is not necessarily reducible to physics and chemistry, that is, the material. But, the common thing in naturalism and materialism is that they are by definition atheistic.

So, atheism is one worldview, and the other worldview is theism—in my case, Christian theism. And the story that is sold to our culture is that science and atheism go together. And that theism, and particularly Christianity, inhibits science. The proposed result is that God and science are at war. I want to strongly emphasize that that is *obviously false*. Let's take the physics Nobel Prize. A couple years ago, a Scotsman by the name of Peter Higgs won it on account of his discovery of the Higgs Boson. Peter Higgs is a friendly atheist, and he won the Nobel Prize. He's a brilliant physicist. A few years before that, William Phillips won it. He's a citizen of the United States, and he is a Christian. He won the same prize. So, are these people divided by their science? Of course not. If you won the Nobel Prize, you won the Nobel Prize. You're a genius at physics! So, they're not divided by their science. What are they divided by? Their worldview. Higgs—atheist; Phillips—Christian. And this is what we see when we analyze society. The division comes at the worldview level, and there are brilliant scientists on both sides. This

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7 Ted Honderich, ed., *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2005).

simple fact ought to show people—unfortunately it doesn't—that it's not a God versus science conflict, it's an atheism versus theism conflict.

## *The Dangers Atheism/Naturalism Poses for Science*

Distinguishing between science and worldview is the next issue. Another Nobel Prize winner named Christian de Duve says this: “Scientific enquiry rests on the notion that all manifestations in the universe are explainable in natural terms without supernatural intervention.”<sup>8</sup> Here is a Nobel Prize winner telling people that science is defined by the view that all manifestations are explainable in natural terms without supernatural intervention. This is a worldview conditioned definition, and it is lightyears from saying that we look at the evidence, and we follow where it leads—even if it leads to the postulate that there has to be a supernatural intervention. He's cutting that off! He's limiting the possibilities for explanation. He's not increasing them. However, de Duve is very honest because he goes on to say, “Strictly speaking, this notion is not an a priori”—that is, it's not a notion that we have to have at the beginning. He says, “It's a working hypothesis that we should be prepared to abandon if faced with facts that defy every attempt at rational explanation.” This is a very common view. Here's science, and science and rationality are coextensive. Because, if the facts defy rational explanations, then we might look for something else.

But this position is absurd. A supernatural explanation of the resurrection of Jesus is perfectly rational. A supernatural explanation of the creation of the universe is completely rational. But such is the cultural power of the natural sciences that many people think that rational and scientific mean exactly the same thing. We would have to close half of the departments in our colleges if that were true. You would have to get rid of history, philosophy, theology, and everything else. It is absurd, but it shows you where the power in the culture rests. Therefore, it's very important for us, even non-scientists, to learn how to point these problems out. There's nothing in what I'm saying that you need advanced degrees in science to understand.

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8 Christian de Duve, *Life Evolving* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002), 284.

People should not be able to brow beat us into thinking that if we are historians or theologians, then what we are doing is not rational. Many atheists want us to believe this is the case, but of course it is not. Another Nobel Prize winner, immunologist George Klein, states: “I am indeed an atheist. I am not an agnostic. My attitude is not based on science, but rather on faith. . . .” Klein is at least being honest. He goes on, “The absence of a creator, the nonexistence of God is my childhood faith, my adult belief, unshakable, and holy.”<sup>9</sup> Klein is not blaming his science for his view; that is his conviction that he brings to his science. We need to realize that these are leading people in their fields telling us what lies in their very hearts. That’s not science. Science doesn’t lead them to do this, but they’re committed to atheism, and therefore, that is going to shape their science.

Here is the danger. Suppose I invent a machine as a physicist that can only see visible light. And you come along and your name happens to be Roentgen from Würzburg in Germany. You approach me and say, “Look. I’ve discovered some rays that I call X-rays.”

“Oh, really?” I say. I get my new machine and point it, “Well, I see nothing.”

And Roentgen would rightly say to me,

“But you designed your machine only to see visible light. Your machine by construction won’t see my X-rays.”

“Oh no. X-rays don’t exist,” I retort.

Well, who’s being stupid? I am, because I’m assuming—to switch metaphors—that what my net doesn’t catch isn’t a fish. So, the atheists have a set of questions, a grid, a matrix, that they apply to the universe and it’s deliberately designed not to see any evidence of the divine. Surprise, surprise, their system doesn’t see any evidence! Well of course not. It’s designed not to see it! But that *bypasses the question of whether there is any evidence at all*. And of course we cannot then, if we take this view, argue that our science has led us to be atheists/istic. It’s the exact opposite way around. The atheism is there at the beginning, and it is being applied to the universe. Nowadays, naturalism has invaded science as I suggest, and that’s a very big shift from the time of say Newton to the time of Steven Hawking.

If you are a naturalist you have to assume that information is reducible to chemistry and physics, but now the biggest shark is waiting to

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9 Cited in John C. Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God* (Oxford, England: Lion, 2009), 35.

devour you—information is not material at all. Mathematics is not material. Information is often carried on material things like paper and ink, but it itself is not material. And now comes the Bible resonating into this, “In the beginning was the Word” (John 1:1), and isn’t it interesting that we live in an age where we have discovered at the basis of our own existence and biology is a “word” written in the language of DNA.

Andrew Ferguson has noted the significant work of Thomas Nagel, an atheistic philosopher, who has argued that reductionistic materialism doesn’t account for the brute facts of existence. “It doesn’t explain why the world exists at all, or how life arose from non-life. It doesn’t begin to explain the fundamental beliefs we rely upon as we go about our everyday business, the truth of our subjective experience, our ability to reason, our capacity to recognize that some acts are virtuous and others are not. These failures, Nagel says, are not just temporary gaps in our knowledge waiting to be filled in by new discoveries in science. On its own terms, materialism cannot account for brute facts. Brute facts are irreducible and materialism which operates by breaking things down to their physical components, stands useless before them.”<sup>10</sup> It gives no base for it, but the view is a rational view. So, it’s pulling the carpet out from under science, as well as any rational thought. Listen to Nagel himself: “Evolutionary naturalism implies that we shouldn’t take any of our convictions seriously, including the scientific world picture on which evolutionary naturalism itself depends.”<sup>11</sup>

You know, shooting yourself in the foot is painful; shooting yourself in the brain is fatal. I want to submit to you that naturalism applied to science is in very serious danger of self-destruction, that is, shooting itself in the brain. In the end, of course, not only those of us who do science, but all of us, have to choose the presupposition with which we start. There’re not many options, just two. Naturalism thinks that human intelligence ultimately owes its origin to mindless matter. Theism teaches that there is an intelligent creator. I find it very strange that some people claim that it is their intelligence that leads them to prefer the first to the second.

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10 Andrew Ferguson, “The Heretic: Who is Thomas Nagel and Why Are So Many of His Fellow Academics Condemning Him?” *The Weekly Standard*, March 25, 2013, accessed June 9, 2016, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/heretic/article/707692?page=1>.

11 Thomas Nagel, *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Materialist Neo-Darwinian Conception of Nature Is Almost Certainly False* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), 28.

# Vocation as Implication: Learning to See Ourselves as Responsible, for Love’s Sake, for the Ways of the World<sup>†</sup>

Steven Garber\*

*“At crucial moments of choice, most of the business  
of choosing is already over.”*

—Iris Murdoch, Oxford University

Most of life is very ordinary. We are children and we are adults. We hope and we love. We work and we play. Most of life is lived not globally but very locally, in houses or apartments, on streets and in neighborhoods, in towns and in cities, and it is in those places, among those people, that we live into who we are and what we believe.

One of the reasons why I am drawn to the literary vision of Wendell Berry is that he writes about this kind of common life. In every course I teach I require my students to read him, looking over his shoulder and through his heart as he unfolds a vision of vocation that is formed by the truest truths of the universe, and yet in language the whole world can understand.

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† This essay is a revised version of chapter 6 of *Visions of Vocation: Common Grace for the Common Good* (Downer Grove, IL: IVP, 2014).

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After years of schooling and getting the job he had long longed for, Berry decided that his deeper identity was as someone from Kentucky and that he should return home, a decision that has shaped his life and literature. Buying into the family farm, he taught writing at the University of Kentucky, but over time settled into the rhythm that has become his life: husband, father, farmer. It is not a surprise, then, that his stories are about people a lot like him. Imagining a small town on the banks of the Kentucky River, he has created a universe out of Port William, with its farmers and shopkeepers, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, generationally twined together over a hundred years. He calls them “a membership”: “The way we are, we are members of each other. All of us. Everything. The difference ain’t in who is a member and who is not, but in who knows it and who don’t.”<sup>1</sup>

*That Distant Land* tells these tales as short stories, giving windows into the lives of people Berry’s readers come to know and love. The Old Jacks, the Miss Minnies, the Mat Feltners, the Burley Coulters, the Mary Penns and the Wheeler Catletts, each one painted with a skillful brush, with complexity and nuance, richness and depth.

Take Wheeler, for example. The subject of several stories, we meet him as a boy on his way to becoming a young man in the story “Blood Is Thicker Than Liquor.”<sup>2</sup> As a child he loved his Uncle Peach, his mother’s brother; they would play and laugh, full of pleasure together. But as Wheeler became an adolescent he began to see that Uncle Peach was an alcoholic and was drunk more often than not. Rather than being happy to be in relationship, Wheeler wanted nothing to do with him.

Seeing how his mother troubled herself with Uncle Peach and mourned over him, Wheeler said, bullying her in her own defense as a seventeen-year-old-boy is apt to do,

“To hell with him! Why don’t you let him get on by himself the best way he can? What’s he done for you?”

Dorie answered his first question, ignoring the second: “Because blood is thicker than water.”

And Wheeler said, mocking her, “Blood is thicker than liquor.” “Yes,” she said. “Thicker than liquor too.”

Wheeler goes off to the university, then to law school, and returns home to begin his life as an attorney and a new husband. Mother and

1 Wendell Berry, *That Distant Land: The Collected Stories* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2005), 356.

2 The following excerpts are from *The Distant Land*, 145–63.

son have an important conversation along the way, him now a young man learning to see the world with both responsibility and love.

“‘Blood is thicker than liquor,’ Wheeler said to her, no longer mocking, but gently stating the fact as he knew she saw it. ‘Yes,’ she said, and smiled. ‘It is.’”

A hotel clerk in Louisville calls Wheeler one day, asking if someone can come into the city and get Uncle Peach, who has gotten drunk, horribly messing up his room. Instinctively, Wheeler says he will come and help his uncle. And he goes off to love his mother’s brother, more because she does than that he does.

He finds Uncle Peach disheveled, and the room torn apart. Cleaning him up, he gives him coffee and brings him home. But before the train ride is over, Uncle Peach vomits again, horribly and loudly retching in the crowded train car. Wheeler does his best to clean them both up, and upon arriving at the station gets them into the buggy and takes them back to Uncle Peach’s home, enduring more vomit along the way.

Finally, after this had happened perhaps a dozen times, Wheeler, who had remained angry, said, “I hope you puke your . . . guts out.” And Uncle Peach, who lay, quaking and white, against the seatback, said, “Oh, Lord, honey, you can’t mean that.”

As if his anger had finally stripped all else away, suddenly Wheeler saw Uncle Peach as perhaps Dorie has always seen him—a poor, hurt, weak mortal, twice hurt because he knew himself to be hurt and weak and mortal. And then Wheeler knew what he did need from Uncle Peach. He needed him to be comforted. That was all. He put his arm around Uncle Peach, then, and patted him as if he were a child. “No,” he said. “I don’t mean it.”

The story finishes with surprising grace, and has become a metaphor for life. When they arrive home, Wheeler decides to stay with Uncle Peach, rather than go home to his new bride. And so, after putting the older man to bed, Wheeler climbs in too. As the hours pass, he feels the terrors of Uncle Peach’s mostly sleepless night, but eventually, “Wheeler went to sleep, his hand remaining on Uncle Peach’s shoulder where it had come to rest.”

In this short story Berry offers a window into life for Everyman, for Everywoman. There is no one who does not have, literally or figuratively, an Uncle Peach to love—a person, a place, a community, a culture. In the innocence of youth, Uncle Peach was lovable, but the

older Wheeler got, knowing more of the world and of his uncle, the more difficult it was to love him.

That Wheeler's mother loved her brother instructed her son, and he was willing to step into her love, for love's sake. But it was not until he began to see Uncle Peach as "poor, hurt, mortal," that he got into bed with Uncle Peach and put his hand on his shoulder through the night.

Can we know the world and still love it? Mostly we decide that we cannot—just like Wheeler—for lots of good reasons. Uncle Peach did not deserve to be loved, and there was no indication that he was ever going to change. Simply said, he was a mess, and whatever he touched became a mess. But in the midst of the mess, Dorie loved her brother, and taught her son to love him too. Knowing what they knew, complicated and complex as it was, they chose to love.

To do that with honesty and integrity is the most difficult task in the world. But there are people who make that choice. Not out of grandeur or great ambition, but in the spirit of Berry's vision: in the relationships and responsibilities of common life, they see themselves as implicated in the way the world is and ought to be. They see themselves as having vocations that call them into life, into the world—into a way of knowing that implicates them, for love's sake.

And in the unfolding of my life, living where I have lived, working where I have worked, I have met some of them.

## *Jonathan Groene—Kansas Born and Bred*

My first memories of Jonathan are from Bear Trap Ranch in Colorado, where he came for a summer after his first year at the University of Kansas. A native of Lawrence and the son of generations of Kansans, he loved being from the people and place which made him, him. But as I got to know Jonathan, I also saw an unusual eagerness, a seriousness about things that matter and a softness of heart that led to a rare desire to learn all that he could.

That summer, with students like him from all over the middle part of America, he took up the calling to live between two worlds—in the rich image of John Stott—deepening and growing an intellectually grounded understanding of the Christian tradition and developing categories and lenses to make sense of the world around him. Over

time he became a part of our family, eating meals with us, playing with our children, even helping us to bury a badly broken and now dead new puppy.

His educational interests eventually took him to other places, where he met Jennifer, and before long they were married on Lookout Mountain, straddling the states of Tennessee and Georgia. More schooling followed for both of them, and they moved first to Mississippi and then to Iowa, where they began having children. In school, and yet needing to provide for his young family, day after day Jonathan would leave his books to take up the craft of carpentry, apprenticing himself to a skilled craftsman who trained him in the hammering of nails and the sawing of wood. He had always loved working with his hands; in fact, the harder the work, the more he liked it.

It was not very long before he decided that he would rather build houses than study history, and they moved back to Kansas, home to Lawrence. I remember smiling when I saw the T-shirt he had made to advertise his new company, “Steward of visions and resources,” and I was sure that he was bringing his years of thinking about the world to bear on the way that he was going to live in the world.

Over the years his commitment to that kind of work has deepened as his children have grown from babies to adults. No longer a young man eager to take up the world, he is now fully at work in the world, a trusted and respected member of the community whose labor of love in building and rebuilding houses is prized by his neighbors. Being in business for himself, he has all of the hopes and fears built into his work: ups and downs in the economy, trustworthy and not-so-trustworthy employees, the daily reality of his reputation on the line.

Listening in over the years I know that Jonathan and Jennifer care deeply about both their local community and the wider world. It would be fair to say that they have made peace with living in Lawrence. They live in the tension of knowing that there is a lot of complex brokenness everywhere, and they often wonder about their responsibility. Sometimes that does take them to other places, to bigger cities, giving away their gifts for the sake of others, him in carpentry and her in counseling, while still living in Lawrence as they do, enjoying the graces of a small university town that still has a wonderful main street, where it is possible to know and to be known.

In a place like Lawrence, it is not possible to say one thing and then do another and still keep your head up the next day. The person you

mistreated by doing bad work on his new kitchen may be your daughter's soccer coach or be married to your son's high school teacher. To have your vocation be embodied where other people live, in their bedrooms and bathrooms, in their longed-for new decks, more often than not requires a commitment to a common good that is more lived than it is imagined.

One of the great challenges for everyone is finding a place in the world—seeing a lot, hearing a lot, reading a lot, and then deciding where and what we will do. Knowing what we know, what will we do? How is it that our habits of heart become a life? How do we grow our loves into a life? How do our deepest commitments become who we are and the way we live? No one finds that easy; in a thousand different ways we start and stop, wonder and try again. The best story is that Jonathan has become the words he advertised, living into his promise: a steward of visions and resources. And Lawrence, Kansas, is a better place for it.

## *David Franz—Home Again*

St. Augustine argued that the question “What do you love?” is the most important of all questions. While other questions matter, it is the question of our loves that goes to the heart of who we are. What David Franz loves is Shafter, California, with all its local history and hopes.

The son, grandson and great-grandson of farmers, he has the soil of the San Joaquin Valley in his soul. He is a descendant of Mennonite immigrants who wanted to worship and work together in America as they had in Russia and found the fertile land of California a good place to make their home. David grew up loving where he was from, both the people and the place.

Shafter is also my hometown, and I grew up going to school with his uncles and aunts, and his parents. I first met David when I spoke on my work with the American Studies Program in Washington to people I had known most of my life back in Shafter. He was in high school at the time but later told me that when he heard about the life of our little community of scholarship and service, of junior and senior members learning together, he determined that someday he would join us. And he did.

Most of life is only understood in retrospect. While he flourished in every important way that semester, it was not until a few years later

that I began to understand what those months had meant to him. He was awakened to learning, and began to see what he wanted to learn about and what he wanted to do with his learning. After he returned to California to finish school, I began to write recommendations for him to study in all sorts of interesting places. A summer at Notre Dame. A few months in Switzerland. A year on the Chesapeake Bay. And finally a graduate program at the University of Virginia.

With an ever-deepening sense of vocation, he began taking up the questions which have become his, the interdisciplinary nexus of sociology and economics, but with a great interest in what the questions in those disciplines mean for ordinary people in ordinary places. A first year grew into many years of study and finally a PhD in a good department from a good university. The doorways of the academic world were open to him.

One day he and I were having breakfast in Charlottesville. He had finished his degree the previous year, and he had been given a year-long fellowship to turn his dissertation into a book. We talked about what would come next, and with a twinkle in his eye, he told me that was thinking of going home to Shafter. I am sure my eyes lit up with perplexed pleasure as I wondered, “To do what?” And he told me of an unusual conversation with the city manager, someone whom I had known forty years earlier, who had a vision for the flourishing of his city that could use David’s gifts and passions to help bring it about.

Over time the idea began to have legs, and to the surprise of colleagues in the academy, with his wife Charis and young family he moved back to the small farming community where generations of his family had made their home. His work there is focused on the renewal of education in the local schools, bringing the years of his study about people and places through the lenses of his disciplines and making that insight useful to the people and place of Shafter.

There is an echo of Berry himself in David’s story, if we have ears to hear. From a farming family and community, off to higher education at different levels, with wonderful opportunities open to explore the world of work with his studies complete—and in and through it all an unsettled sense that “I am from somewhere and from some people, that my relationships to that place and those people give me a responsibility to and for them, and therefore my vocation will be found with them and among them.”

There is a longer story here, as David is only stepping into this vision. There are difficulties in a small town, as there are in a large city. History, geography, politics, economics, race and class—always and everywhere these dynamics create complexity. What will happen over time is a story that is yet to be told. What is sure is that he loves where he is from and why he is from there. Because that is true he wants honest coherence between his education and his vocation, so that what he has learned will be for the sake of where he has lived. That is a good life for anyone, anywhere.

## *Kwang Kim—A Global Citizen*

We all have many conversations, and most of them slowly fall into the mist of the past. But some of them we remember, and I remember one from a weekend retreat some years ago, hearing a question at the Saturday evening campfire, “Can we talk?” The question became a conversation, and the conversation became a friendship.

Kwang Kim is the most global citizen that I know. Born of Korean parents from the North and the South, he grew up in Latin America; first in Argentina, then Brazil, and finally Ecuador. He moved to Los Angeles for undergraduate study, then onto Boston for graduate school, and with years of learning to now steward, he began a career at the World Bank.

If there is a question at the heart of his life, it is this: What should the world be like? Is there a way we ought to live in the world, one that has implications for the way that development is done, whether that is in the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, or in the cities and societies of the Northern Hemisphere where there is still such crying need?

Having spent the last twenty years thinking about the way we help—the way large multinational organizations like the World Bank assist the needy nations of the earth—Kwang is captivated by the question: What ought we to be doing? Are there norms for development? Do we have any access to what it is supposed to be? Can we ever know what development should be? Are there any oughts and shoulds in this whatever world? Or are we only left with culturally relative “maybes” and “perhapses”?

Able to think and speak and write in many languages, Kwang lives his heart out all over the world. His years at the Bank have taken him for periods of time to Pakistan, to Jordan, to the Caribbean and to several

countries of Latin America. Always the passion guiding his work is to rethink the way development is done, longing to be part of something more sustainable, where the hours and dollars mean honest change for the good of those who live with the programs and plans of the Bank.

Watching as I do, I am intrigued when someone sees seamlessly, when someone's instincts are to find the connections between ideas, when someone assumes that there is a coherence to the cosmos—and that our task is to understand it. From my earliest conversations with Kwang, that was true. In the questions he asked and the visions he pursued there was a thread that ran through everything he took up. In a word, it was integrity. Not only for his life as a human being, an Asian/Latino/American, but as someone with a calling into the socio-political economics of the world, with their almost unfathomable complexity. Even in the midst of that work, Kwang wrestles his way to coherence.

That is not romanticism. He does not give an inch to pie-in-the-sky. Rather, he works hard to master the information that each situation presents, bringing his own vocation to the dynamics of the assignment. Over time he has begun to see that there are in fact “true truths” about development, ones that are as meaningful to Latinos as they are to Pakistanis as they are to Arabs. But he also recognizes that development is broken, and Kwang has chosen a path to promote change from within. With his own necessary sophistication, having to speak the language of the Bank because that is the context of his work, he argues that humility and mutuality are the heart of good development programs.

The Bank can be the proverbial elephant in the room, requiring that everyone pay most attention to what it says and does. Among the nations of the earth, that does not make for a good future. Instead it breeds resentment on a large scale, and what might happen for good is more often than not frustrated by the tensions produced by arrogance in all its insidiousness. People want to know that they are being honestly served by people who are honest servants. And people, as people, want to know that everyone's ideas matter, so for an economic development project to work in Guatemala it has to be primarily the Guatemalan people that give shape and substance to the project. The Bank is an important partner, but it must be a partner—and it can do this by becoming an effective broker to the voices of the poor as it takes its place in the collage of local industrialists, the requirements of internal and external bureaucracies, and of course, always amid the reality of global trends.

And it is this that Kwang gives himself to wherever his work calls him, month by month, year after year. Those virtues of humility and mutuality find their place in the serious, sustained debates about social structures that over time will either make or break the program, and that is always incredibly complex. But the structures do not exist or have life on their own. Rather, it is the virtues—a word formed by the Latin *vir*, or what human beings are supposed to be, are meant to be—that give life to the structures, bringing flourishing to aching people in aching places.

There is more to Kwang's life than the Bank though. For years now he has given time and energy to the renewal of North Korean culture, meeting monthly to pray with other Korean Americans in Washington, each one autobiographically implicated in the hopes of their homeland. The Washington group is only one of many like this all over the United States and Canada, each one full of eager, bright, motivated men and women who yearn together for a new day in Korea, where social and political and economic and artistic flourishing will become reality—because it is the way it is supposed to be, for everyone everywhere.

In the end, all of us are best known by the questions that keep us up at night and that wake us in the morning. What should the world be like? is the animating question at the heart of Kwang's life, making sense of his days and his nights. That is what a vocation is, and does.

### *Susan Den Herder—A Mother and More*

Sometimes it seems as if I have spent my life welcoming new students into the classrooms of my heart. For reasons that are finally mysterious, some stay there and some go. That they are different is not a moral difference; equally good people respond differently. And it is not always obvious the first day. More often than not, it is weeks and months before I began to understand who a student is and to know whether there will be more of life together.

I do remember having lunch with Susan during her Fellows year of study. We had spent a month in class “reading the Word and reading the world at the very same time,” focused for several weeks on sexuality. As we talked I began to see that she was someone with surprising instincts about life and love, about her faith and the world that was hers, as if it all mattered very much, and she had eyes to see why it did and how it did.

A recent graduate of Wake Forest University, she was only beginning to dig more deeply into the meaning of what she believed and how she would live. But it was her instincts that surprised me. If the challenge of the class was to take Christian convictions seriously, and at the same time to take the questions of the world seriously, Susan intuitively rejected any kind of compartmentalization and instead went straight for more coherence. She saw seamlessly and wanted to live seamlessly.

By the semester's end she had become a friend, and now ten years later, Married to Nate, and mother to William, Molly, and Isaac, she is only more so. We continue to talk about things that matter to both of us. Even this past week she texted me, wondering if I was home, and if so, could she bring her kids by? So we had lunch, me offering peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for all. As I told her little ones as they left, "Your mommy is very dear to me." And now they are too.

I watched her over the next years in life with a group of adolescent girls, helping them come to coherence, where what they believed about the world was more and more the way that they lived in the world. A few years later I was asked to teach for my daughter Jessica's class, a "summing-up of high school years" course, and agreed to do so—if Susan could join me as my co-teacher. I knew that if I could not be there, that she would be, and that it would be wonderfully rich and right in its own way.

When she and Nate began to spend more time together, I was drawn in, friend and professor that I was—and when the great day of their wedding came, they graced me with the task of giving the homily, outdoors in the beautiful Virginia countryside, amid farms and sky and mountains. Since I am not a pastor, I do not "marry" people, but sometimes am asked to speak about the meaning of marriage as part of the wedding. Musing with them on the reality that the best of marriages can be wonderful, but not perfect. I offered them these words from Berry:

*What wonder have you done to me? In binding love you set me free.  
These sixty years the wonder prove:  
I bring you aged a young man's love.<sup>3</sup>*

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3 Wendell Berry, "To Tanya, on my Sixtieth Birthday," *Given: New Poems* (Washington, DC: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2005), 6.

And then I said, “Susan and Nate, we set before you today the vision of a long-loved love. Someday you may be sixty years old and writing poems for each other; by God’s grace you will be. For however long your marriage lasts, as your community we long with you for a long love, hoping that at moments along the way—with creativity and care and commitment—you will bring to each other an aging love, full of the wonder it is that in binding love you set each other free.”

A wonderful marriage, not a perfect one—like every good marriage everywhere.

As Susan has moved from just-out-of-college into marriage into motherhood, she has learned more about her vocation, living into her life as she has. What she began to see is that she loved to create with her hands, and so she spent time in a paper store, glorying in the tactile world of her work. As babies came, she wondered what they would mean for that love, and with her husband Nate’s help, decided to build a home business of hand-printing stationary using a letterpress. This creative labor now sells in shops in her city and serves a growing circle of glad customers.

In our home we have a reading room between the front of the house and the back, and for those who love to read it always brings a smile. On one wall we have shelves from floor to ceiling, filled with books of all sizes and shapes. There are shelves of children’s books, shelves of novels and shelves of biographies. But there is also a shelf for Leo Tolstoy, for Robert Louis Stevenson and for Charles Dickens—and one for Wendell Berry too, his essays, his poetry, his novels. Set in the middle of that shelf is a beautifully made card, letter-pressed, with the words of one of Berry’s poems, beginning with, “What wonder have you done to me?” A gift from Susan, yes, and seeing it I remember her ability to see into the meaning of things. Her studies, her loves, her marriage, her work, her children, together a vocation, she is making sense of life as she lives her life.

## *A Just Man*

Ordinary people in ordinary places, each one is a story of a life lived as a vocation. None have arrived, and each lives with a keen sense that more could be done. Time and energy, ability and desire—together they

are the contours of our lives, and when all is said and done, we have to sleep at night, making peace with who we are and how we have lived.

But it is true for all of us that sometimes the simplest grace is the most important gift. Take the remarkable story of *Les Misérables* and the decision of Bishop Bienvenu to keep his door open; as he said to his sister and housekeeper, “Someone may need to come in.” And the whole world knows that that night, someone did. What most do not know is that in Victor Hugo’s novel there is a lifetime behind that decision. If the stage play gives the bishop ten minutes, the book tells the story of his whole life over almost one hundred pages, titling volume one “A Just Man.” From the calling to a pastoral vocation on through to becoming a bishop, we come to know an unusual man. If we hear Iris Murdoch’s wisdom—“At crucial moments of choice, most of the business of choosing is already over”<sup>4</sup>—then we understand the pilgrimage the bishop made to be the man whose instinct was to show mercy. For years he had made choices, small and large, that shaped his soul, giving him eyes to see the world that was his as his to care for.

The someone who needed to come in was Jean Valjean, a wayfarer set adrift after almost twenty years in prison for stealing a loaf of bread. We know the responses of the bishop to his visitor, first the offer of a meal and a bed, and then amazingly, beyond comprehension, the offer of the silver candlesticks that had been “forgotten” after Valjean was arrested for stealing everything else.

“I have bought your soul for God,” are the words of the bishop to his surprised guest. And the way that Hugo tells his tale, that is what has happened, not because Valjean is now fated to become good, but rather that he is transformed by the simple grace that was given.

If Berry has made a vocation of “telling stories shaped by the truest truths of the universe, but in language the whole world can understand,” Hugo’s *Les Misérables* is that story writ dramatic on the stages of every city and continent. Grandly and yet wonderfully, it tells the truth of the human condition in a way that draws everyone in. We see ourselves in the story, our own hopes, our own fears, the loves and longings of every heart.

But lest we forget, it is the story of “the miserables,” of people who have stumbled along the way, economically, politically, and socially. And it is the story of a man who sees his vocation as implicated in the lives of

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4 Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection,” in *The Sovereignty of Good* (New York: Schocken, 1971), 36–37.

people like that. He has chosen to live a common life for the common good. And Valjean, very slowly, makes that choice too. Profoundly formed by the bishop's life, he begins to take up his new life with the same simple grace—not in the ministry, but in the marketplace. If the bishop's clerical calling implicated him in the lives of his people, then it was the vocation of business for Valjean that drew him into the welfare of his workers and his city. And because he saw himself in relationship to a people in a place, he saw himself as responsible for the way their world turned out, for the way it was and the way it ought to be.

FAITHFUL LIVES



*Reviews and  
Resources*



*Mission Series 9*  
Ryan Jackson  
Oil on Canvas  
2009

In *Mission Series 9*, a young man embodies young men and women everywhere who volunteer to ease the suffering of millions at home and abroad. The child as well signifies not just himself, but the countless numbers of anonymous children helped by these young volunteers. Both figures, both image bearers of God, are, for a moment, brought together in community, a brief, anonymous act of love shared in the giving and in the receiving. This work is from the exhibition *WORK Curse or Calling?* For a more complete review of the exhibition, see pg. 83.

# Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective: A Comprehensive Introduction

by Michael E. Cafferky.  
Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2015.  
496 pp. \$45.00, hardcover.

A fundamental difference exists between what is legal and what is ethical; often, what is morally or ethically right may not be politically expedient or necessarily profitable. For example, a homosexual couple asks a Christian baker to create a wedding cake for them. The baker refuses and is taken to court. Is the baker morally wrong? Is there a legal imperative to bake the cake? Or perhaps you purchase a used sofa on the Internet and discover a roll of twenty dollar bills under the cushions. Even if the former owner discovered the absence of the money, they would probably never connect it to the sofa. Should you return it? Perhaps a major department store announces a bathroom policy contrary to your faith. As a result, their stock drops to an attractive level. Should you buy it?

Ethics is the study of ideas about what we perceive as good and bad behavior; it is a branch of philosophy dealing with what is morally right or wrong. Morality itself is the *belief* about what is right or wrong behavior. This begs the question: what or who determines the definition of “right” and “wrong”? Is it Society? Or it is the government or the Securities Exchange Commission? Or perhaps it is really a case of, to quote Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, “Nothing is good nor bad save thinking makes it so.”

In a world of rapidly changing moral standards, the businessperson of today is faced with an increasingly difficult task—how to resolve the tension between a Christian worldview and the practical application of that worldview in contemporary business in an increasingly secularized society, a society with rapidly evolving social and economic pressures. We as Christians believe in an established and clear definition of right and wrong as found in the Bible. In general, popular culture and courses on ethics tend to deal with accepted “moral” solutions gener-

ally agreed upon by society. Although the Bible was foundational to our society's construction of moral imperatives and laws, we find that over time our culture has become ever more accepting and permissive of alternative viewpoints. Morality devoid of a continuous foundation in biblical principles will find itself evolving to a place unrecognizable from its origins.

To aid in this struggle, Michael E. Cafferky's book, *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective*, is well-suited not only for classroom instruction but also personal enrichment. He offers a viewpoint on contemporary business ethics as well-grounded in Scripture as it is in contemporary secular approaches to business ethics. Cafferky approaches business ethics through a scriptural lens applying biblical themes to each problem or situation as it is presented. Each chapter opens with Scripture passages applicable to the theme being discussed, and the reader can then review these passages for a greater understanding of the context. This also reinforces the truth that Scripture is applicable every day, not just on Sunday morning. Also central to Cafferky's book is the concept that ethics and the implications of one's actions are communal, not solely personal, in nature. What you do matters not only to you (and perhaps your family) but also to the community as a whole. And while many ethics texts deal with such major subjects as euthanasia, abortion, and stealing, Cafferky delves into the somewhat less considered but, perhaps, more relatable issues such as the ethics of buying and consuming products, discounting, waiving fees, and business gifting.

After opening each chapter with relevant Scripture passages, Cafferky refreshingly uses a direct approach by then giving the reader a brief chapter overview, main topics, key terms and an opening scenario designed to draw the reader into a greater understanding of the topic for consideration before diving into the substance of the text. The reader will have a good sense of what the chapter is about before reading it in its entirety and may, therefore, focus on the content and message delivered rather than struggling to find the main point. The final section of each chapter, *Through the Lens of Biblical Themes*, takes the reader through twelve biblical themes intended to give the reader a solid foundation for evaluating the dilemmas presented in the chapter. He uses such themes as creation, holiness, covenant relationships, justice, truth, and righteousness to guide the reader into a biblical view of ethical dilemmas and their solutions. Finally, for the scholar (as well as the average reader), Cafferky closes each chapter with a series of

review and discussion questions, as well as ethical vignettes intended to stimulate further discussion.

The structure of the book clearly lends itself to classroom instruction. Not only are the chapters organized in a logically structured way, but on a broader scale, Cafferky organizes his book according to five main sections: “The Fundamentals,” “Contemporary Approaches,” “Contemporary Issues,” “Widening the Perspective,” and the “Appendixes and Case Studies.”

The section titled “The Fundamentals” introduces the big picture issues involved in ethics and how they relate to the individual, the organization, the industry/profession, and the larger economic system. This section also introduces the biblical viewpoint as an ideal context for thinking and resolution. “Contemporary Approaches” evaluates the common approaches (such as Egoism, Relativism, and Utilitarianism) typically used to quantify ethical dilemmas and measures them against the lens of biblical themes. By so doing, Cafferky educates the reader on more secular approaches to the issues but, more importantly, demonstrates the biblical perspective in practical application. In the “Contemporary Issues” section, Cafferky focuses on the application of ethics to contemporary business issues; that is, how they relate to the individual and broader communal groups like the organization or the profession. The “Widening the Issues” section builds upon the material addressed in “Contemporary Issues” by adding additional layers of implication such as the environment and the economy as a whole. The final section, “Appendixes and Case Studies” offers very relevant cases for the reader to consider and aids in an overall synthesis of the material.

Whether taken as a whole or in bite-size pieces, Cafferky’s *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective*, offers something for both the novice and the layman. The reader doesn’t need a degree in law, psychology, or theology to fully understand the content and its application to life. Cafferky’s book offers a clear and thorough illustration of biblical themes in practice on a personal, societal, and professional level. It is an excellent resource book for both instruction and reference. For anyone interested in a deeper understanding of a biblical perspective on ethical issues relevant to our continuously evolving business landscape, Michael E. Cafferky’s *Business Ethics in Biblical Perspective* is a must-read.

Scott Hall  
Hannibal-LaGrange University



*Christ.223 | Locked and Loaded*

Richard Cummings

Metal, polystyrene resin, recycled PET, stained glass  
2010

*Christ.223 | Locked and Loaded* contains an antique door locking mechanism, a failed resin experiment, a Christ figure from a broken crucifix, a discarded piece of stained glass and several shell casings from an ROTC firing range. Each object in the piece has been given new life, brought together into a community where each contributes to the visual whole. In that wholeness of form, we are reminded of Christ's work here on earth; his willing sacrifice, his loving act of redemption for all humanity. This work is from the exhibition *WORK Curse or Calling?* For a more complete review of the exhibition, see pg. 83.

# WORK Curse or Calling? | CIVA Artists (Christians in the Visual Arts) Explore the Subject of Work.

juried by Joel Zwart. Accessible at  
[http://civa.org/exhibits/traveling-exhibits/  
work-curse-or-calling/](http://civa.org/exhibits/traveling-exhibits/work-curse-or-calling/).

**I**s work a curse or a calling? What is a biblical position on work? How is work necessary? How can work be worship? How does a visual artist, “picture ‘work’ in its many applications in the Christian experience?” These are the types of questions posed and explored by visual artists in the CIVA (Christians in the Visual Arts) exhibition, *WORK Curse or Calling?*

What is always fascinating as one who has curated an exhibition for CIVA in the past, is how in any themed exhibition individual artists interpret not only the exhibition prospectus, but also their own artwork in relationship to that prospectus. From these submitted works the curator/juror must then engage in his or her own personal interpretation of quality, appropriateness, and variety in order to bring the thematic concept into material existence.

*WORK Curse or Calling?* curated by Joel Zwart, gallery director and curator at Calvin College, demonstrates a wide range of visual and thematic interpretations on the subject of work. These interpretations vary greatly in focus, from the negative to the positive, and include shades of the humorous and the confounding. Artwork ranges from graphics to collage, from painting to assemblage, and from video and photography to drawing and encaustic. And like the diverse media represented, the range of interpretations from curse to calling represent the many facets of a complex whole concerning the role of work in human existence and flourishing.

Perhaps the easiest entry into the subject of work for anyone visiting this exhibition will be artwork depicting people in the process of working. In *Woman Who Remained* by Lisa Line, a solitary woman (the artist) peels

potatoes in a field. There is a peaceful, resigned mood as she sits, bare-foot at dusk, turned in the direction of the viewer but with her eyes toward her task. A man in the background carries a fence rail on his shoulder as he walks toward the light of the setting sun. In Line's work humanity exists in harmony with both the cultivated and the natural. The Appalachian Mountains in the background give a solidity and timelessness to the painting, which reinforces the seemingly timeless, ever present process of work. Today's potatoes are peeled; tomorrow's await.

Ryan Jackson, in the painting *Mission Series 9*, depicts a college-age man about to apply ointment to a child's head. No wound is visible, and there is no excitement or trauma indicated in the piece. This does not feel like a photo-op for an organization. The young man is simply in the process of working out his mission to this child. Though there is specificity in the man's features, he acts much more as a symbol for young men and women everywhere who volunteer to ease the suffering of millions at home and abroad. The child as well signifies not just himself, but the countless numbers of anonymous children helped by these young volunteers. Both figures, both image bearers of God, are, for a moment, brought together in community, a brief, anonymous act of love shared in the giving and in the receiving.

In living out the *imago dei* in our lives, humans make things from other things. Clay and water mix, and humans form the mixture into objects both useful and beautiful. Humans even make machines that will make other things of use and beauty. A few of the pieces in *WORK Curse or Calling?* objectively reference the evidence of human work. Jon Anderson in his *Construction (no. 5)* utilizes the wood surface of his birch panel to present a silhouette of a wood-framed building. Anderson manages to capture both the beauty and utility of wood in this piece, all the while presenting evidence and documentation of a historical moment of human activity. This is a positive piece. In *Construction (no. 5)*, human activity does not blight the land, but becomes a doxology of material substance that lauds the good gifts of a loving God.

Anderson's piece contrasts with Sheryl McRoberts's pen and ink drawing, *Abitibi on Rainy River II*. In McRoberts's drawing, a paper mill is seen without a human presence. Industry imposes itself on the landscape, cluttering the river. A solitary smoke stack rises in the top right of the drawing as it releases its noxious odors into the environment. Yet McRoberts portrays the mill from the perspective of an observer rather than a commentator. There is a beauty to the line, shape, and strokes

made with her pen; a rhythmic dance of repeated elements make up the workings of the mill. Even the utilitarian reveals the beauty of its structure, surface, composition, and form.

A key element of this exhibition is its portrayal of the compass of implications for human work. *WORK Curse or Calling?* acknowledges God's "very good" material creation (Gen 1:31) and God's mandate and blessing of human creativity (Gen 2:19), but it also bears witness to God's cursing of humanity's labor (Gen 3:17-19). The most direct reference to the Genesis 3 curse is found in Alan Vales's triptych *Cursed Earth, Thistles, Thorns*. This mixed media triptych depicts photos of farmers and farmland, which are obstructed by the actual earth, thistles and thorns that hinder cultivation and bring toil to humans in their work.

A digital video piece by artist Ryan Thompson, *Erratic Displacement (After Aljys)*, portrays (in three minutes and fifty-four seconds) in a tongue-in-cheek manner the quasi-Sisyphean task of rolling a large stone from the edge of a river and ultimately to an exhibition that requires packaging of the stone in a sturdy crate as well as an airline trip to the exhibition's destination. This piece works on several levels. On one hand it is a respectful parody of the work of Belgian artist Francis Aljys. On another level, like Sisyphus, the cursed Corinthian king who was sentenced by the gods to push a large boulder up a hill for eternity, the video delves into the idea of work as purposeless toil, even punishment. Finally, the video becomes a metaphor for the work of the artist. The rock is representative of the objects that we display, the humble material origins from which they are made, and the toil by which we as artists attempt to make our objects arrive in one piece.

Two artists in *WORK Curse or Calling?* particularly capture the idea of human work in the process of redemption and final restoration. Bruce Herman's painting *Peregrini Pro Amore Dei* (which translates as "wanderers (or pilgrims) for the love of God") shows both the curse of labor but also its restoration. The curse is portrayed by a male figure hunched over and carrying a burden on the right-hand side of the panel. Contrastingly, a pregnant woman and her child on the left-hand side of the panel personify the redemption of work. The mother and child proclaim God's command to "be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28). Finally, new construction, complete with scaffolding, behind the woman foreshadow humanity's complete restoration in the new Jerusalem.

Similarly, though in a quite different manner, Michael Buesking's *Will Work 4 Food*, perfectly foreshadows a time when the curse of work

will be lifted. Buesking's trompe l'oeil painting of a cardboard sign surrounded by gold leaf presents the necessity of work for humanity's survival, but, like Herman's piece, the gold foreshadows the restoration of work to its proper intention for humanity at the restoration of creation in the new heaven and new earth.

One aspect I have refrained from commenting upon about the exhibition, *WORK Curse or Calling?*<sup>9</sup> has been the quality of the artwork. Rest assured that there is much that will delight regardless of stylistic preference. With that said, not every piece will move every individual. The overall artistic quality, however, is quite good. *WORK* will be on exhibition at Boger Galley at College of the Ozarks from August 29 – October 3, 2016, and it is my desire that this review will assist the viewer in engaging with the various complexities and aspects of the work.

Richard W. Cummings  
College of the Ozarks

# Matthew through Acts

edited by Will Messenger.  
Theology of Work Bible Commentary. Volume 4.  
Peabody, MA; Hendrickson, 2014.  
177 pages. \$24.95, softcover.

*M*atthew through Acts comprises the fourth installment in the five volume series produced by the Theology of Work Project, whose “mission has been to study what the Bible says about work and to develop resources to apply the Christian faith to our work” (p. 1). The book is divided into five major chapters: “Matthew and Work” (by Jonathan Pennington and Alice Matthews), “Mark and Work” (by Grant Macaskill), “Luke and Work” (by Aaron Kuecker), “John and Work” (by Sean McDonough) and “Acts and Work” (also by Aaron Kuecker). In addition, there is bibliography and index as well as a list of contributors to the series.

Each chapter begins with a short introduction to the New Testament book to be discussed. The chapters are divided into major sections based on the structure and content of the book. Finally, a brief conclusion brings each chapter to a close.

One wonders why the synoptic Gospels were treated individually, given the significant amount of material appearing in all three. The decision to include individual discussions of each of the synoptic Gospels draws attention at the same time to certain strengths and weaknesses of the volume. On the one hand, the reader is not limited to the insights of a single interpreter. Multiple interpreters may provide greater insight into the same material. On the other hand, there are places where the interpretations of multiple interpreters clash (e.g., the accounts of Jesus’s disciples picking ears of grain [pp.58–59, cf. 80, 111]; the interpretation of Jesus as a carpenter [p. 25, cf. 60]). These are not simply differences in application, but differences in the proposed meaning of the text. Although these differences are perhaps minor, they detract from the unity of the message.

The authors frequently discuss the importance of understanding our work as part of the story of God’s kingdom and the gospel of

Jesus Christ. For example, in the section “Working as Citizens of God’s Kingdom (Matthew 1–4),” Pennington and Matthews make the important point that our work should be done not only for the sake of earning a paycheck, but also for the sake of building God’s kingdom. We should consider ways in which we can serve other people even as Jesus did (p. 7).

However, one concern is that the focus on “the theology of work” may lead to an unbalanced interpretive approach. In the chapter “Mark and Work,” Macaskill makes the observation, “Therefore the Gospel of Mark is not *about* our work, but it *informs* our work and *defines* the ultimate goal of our work” (p. 45). This observation presents an important reminder that “work” is not the main emphasis of Mark’s (or any other gospel) account. Some readers may conclude this point was sometimes forgotten as there is a danger in projects like this to attempt to make the text address the key theme, even when it does not.

In the section “Do Good to Those Who Hate You” (Luke 6:27-36) Kuecker applies this teaching to the workplace when he writes,

At the individual level, it means that we must work for the good of those with whom we are in conflict. This does not mean avoiding conflict or withdrawing from competition. But it does mean, for example, that if you are competing with a co-worker for promotion, you must help your co-worker/opponent do their work as well as they can, while trying to do yours even better. . . .

At the corporate level, it means not crushing your competition, suppliers or customers, especially with unfair or unproductive actions such as frivolous lawsuits, monopolization, false rumors, stock manipulation, and the like. (pp. 80–81)

Although these suggestions run counter to the typical behaviors and practices one encounters in the workplace, the command of Jesus seems to require something like this approach.

In “John and Work” McDonough discusses humble service, which is a theme found in several of the chapters. Discussing Jesus’s washing of the disciples’ feet he writes,

This attitude of humble service should accompany all we do. If the CEO walks the production floor, it should be as if coming

to wash the assembly workers' feet. So, too, the gas station attendant should clean the bathroom floors as if being there to wash the motorists' feet. This is not so much a matter of action as attitude. . . . Jesus, the Spirit-filled teacher who reigns over the entire cosmos, deliberately performs a concrete act of lowly service to demonstrate what ought to be the habitual attitude of his people. By doing so, he both dignifies and demands from his followers humble acts of service. Why? Because doing so brings us tangibly face to face with the reality that godly work is performed for the benefit of others, not merely for our own fulfillment. (p. 110; cf. e.g., 8, 77, 81, 143, 154)

The final chapter titled "Acts and Work" is also written by Aaron Kuecker. While there is much to commend in this chapter, two points stand out. First, in the section "A Clash of Kingdoms: Community and Power Brokers (Acts 13-19)," Kuecker writes, "This could mean that today's Christian communities should participate alongside families and young people as they seek answers for questions such as, 'What do you want to do when you grow up?' 'What will you do after graduation?' or 'To what is God calling you?' This would require Christian communities to develop a much greater expertise in vocational discernment than is presently common" (p. 143). This is a needed challenge and invitation to the Christian community in a culture that values and promotes individualism.

The second point is found in "Tent-Making and Christian Life (Acts 18:1-4)." Kuecker observes the typical understanding of the term tent-making "is too narrow, because it doesn't see that the tent-making itself is a real ministry of witnessing to Christ." (p. 153) He also notes,

Paul's money-earning work was an effort to build up the community economically. Paul employs his skills and possessions for the sake of the community, and he explicitly says that this is an example others should follow. . . , it is not the case that Paul engages in tent-making as a necessity so that he can do his "real job" of preaching. Instead, Paul's varieties of work in the sewing shop, marketplace, synagogue, lecture hall, and prison are all forms of witness. (p. 154)

These observations help to enrich the understanding of bi-vocational ministry and encourage a broader conception of our vocation.

Provided the concerns addressed above, there is little doubt that this volume of *The Theology of Work Bible Commentary* could be a good resource for Bible studies, small group discussions, Sunday school classes, and similar contexts in which Christian life and vocation are the focus of study.

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# Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for Economics

by Kenman Wong and Scott Rae.  
Christian Worldview Interpretation Series.  
Grand Rapids: IVP Academic, 2011.  
288 pp. \$26.00, softcover.

Christians writing on the subject of business always have a problem. The Bible commands Christians to cultivate the virtues of generosity and selflessness. Yet, business rewards those who show ambition and strive to make a profit. Thus the question arises, “how can a Christian remain faithful to Christ and pursue the vocation of business?” Kenman Wong and Scott Rae attempt to answer this question in *Business for the Common Good*. In so doing Wong and Rae give the Christian community a guide which can help those called into the business world to live out their vocations faithfully.

There is much to admire in this book. Wong’s and Rae’s first chapter, entitled “Your work is an altar,” advances a theology of work. The authors correctly note that God works, and his command to humans to work precedes the fall. Thus work is good. Doing work well is an appropriate act of worship to the Lord. Thus a Christian in business can work diligently knowing that God has called her to it.

This allows Wong and Rae to argue for business as a “transformational service” in their second chapter “The Shape of a Calling to Business.” Wong and Rae note the corruption of our work due to the effects of sin. However, God’s mission in redemption means that the Holy Spirit seeks to transform the world. Business can participate in this vision by service. Service is multifaceted. Business serves its customers by producing useful products at a reasonable price. A manager can serve her employees by encouraging their growth and development. Business can serve the world through development and trade.

Of course these ideas come with controversy. Wong and Rae reject profit maximization as the sole purpose of business, but they equally reject more ascetic visions. The Christian need not give up all wealth

and live as a hermit. Instead, the Christian must steer a course between extremes. The business must make a profit; yet, the Christian must remain vigilant against the temptation to sin.

Wong and Rae point out in their third chapter, “Business and Spiritual Formation,” the positive spiritual benefits that this course can have. Each Christian can grow as a Christian in attempting to live out this vision. Learning to work diligently, serve the needs of customers and employees, and keep all in perspective develops Christ-like character in us.

This is particularly the case in regards to “Wealth, Success, and Ambition,” the title of Wong’s and Rae’s fourth chapter. Wong and Rae argue for the accumulation of wealth as long as the Christian keeps perspective: a Christian can enjoy wealth and material possessions but they are not an end unto themselves. Thus, the Christian should be generous. Such a vision will not satisfy those who see business and profit making as inherently corrupt. Overall, this chapter could have used more reference in the text to those with a different vision, and a refutation of them. While this reviewer agrees with Wong’s and Rae’s points, the case could have been argued more persuasively.

In their fifth chapter “Business and the Global Economy,” Wong and Rae acknowledge some of the problems globalization has caused: such as unfair labor practices and environmental degradation. At the same time they argue for globalization as a form of service to the world’s poor. Such a perspective will not satisfy the critics of globalization, but it does make for a sound principle for trade.

In “Ethics in the Workplace,” Wong and Rae take on the all too frequent occurrence of compartmentalization. If God intends for the work of the Christian to transform the world, then the Christian can’t act one way on Sunday and another the rest of the week. The Christian businessperson must be guided by the ethic of service to a neighbor. Wong and Rae concede that on occasion the Christian may suffer consequences by doing the right thing. Yet, the authors suggest the focus should be upon ways the Christian can transform a workplace to encourage an ethic of service.

Chapter seven involves “Leadership and Management.” The authors note the current trend of advocating servant leadership. Wong and Rae see much to commend this movement, but insist that at times, a leader must exercise power. The authors suggest that this does not

always fit into the servant leader model. Nonetheless, when this is done from the correct perspective—the leader is trying to develop people—this can have a positive effect on the company.

In chapter eight's discussion of "Marketing," the authors take on another thorny business problem. Critics have accused business of creating needs, through advertising, for products that consumers do not really need. This seems to be particularly true in the realm of marketing directed at the unconscious needs or desires of consumers. Yet, businesses need to get the word out about their products. The authors suggest using the principle of service to human flourishing as a starting point, and allowing practices to flow from it.

In chapter nine the authors tackle "Stewardship and Sustainability." For millions of the world's poor free markets are the only proven method of lifting them out of poverty. At the same time the use of resources required to bring billions of people up to the standard of living experienced in the United States would possibly do irreparable ecological harm. There are no simple solutions here, but the authors believe business ought to support efforts to sustain the environment.

In "Emerging Directions in Business," the authors review several proposals for business in the twenty-first century. The authors do not really take a position on corporate social responsibility, bottom of the pyramid business, social enterprise, microfinance, and business as mission. Yet they urge their readers to further explore how one might go about incorporating one's faith into one's business.

Overall Wong and Rae have written an excellent treatise supporting those whom God has called to go into business. For critics of capitalism this book will disappoint. Yet, for those who believe in free markets, this work can be a starting point for understanding how one might go about bringing faith into the marketplace.

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# Where is God on Monday?

by Alistair Mackenzie and Wayne Kirkland.  
Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2015.  
148pp. \$24.95, hardcover.

Some readers may remember the resounding words of former president Ronald Reagan in front of the Brandenburg Gate: “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!” Two years after the speech, this great concrete divide would dissolve and the Berlin Wall would indeed come down. While not comprised of poured concrete, an unnecessary wall has been built into the lives of Christians for centuries—the one that divides the “sacred” from the “secular.” For too many Christians today the transition from the work world to their faith is as clunky and jarring as passing through guard checkpoints on a border. As one of the authors of *Where is God on Monday?* writes, “The overwhelming impression I gained was that most Christians felt resigned to the fact that church life did not really relate to what they spent much of their week involved in” (p. 137). Thankfully, the last few years have seen a significant surge in projects addressing this issue: the Theology of Work project (partnering with Hendrickson publishers), The Gospel Coalition (their Faith & Work material), the Institute for Faith, Work, & Economics, and freestanding volumes like Timothy Keller’s *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God’s Work* (New York: Penguin, 2014), Amy Sherman’s *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove, IVP, 2011), and Tom Nelson’s *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011). With these efforts, along with the present volume, we too may see a needless wall come down in the years ahead.

While there is presently no shortage of books addressing a Christian theology of work, some qualities evident in *Where’s God on Monday?* make it an outstanding place for the demolition crews to begin. First, the book is extremely accessible. The authors are to be congratulated on carrying out the difficult task of writing a book that could be taken up by any high school student and yet it does not feel boring for an average adult reader. The amount of ground they cover in the skimpy 148 pages is

quite impressive. Having taught this subject many times, I frequently run into the challenge of “getting it all in.” However, Mackenzie and Kirkland masterfully address many topics (such as, work in the Bible, Sabbath, sacred-secular divide, and kingdom living) using engaging illustrations and real-life narratives without belaboring the point.

Second, *Where’s God on Monday?* makes a concerted effort to resonate with people from various occupational backgrounds who are not trained theologians. However, Mackenzie and Kirkland do not shirk from introducing necessary vocabulary, including a chapter at the end on suggested changes to how we often talk about work. From beginning to end, the authors present everyday scenarios that will connect with anyone in today’s workforce. It is also refreshing to see the authors give significant attention to the reality of work that takes place in the home as well.

Another positive aspect of this book is its sanctified realism. The authors are encouraging; they are positive; they are faithful in their presentation of what Scripture teaches; but they don’t oversell. Some jobs are hard. Work is sometimes monotonous and mind-numbing and we have to make a strong effort to transform our perspective. However, this transformation will not happen immediately in five easy steps. Mackenzie and Kirkland highlight the significance of the body of Christ in the development and ability to integrate faith and work. “We believe the future of the church will be determined by the extent to which it is able to mobilize and provide resources and support for all its members for mission all the time” (p. 92). This is a church-wide project, not an individual self-help program. In addition to this corporate focus, each chapter ends with a series of discussion of questions that could easily be incorporated into a small group study.

Finally, *Where’s God on Monday?* is packed full of sage advice. Here are a few examples to whet the appetite. Addressing calling and vocation: “The idea of vocation or calling is very much present in the Bible, but in a surprisingly different way. There it doesn’t so much concern *what we do* but *who we belong to*” (italics original, p. 72). “So our calling or ‘vocation’ is to belong to God. The daily work we do is an expression of our calling, *but it is not that calling*” (italics original, p. 73). Writing on work and worship: “Work can—and should—be an act of worship. If we identify worship as what happens only on Sunday, it becomes a pale reflection of what God views as worship” (p. 84). “Work is not meant to be the most important thing in our lives, nor should it be degraded. It

shouldn't lead us to idolatry, but neither should it lead us to be idle" (p. 82). Explaining rest and Sabbath: "It is important to note the distinction between rest and leisure. Rest and Sabbath are not the same as leisure, though they may certainly overlap. Rest is recovering our equilibrium. . . . The goal of leisure is personal enjoyment—which may well be a by-product of rest, but not its primary purpose" (pp. 46–47).

The strengths of this volume certainly overshadow any perceived weaknesses in the book. Except for a few quibbles on language and what feels like a leaning toward a post-millennial view of the end times (that is, Christ will return after the church establishes his kingdom on earth), Mackenzie and Kirkland are on solid footing. Overall, the theological landscape of the volume is overtly biblical and primarily comprised of positions widely held throughout evangelicalism. In the end, the finest praise I can give *Where's God on Monday?* is that since having read the volume, I am constantly thinking about how I could teach through it at church or use it in a class. Just this morning, I recommended it to a friend struggling in his workplace. This is a book I plan on using and giving for some time.

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