

WORK: AN ESCHATOLOGICAL IMPERATIVE

by

Paul Kevin Bates, FCMA, CPA-CMA, CMC.

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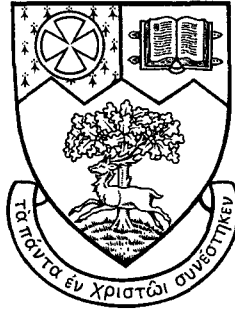
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AUTHOR: Paul Kevin Bates

SUPERVISOR(S): Dr. Phil Zylla  
Dr. Steve Studebaker

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## **MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES**

Primary Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Phil C. Zylla, D.Th.

Secondary Supervisor: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Steven M. Studebaker, Ph.D.

Academic Dean Designate: \_\_\_\_\_

  
Lee Beach, Ph.D.

Date: March 27, 2014

## ABSTRACT

### “Work: An Eschatological Imperative”

Paul K. Bates  
McMaster Divinity College  
Hamilton, Ontario  
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This thesis asserts an eschatological perspective that the end of days will come not in apocalyptic destruction, but in transformation. With this theological foundation in view, this thesis draws a deep spiritual purpose in our working lives. This spiritual purpose is God’s summons to us to dedicate our vocations to service to the kingdom, now and in preparation for the new creation. This spiritual orientation is the grounding for a critical understanding of a lifetime of work wherein we will strive unceasingly to reflect the image of Christ in our methods and in our demeanour in the workplace. We seek personal sanctification as we respond to God’s vocational summons to us.

This thesis draws a theology of work, founded in the eschatological dimension of *transformatio mundi*. Work, while often challenging, is not our punishment for Adam’s sin. Work is the expression of our essential being. Work is our loving response, in the deepest ethical way, to God’s creation. Indeed, this thesis presents the perspective that our daily work is far more than personal and societal economic growth and security. Indeed, this thesis argues that our daily work is more than self-actualization. This thesis asserts that, when it is inspired and equipped by God through the Holy Spirit, our daily labours are not only pleasing to God, but they hold a significant and important eschatological purpose. This thesis asserts the centrality of our work as stewardship of

God's resources, and therefore is of critical importance to the pastoral activities of the church.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And

## DEDICATION

The opening of my eyes and ears has taken place slowly and gradually, through the working of the Holy Spirit in so many who have witnessed to me, provided guidance to me and even nudged me.

From the day that I walked through the doors of McMaster Divinity College I found not only sanctuary, but the willingness of the professors who, without hesitation, began to teach me and to shape me. I now thank them. In particular, I thank Dr. Phil Zylla.

This thesis is the merging together of lessons learned in a long life of commerce, business education, and now theology. My studies in these years at McMaster Divinity College have brought sharp focus and purpose to my journey.

I also acknowledge, with great love and respect, the friendship, encouragement and gracefully offered perspectives of colleagues of other faiths. While their worldviews differ from mine, they have spoken passionately of the Creator-centred purpose that anchors their own endeavours and I am enriched by them. Their willingness to share their views with me has been more impactful than they realize.

Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my very dear family and especially to my beloved Sally, who has always been there and, I suspect, knew what was going on before I did.

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## INTRODUCTION

Synopsis: This thesis brings great comfort to all of us who labour, regardless of the domain in which we labour. This is a thesis that rests on the theological foundation of eschatological transformation. This thesis asserts that not only is our work a response to God's summons to contribute to the kingdom, both in the 'now' and the 'not yet,' but our work is a means of sanctification. This thesis also warns that Satan is active in the places of our work, and we must be prepared to confront him there. This thesis calls for a re-combining of the 'sacred' and the 'secular,' and it offers encouragement and suggestion for a pastoral response to this call.

### Our Daily Work as a Contribution To The Kingdom

In every pew at every church on every Sunday morning, someone is almost certainly struggling with the question that Darrell Cosden asks, "From within the Christian doctrine, what is work and work's place in God's economy, [and] thus, how should we be carrying out our work?"<sup>1</sup> This thesis responds to this question. This thesis presents our daily work, in all its domains and forms, as a critical and beloved contribution to God's kingdom, both in the now, as broken as the now is, and the not yet. Indeed, this thesis will argue that the significance of our work, as our means to respond to God's vocational call to us, is eschatological in its importance. Jurgen Moltmann makes the statement, "The coming lordship of the risen Christ cannot be merely hoped for and awaited."<sup>2</sup> We have work to do in the service of God and his kingdom; work that is more important than we might imagine.

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<sup>1</sup> Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, preface.

<sup>2</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 329.

In the movie adaptation of Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* Trilogy we observe the following exchange:

Frodo: "*I wish the ring had never come to me. I wish none of this had happened.*"

Gandalf: "*So do all who live to see such times, but that is not for them to decide.*

*All we have to decide is what to do with the time that is given us.*"

While at first blush it may seem flippant to use this fictional exchange as an introduction to such a critical examination, I have done so because the imagery of this dialogue between the *Hobbit* Frodo and his guiding wizard Gandalf is such that it calls to mind, in all of us, a time when we are presented with a pivotal decision; the decision to step up or to step down, to take the easy road or in response to our Lord's instruction, to "Enter through the narrow gate."<sup>3</sup>

In stark contrast to the ascetic life chosen by the desert fathers and others, Moltmann continues, "The *vita Christiana*, the Christian life, no longer consists of fleeing the world and in spiritual resignation from it, but is engaged in an attack upon the world and a calling in the world."<sup>4</sup> Moltmann is very specific as to the source of this call. He says, "From the call of God in the Gospel of Christ, and from the call of God of history...it is the call to join in working for the kingdom of God that is to come."<sup>5</sup>

The word 'time' appears seven hundred and seventy one times in the Bible. Webster's New College Dictionary describes 'time' as, "every moment that has ever been or ever will be."<sup>6</sup> Antje Jackelen writes that "Time exists only as the present of the

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<sup>3</sup> Matt 6:13.

<sup>4</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 331.

<sup>5</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 332-3.

<sup>6</sup> Websters, 1499.

past, the present of the present, the present of the future.”<sup>7</sup> Time is the ‘days’ of which the Angel spoke to Daniel (Dan 10:14). As Jackelen points out, “Eternity [is the] ‘other’ of time.”<sup>8</sup> This thesis is involved with what we do with our days ‘in time’ in preparation, and as a contribution to, time’s ‘other’: eternity.<sup>9</sup>

The Nicene Creed ends with the verse, “*I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. AMEN.*”<sup>10</sup> To this Volf says:

We will have to insist (against Thomas Aquinas, for instance) that perfect happiness does depend on the resurrected body. And if the concept of ‘body’ is not to become unintelligible by being indistinguishable from the concept of the ‘pure spirit’ we must also insist that ‘external goods’ are necessary to perfect happiness. The resurrection of the body demands a glorified but nevertheless material environment. The future *material* existence therefore belongs inalienably to the Christian eschatological expectation.<sup>11</sup>

While this argument is profoundly appealing, there is no question that it is difficult to grasp in the absence of faith. This is particularly challenging in our western culture where the prevailing approach is ‘life is hard and then you die’, so take whatever you can take in the here and now. Those that confront the atheist perspective and profess a view similar to this thesis are often ostracized and ridiculed.

#### A Reassuring Answer To Troubling Questions

Dorothy Bass speaks of how, “Simply to imagine a way of life that prizes an abundance of life rather than an abundance of things to do and things to possess puts a new frame around the world in which many middle-class North Americans live at this

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<sup>7</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 965.

<sup>8</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 965.

<sup>9</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 965.

<sup>10</sup> TBAS. 234

<sup>11</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 95 [emphasis original].

point in history.”<sup>12</sup> Notwithstanding the pressure to normalize with the prevailing ‘worldly’ view, sooner or later, a great number of us seek to answer the questions: *How might we know what to do with the days that have been given us? May we find sanctification in our work? In what way will we be held to account for that work? What will be our legacy?* Often struggling with such questions alone, many, if not most, find these questions daunting. In a letter to a colleague, Scott, wrote, “Whither this leads and whether I will step successfully towards the aim is unknown and terrifying.” This simple but profound concern is one that is being repeated by many with increasing frequency and with increasing urgency.

In a profound apocalyptic vision, the angel that many scholars identify as Gabriel spoke to Daniel and said that he had “come to help you understand what will happen to your people at the end of days.”<sup>13</sup> This thesis begins with the end in mind—the absolute end; the ‘end of days’ when the ‘book of life’<sup>14</sup> will be opened, to seek answers to the questions above that we wrestle with very much in the present. Jackelen writes, “More than eschatology, apocalyptic thought is preoccupied with deliberations and sometimes even calculations about the end of the cosmos.”<sup>15</sup> Daniel 10-12 draws us deeply into this contemplation. If the *eschaton* is the nexus between time and eternity, then, as Jackelen points out, “This would mean that every event carries an eschatological deep dimension of ultimate meaning.”<sup>16</sup> This thesis places our everyday work, together with the ethics with which we carry out that work, squarely within the *gravitas* of such perspective. Jackelen writes, “The Reformed tradition of the

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<sup>12</sup> Bass and Dykstra, *For Life Abundant*, 34.

<sup>13</sup> Dan 10:14.

<sup>14</sup> Rev 20:11b.

<sup>15</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 957.

<sup>16</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 957.

transformation of the world (*transformatio mundi*) rather than the Lutheran orthodoxy of the annihilation of the world (*reductio in nihilum*) [leads us to consider that] new creation thus understood would be creation out of the old, *creation ex vetere*.”<sup>17</sup> This eschatological perspective—transformation—provides the foundation for this thesis: it clarifies the relationship between human beings, and their efforts, and creation.

This thesis, then, is built upon the overarching premise that the world will end not in destruction, but in eschatological transformation: what Volf also describes as the *transformatio mundi*, rather than the *annihilatio mundi*.<sup>18</sup> Indeed, given the dependence of this thesis on the viewpoint of eschatological transformation, it is appropriate here to expand on this perspective.

Coluccio Salutati, the Tuscan humanist whose life spanned the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, wrote on the matter. Bonnell writes that Salutati, “admitted that using the world’s goods helped to attain the *summum bonum*,<sup>19</sup> if they were correctly employed...in the second part [of Salutati’s work *De Seculo et Religione*] he regarded the world as a creature of God and sought a *transformatio mundi*.”<sup>20</sup> Margull places the task of education for mission squarely within what he describes as, “A deep theological history—and world—consciousness...A dynamic involving world that is not yet completed.”<sup>21</sup> Effectively, Margull places the *transformatio mundi* at the centre of the missionary dialogue. He writes, “We talked about hope when we talked about the Gospel...Hope as the call to Christ. Here we began to understand conversion as the acknowledgement of God’s historical action in the past, the present and the future (the

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<sup>17</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 963.

<sup>18</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 89-90.

<sup>19</sup> Highest good

<sup>20</sup> Bonnell, “Humanistic View,” 233.

<sup>21</sup> Margull, “Teaching,” 183-4.

*Mission of God*)...a history marked by change.”<sup>22</sup> This thesis rejects the *annihilato mundi* perspective, as does Volf. In his *blog*, Cortez writes:

Volf devotes considerable attention to rejecting the idea that there will be an eventual ‘annihilation’ of this world followed by an entirely new creation. Instead, he contends that a more faithful interpretation of the biblical narrative would be to affirm that this present creation will be renewed and transformed in the *eschaton*. Thus the new creation flows from the current creation, rather than being entirely discontinuous with it.<sup>23</sup>

In his Letter to the Romans, The Apostle Paul writes, “We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies.”<sup>24</sup> Here Paul certainly seems to describe our title to the future—a future that we are being prepared for. Revelation 21 appears also to offer an eschatological horizon that is one of renewal and transformation.

The Apostle Paul also appears to support the view that work is a response to God’s call. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul states, “What-ever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive your inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ”<sup>25</sup>. The eighteenth century cleric John Wesley stated that, enabled by the Holy Spirit working in us, “From the time of our being born again, the gradual work of sanctification takes place.”<sup>26</sup>

The words of the Gospel Hymn *The Mistakes of My Life* will resonate with all who are called to faith in adulthood—the hymn begins with the words, “The mistakes of

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<sup>22</sup> Margull, “Teaching,” [emphasis original] 184.

<sup>23</sup> Cortez, “Blog” No pages

<sup>24</sup> Rom 8:22-23.

<sup>25</sup> Col 3:23-24.

<sup>26</sup> Wesley, “Sermon 43,” para. 6.

my life have been many, the sins of my heart have been more.”<sup>27</sup> The good news is that through faith we are justified, set straight again, and through baptism given new strength. Our work, done right, becomes sacramental.<sup>28</sup> Elemental to this thesis is that, for most people, sanctification takes place in the daily routine of their work. Matthew Fox writes of, “How our inner work can feed our outer work.”<sup>29</sup> This inner work, is our prayerful meditation on God’s work in strengthening our souls and shaping us for the proper execution of our outer work, and it takes time—a life time. It is the gradual process of a lifetime of work in which we are to strive unceasingly to reflect the image of Christ and to seek personal sanctification. In other words, both the constant pursuit of holiness to the greatest extent we can achieve in this life, plus a hoped-for divine acknowledgment of our demonstration of accountability to Him in the stewardship of our gifts for the enrichment of His Kingdom. This is an important statement because it asserts that there is no distinction between our ‘church’ activities and our ‘economic’ activities.

This thesis presents the perspective that beyond the journey towards personal holiness there is a very significant eschatological purpose in our work; literally, the potential for a personal contribution to the new creation. We see frequent reference to the importance of work throughout the Bible. For example, while it is not the central theme of the book of Job, the mining of metals is described in some detail at Job 28: 1-4, 9-11.

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<sup>27</sup> Sankey, *Story of the Gospel Hymns*, 217.

<sup>28</sup> Please see the section entitled ‘A New Spiritual Order’ in chapter 4 for a detailed explanation of the concept of work being sacramental.

<sup>29</sup> Fox, *The Reinvention of Work*, 297.

*In God the Worker: Journey's into the Heart Mind, and Imagination of God*

Robert Banks refers to Australian Old Testament Scholar Francis Anderson, who says, "The speaker expresses nothing but admiration for man's industry and ingenuity...Tribute is paid to man's [sic] persistence and courage, for digging treasures from the earth is one of the most dangerous of occupations...There is...no suggestion that the author is disapproving, as if he thought that the energies... should be better used in the quest for wisdom."<sup>30</sup>

Many in the Workplace Are Hungering For Deeper Purpose

This thesis is grounded in a lifetime of activity in the world of commerce and business, experienced before, during, and after coming to faith. It explores the benefits of such immersion, which will be the locus of an examination and critique of a subject that few Christian theologians have considered. The constructive purposes of this thesis are four-fold:

Firstly, we may find sanctification in our work. As we learn, through humility, to invite the Holy Spirit to guide and develop our leadership and stewardship accountabilities, in a gradual and purposeful way, we come to reflect the image of Christ in the world.

Secondly, we may actually leave a legacy that contributes to the new creation. While this holy accountability brings with it a truly awesome expectation of us, it brings with it also the truly great comfort that we may leave a legacy that enriches, in some very small way, the coming New Creation – our eschatological hope for the New Jerusalem. It is critical to say here that to follow the path advocated in this thesis is to follow it for the right reasons. Zygmunt Bauman says clearly:

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<sup>30</sup> Banks, *God the Worker*, 51.

It is true that objectively good—helpful and useful—deeds have time and time again been performed out of the actor’s calculation of gain, be it to earn Divine grace, to purchase public esteem or to ensure absolution for merciless show on other occasions; these, however cannot be classified as genuinely *moral* acts precisely because of being so motivated.<sup>31</sup>

Thirdly, Satan will oppose Christians who seek to find sanctification in their work. We *will* be opposed by Satan in our efforts, and we should be prepared. As C. S. Lewis said, “we are living in a part of the Universe occupied by the rebel.”<sup>32</sup> Even though Christ’s arrival bound Satan, he is still very much at work and we will be caught up in this struggle. Bob Beltz underscores this when he states, “We live in a supernatural universe, engaged in a spiritual battle [that we may not even be aware of]. In light of this reality, there are certain critically important concepts we need to master in order to win this battle.”<sup>33</sup> This point indicates a very real and literal spiritual attack that many experience. This should not be viewed simply as a philosophical concept, but rather a reality that requires our engaged reflection and dialogue.

Fourthly, this thesis benefits those preparing for and entering ministry. Pastors and emerging leaders of the church require a more robust understanding of the nature of work, the practical theology of work and the centrality and importance of work in the lives of their parishioners as they seek to bring glory to God in their vocations. This thesis draws out areas for guidance and instruction for those in church ministry as they preach and provide counsel to congregation members in their daily work. This underscores the critical importance of our work for the Kingdom, and for the opportunity for discipleship through our work.

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<sup>31</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Love*, 92-3.

<sup>32</sup> Lewis, *What Christians Believe*, 45.

<sup>33</sup> Beltz, *Becoming a Man of Prayer*, 92.

## History Is Unfolding and We Are Players

In sum, then, this thesis argues that history is unfolding. Our lifetime of work is desired by God as a contribution to that unfolding history: indeed, each of us can make a personal difference—each of us *will* make a personal difference; for good or for bad. Also, following our conversion and the acceptance of faith in Jesus Christ, our work becomes the gradual path toward personal sanctification, guided by the in-working of the Holy Spirit in each of us as we navigate our path. At every step, Satan and his forces are at work to frustrate us and even stop us. Finally, this thesis will argue that there are important and useful implications for the church.

As well as being a champion for women in the priesthood, Canon Simon Phipps was the Industrial Chaplain in the Diocese of Coventry, England. His close contact with the challenges of labour and management in this industrial heartland of 1960s Britain gave him a view of life which he believed the church had largely missed. In *God on Monday*, he asserts, “The biblical outline of the world shows it as man’s [sic] means of freedom, God’s means of communication, and man’s [sic] means of response... and it all happens in the one secular world.”<sup>34</sup> Phipps goes on to criticize an evangelism that implies a duality in our lives: our religious world and our secular world. This thesis rejects the duality of the sacred and the secular.

## Re-Combining the Sacred and the Secular

Each organization develops its own unique and distinct culture, work ethic and lexicon. Stephen Pattison points out that “management is a kind of faith system accompanied by its own distinctive symbols, rituals, narratives and practices.”<sup>35</sup> Beyond

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<sup>34</sup> Phipps, *God on Monday*, 35.

<sup>35</sup> Woodward and Pattison, Eds. *The Blackwell Reader*, 284.

this, today the systems and structure of the workplace are influenced and shaped by people of many faith backgrounds and, increasingly, atheists. Thus the Christian who strives to live out a practical theology must do so with care, discernment and in a way that is welcoming to all. In his paper, *Living Theologically: Toward a Theology of Christian Practice*, Paul Stevens quotes the Puritan William Perkins, who said, “Theology is the science of living blessedly forever.”<sup>36</sup> Stevens’ concept of Practical Theology—the integration of faith and work—is a cornerstone for the methodology of this thesis. David Miller writes that “Increasingly, business people and workers of all types are tired of living a bifurcated life.”<sup>37</sup> The challenge for the person of commerce is to apply the rather abstract theories of theology to the complex, performance-driven and often cynical and unforgiving world of work. Pattison describes this as the “three-way ‘conversation’ or dialogue between [the believer’s] own ideas, beliefs, feelings and perceptions. Between the beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions provided by the Christian tradition and the contemporary situation [their workplace] which is being considered.”<sup>38</sup> The result is that this thesis, in effect, is a merging of theology and leadership theory.

This thesis also explores the opportunity for a very rich dialogue between the Bible and what has become standard management practice. A dialogue where biblical influences might guide our behavior in the secular world in which commerce is conducted, adding to what Pattison describes as the “three virtuous ‘e’s of effectiveness, efficiency and economy.”<sup>39</sup> The addition that this thesis offers is a fourth ‘e’ ethics. At

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<sup>36</sup> Stevens, *Living Theologically*, 4.

<sup>37</sup> Miller, *The Faith at Work Movement*, 301.

<sup>38</sup> Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader*, 135.

<sup>39</sup> Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader*, 286.

the same time this dialogue introduces standard management practices from the world of commerce (strategic management, financial management, human resource management, and marketing management) to the church.

In keeping with Stevens' concept of Practical Theology, this thesis is what Stephen Pattison would describe as "contemporary enquiry."<sup>40</sup> It is an approach that makes Scripture accessible to the postmodern person of commerce and deepens both her/his theological reflection and business acumen, while also framing these concepts of commerce in ways that are valuable to the church leader.

Chapter one includes a range of theological developments on the issue of vocation and the spirituality of work in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Chapter two considers, and rejects, the argument that work is simply a means to an end, nothing more. This thesis rejects the view that work serves no greater purpose than the provision of food and shelter and that personal advancement is just about getting ahead and the accumulation of wealth. Stevens presents the harsh view that, "People in business, law, the professions and the trades often regard the study of theology as a process of becoming progressively irrelevant."<sup>41</sup> This view is, largely, the secular position, however, there are those that interpret scripture as portraying a practical setting for serving the Kingdom, adding the imperative to act justly and ethically—an imperative that is repeated through both the Old and New Testaments. This thesis underscores this imperative both by laying out the biblical view that all work is just as God-centred as the work of the clergy and that the "powers of this dark

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<sup>40</sup> Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader*, 137.

<sup>41</sup> Stevens, *Living Theologically*, 4.

world”<sup>42</sup> as described by the Apostle Paul are out to stop us. In a sad irony, the less accessible the church is to business practice, the more vulnerable the workplace is to evil.

### Work In The Spirit

Chapter two also presents a view of work in the Spirit. It describes a gradual path to sanctification and legacy. This chapter will move to a comprehensive argument that our work, our vocational calling, whatever it may be, is of critical importance in the unfolding history of the world. This thesis asserts that it is God who, through the working in us of the Holy Spirit begins “at the same time that we are justified,”<sup>43</sup> is shaping our work as a critical continuation of creation. Drawing from Richard Osmer’s *Practical Theology: An Introduction*, this chapter will present the elements of the process of drawing closer to God in all that we do—in our transactions, our treatment of others, our leadership, our community-centredness (both church and secular), so that not only are our own eyes and ears opened as we receive Christ in all His offices, but that others might see Christ reflected in us. In this way, not only is the fruit of our work economic in nature, but through our stewardship of God’s assets in the eyes of others we might fulfill the call to discipleship in a meaningful way.

Chapter two will also address the daunting premise laid out by Gregory Boyd in his two works, *God at War* and *Satan and the Problem of Evil*. Boyd posits that, “Further, it has also been shown that the final period before God’s ultimate victory over Satan has generally come to be identified as the ultimate period of testing.”<sup>44</sup> Nowhere, perhaps, are we more likely to be tested than in the workplace. This is the place where we might

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<sup>42</sup> Eph 6:12b.

<sup>43</sup> Wesley, “Sermon 43,” para 4.

<sup>44</sup> Boyd, *God at War*, 220.

strive to make our most critical personal contribution to the Kingdom and therefore this is the place where we are vulnerable. While God is fully capable of vanquishing Satan, we will need to be prepared for the attack.

### A Pastoral Response To The Theology of Work

Chapter three presents the elements of a pastoral response, offering the opportunity for an enriching exchange between the church and the workplace. As members of the body of Christ we must abandon completely the dualism that pervades us in so many ways. We must abandon the dualism that separates our holy lives from our secular lives. Rather we must bind our activities together in the way that the lives of the ancients were bound together. We see this still today in such places as Greek and Jewish orthodoxy and we must bring this back to the confessing church. This chapter will also outline both a work-centric guideline for the ministry and implications for seminaries. It provides a call for, and the provision of, instructional thoughts for ministry as we seek better to understand our daily role as Christians as we go about our work in the Spirit. To become resilient in our task is crucial.

What also emerges is the potential for an enriching exchange. As the pastoral community contemplates the realities of the working lives of its flock, so too might the practices of good management more fully pervade the church. Pattison suggests that the time is right for this, arguing that “management is probably a necessary, useful, and inevitable part of the life of any contemporary organization, including the church.”<sup>45</sup>

### A Teleological Evaluation of Work

Chapter four concludes this thesis, with a teleological valuation of work. Martin Lloyd-Jones says this:

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<sup>45</sup> Woodward and Pattison, *The Blackwell Reader in Pastoral and Practical Theology*, 283

The Christian man [sic] should remind himself every morning as he wakes up, ‘I am a child of God; I am a unique person; I am not like everybody else; I belong to the family of God. Christ has died for me and has translated me from the kingdom of darkness into His own Kingdom. I am going to heaven, I am destined for that. I am but passing through this world. I know its temptations and trials; I know the subtle insinuations of Satan. But I do not belong to him. I am a pilgrim and a stranger; I am one who is following Christ along the road.’<sup>46</sup>

But, along the journey, this thesis asserts, it is the goal of every Christian, whether clergy or street sweeper, to add value in the carrying out of their daily work. We live in an era where *networks* are proliferating—*facebook*, *linkedin*, and other ‘*www*’ services have memberships that, in size, challenge the populations of many countries. Yet, at the same time we also live in a time when we speak less often of *relationships*. Bauman says, “When the quality lets you down, you tend to seek redemption in quantity. If ‘commitments are meaningless’, while relationships cease to be trustworthy and are unlikely to last, you are inclined to swap partnerships for networks.”<sup>47</sup> In a world where partnerships, *relationships*, diminish and *networks* increase, our clergy must link arms with the communities they serve as fellow travelers in search of the narrow gate. This must be achieved in the most committed—the most mutually engrossing way possible.

This thesis strives to provide biblical comfort, inspiration and instruction on this critical topic of practical theology as it might permeate and make more relevant our careers, both for confessing Christians and those who minister to them, and to those who seek answers to what is for many the burning question, “Is it possible for me to find sanctification through my daily work?”

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<sup>46</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in The Sermon On The Mount*, 489.

<sup>47</sup> Bauman, *Liquid Love*, xiii.

## SUMMARY

This thesis presents a theology of work. As its central plank, this thesis offers that our daily work, when called and inspired by God through the Holy Spirit, is a contribution to God's kingdom both in the present and in the kingdom to come.

We are players in the unfolding of history. This should provide very reassuring answers to the troubling questions of those hungering for deeper purpose in the workplace. The sacred and the secular become recombined, just as scripture has instructed. Working in the Spirit does also mean that we need a stronger understanding of the presence of evil in the workplace.

A strong pastoral response to the theology of work is important. There is an opportunity for a much expanded dialogue on the sacred value of everyday work as a contribution to the kingdom.

## CHAPTER 1: THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Synopsis: On the theological foundation that the world will not in annihilation, but transformation, we find evidence that God is equipping us for work, and is also very interested in our work. Jesus is our role model as we see to reflect the image of God in the way that we carry out our work—our contribution to an incomplete and unfolding creation. An eschatological purpose for our work underscores the ethical behavior that the early church fathers established and that we must follow. The Holy Spirit is equipping us and leading us as our vocations unfold.

### The World Will Not End in Annihilation, but Transformation

As presented above, the first foundational element of this thesis is an acceptance of the eschatological *transformatio mundi*. In this scenario, a deeper emphasis is to be given to what Jackelen describes as the “Predicament of human life as being in the tension between the already and the not yet.”<sup>1</sup> This predicament presents urgency in terms of the question of how human beings are to view the value of their effort.

Therefore a second foundational element of this thesis is the construction of a theology of work. Such a theology affirms that vocation is an evolving and developing gift from God, empowered and led by the Holy Spirit and unique to each one of us. A theology of work is a theology of God’s equipping of us for the work we are called to undertake, whether as street-sweeper or business executive; for one career for life, or for a lifetime of diverse careers. A theology of work affirms us in our judgment. It fills us with hope, inspiration and endurance. It gives us the gift of forgiveness. It cements our moral compass so that we may navigate the dilemmas that we inevitably confront and it

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<sup>1</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 969.

assures us of God's intentionality for us—that our work is not only pleasing to him but also critical to him.

### God Is Interested in Our Work and That Brings New Meaning

For many there seems to be a vortex of negativity in terms of meaning in their lives. Diana Butler Bass writes that even if people are church-goers, “Many people are just bored. They are bored with church-as-usual, church-as-club, church-as-entertainment.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, we hear co-workers speak of, ‘the daily grind’ or, ‘it’s just a job’, or, ‘back to the salt mine tomorrow’ two days after exclaiming ‘thank goodness it’s Friday’. We put the vast majority of our waking time and energy into our work and yet so many of us experience what Nouwen describes as a form of homelessness. Sadly, for many, the church does not seem to ameliorate this—which we will turn to later in this thesis. Nouwen writes, “Countless people experience their existence as dull, boring, stagnant and routine...Every day is just another day, often filled with many things to do, but seldom offering profound human satisfaction.”<sup>3</sup> A theology of work turns such feelings of worthlessness away and in its place reminds us of our God-summoned and God-equipped vocations. Moreover, a theology of work underscores the importance for recognition that justification<sup>4</sup> through work—our response to God’s summons—requires broad dialogue in the church. In the mid-1960s Alfons Auer wrote:

Since the end of the Second World War the subject of a Christian spirituality that is specifically lay, has been discussed with an interest previously unknown. This attitude is not shared everywhere with equal enthusiasm. Admittedly in many respects it requires some clarification; but the basic tenet has been clear from the

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<sup>2</sup> Butler-Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Nouwen, *Lifesigns*, 44.

<sup>4</sup> Justification: Vindicated, made free from blame, placed in a state necessary for salvation. Source: Webster's.

beginning. The results of an enquiry into the lay spirituality in an appeal for ‘the saint in the flesh’ have been summed up as follows: Our time longs for the realization of Christian lay spirituality in the concrete matters of the modern world.<sup>5</sup>

Several conversations in preparation for this thesis confirm that, as people grow in their workplace experiences, in commerce and in the academy, they frequently find themselves seeking a greater understanding of the theological materiality of work. Persons who have devoted their life to the business sector would likely agree on this matter, although many would articulate their perspectives in different ways. For example, Susan, a devout Jew, shared that the Torah is never far from her thoughts, that she prays three times daily and, although her work, in her words, “is not religiously oriented, [she emphasizes that her] deep faith coupled with traditional values like respect, honesty and commitment allow [her] to do [her] best”. Perhaps it is the centrality of the Synagogue in the lives of Orthodox Jews. Perhaps it is the fact that much time in the days of the week between Sabbath worships is spent in the Synagogue that the lessons of Torah are never far from the mind of the Jewish business person. The Book of Leviticus, third book of the Torah, the Pentateuch, often, it seems, seen by the church today as irrelevant, was particularly instructive to the laity in their daily lives as well as to the priesthood. While the instructions for *expiation*—atonement were largely focused on restoring the covenant relationship with God, we find explicit instructions for atonement in matters of inappropriate behavior in business. For example, in Leviticus we find the verse, “When you have sinned and realize your guilt, and would restore what you took by robbery or by fraud...or anything else about which

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<sup>5</sup> Auer, *Open to the World*, 80-1.

you have sworn falsely, you shall repay the principal amount and shall add one fifth to it.”<sup>6</sup>

We also find the instruction, “Six years you shall sow your field, and six years shall you prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; but in the seventh year there shall be a Sabbath of complete rest for the land, a Sabbath for the Lord: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard.”<sup>7</sup> Longman and Dillard describe such instructions as “Fellowship Offerings; based on the fact that such [activities] are for fellowship between both the worshiper and God and *among* the worshipers [emphasis added].”<sup>8</sup> Leviticus also provides a specific admonishment of appropriate business conduct, “You shall not cheat one another, but you shall fear your God; for I am the Lord your God.”<sup>9</sup> Interestingly, Rabbi Wayne Dosick speaks of a time when “the Rabbi of the city would go from business to business checking the scale weights used by the merchants”<sup>10</sup> Quite clearly then, in the ancient pages of the Torah, the Law of Moses, we find evidence that God is taking an interest in our business practices, just as we celebrate God’s own works of creation. Wyszynski points out that, “In words familiar to us all, Psalm 103 makes these thoughts more beautifully vivid by its praise of God’s work in the universe.”<sup>11</sup>

In ancient culture we find that hospitality and reciprocity are already entrenched as foundations for ethical behavior in commerce. Matthews and Benjamin make the point that, “Travel provided a natural stimulus to the development of a protocol for the

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<sup>6</sup> Lev 6: 4-5.

<sup>7</sup> Lev 5: 3-4.

<sup>8</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 87.

<sup>9</sup> Lev 25: 17b.

<sup>10</sup> Dosick, *The Business Bible*, 37.

<sup>11</sup> Cardinal Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 14.

host and the stranger. If water, food, and shelter were not offered, travelers in the ancient near east could not have survived. Hospitality created a code of reciprocity.”<sup>12</sup> It was this code of hospitality, with rigid protocols to be followed by both host and stranger/guest that undergirded the development of trade between communities and ultimately nations.

### Many Seek Greater Meaning in Their Work. Jesus is our Role Model

Journey fast forward to the western world and the modern day. In his book *Business As a Calling*, Michael Novak speaks of, “An unfound door through which what [we] seek is revealed.”<sup>13</sup> In other words we seek the door to abundant life—a life beyond *having*. [We find] a revelation that “plenty isn’t enough”<sup>14</sup>. Experience suggests that many, in one way or another, wrestle with Jesus’ question, “What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”<sup>15</sup> The notion of the ‘unfound door’ resonates here. The fundamental answer to Jesus’ question is that profit, gaining the whole world, but working hard without a greater purpose—God’s purpose—is fruitless. However, profitable enterprise that is full of God’s purpose—fecundity versus productivity—is a perfectly noble goal. This is the unfound door; unfound but searched for by many. It really does feel very different when an organization has embraced a greater purpose and the good news is that this can be achieved. So, indeed, there is hope!

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<sup>12</sup> Matthews and Benjamin, *Social World*, 82.

<sup>13</sup> Novak, *Business As a Calling*, 1.

<sup>14</sup> Novak, *Business As a Calling*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 8:36.

## We Discover That the Entire Biblical Narrative is Eschatological: Providing Hope For Us

Referring to Psalms 27, 105 and 121, Donald Gowan lays out that all of God's guidance for His people Israel is cloaked in an eschatological promise, "It is thus the certain, never failing, all sufficient, caring, and protecting presence of God 'in that day' [is promised by these texts]. [Their] central concern is the future existence of a holy people enjoying the presence of God in their midst."<sup>16</sup>

In fact, this thesis rests on the foundation that the entire biblical narrative, from creation to salvation and re-creation, is eschatological; a story of hope and a call for God's people to be his 'co-workers' in the world's preparation for the New Kingdom by using our gifts in the service of others rather than self-aggrandizement, by our stewardship, and by discipleship. Thus, our vocational endeavours are central to God's plan, and this cannot be overemphasized. Arguably, the workplace—with all its lessons and challenges—is where we contemplate hope for the future. It is also the place where the need for forgiveness of those who have 'trespassed' against us is vital. It is where we choose to work for God or some other idol.

Longman and Dillard tell us that, "The Hebrew title for Leviticus, like the other books of the Pentateuch, is derived from the initial words of the book [and is thus titled] 'And He called'."<sup>17</sup> God's call to Moses from the Tent of Meeting may be taken as a precursor to his call to each of us. Gowan goes on to affirm that restoration is a key eschatological theme, "In Ezekiel 37 [we see] most of the important concepts associated

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<sup>16</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 13

<sup>17</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to The Old Testament*, 81

with Old Testament eschatology—a return of God’s people to their land. It is also in Hebrew scripture that the promise of a savior emerges.”<sup>18</sup> Gowan continues:

[The] only extensive pre-Christian description of the Messiah that we possess is in [the pseudepigraphic] Psalms of Solomon 17, dated in the middle of the first century B.C. It is still familiar OT language. Messiah is the king, the son of David, but he is a bit more active now. It is he who will defeat Israel’s enemies, gather the people, and settle the tribes in the land where he will be their judge. The nations will come under his yoke and he will rule in righteousness, for he is sinless and wise because of God’s Holy Spirit. But he is still a purely human figure and his functions are exclusively political.<sup>19</sup>

It is at the moment of Jesus’ arrival, when the “word became flesh”<sup>20</sup> that we have our ‘God-man.’ In Jesus we have our role model—a worker. Wyszynski points to Luke 2:49 and writes, “Jesus united his action to the action of the Father. He describes the Father’s work more closely, by calling Him a householder, sower, and husbandman [sic].”<sup>21</sup>

### The Gift of *Imago Dei*

Anderson states, “God is a God of Glory without the praise and company of human creatures...Human persons, in contrast, cannot be complete without ‘glorifying or enjoying’ God, for that is their nature and their destiny as created ‘in the likeness and image of God.’”<sup>22</sup> This is at the root of personhood and goes to what God has in mind for our redemption through Jesus Christ, who is the true and perfect image of God. Humans are created after that image and are imperfect. Yet, Jesus invites us, “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>23</sup> Anderson offers that, “The *imago* is a gift or an endowment which takes place in the concrete and particular existence of each

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<sup>18</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 39

<sup>19</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 39

<sup>20</sup> John 1:14

<sup>21</sup> Cardinal Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Anderson, *On being human*, 69.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 5:48.

person. It is not merely that ‘humanity’ in the abstract exists as the ideal of true humanity, the likeness of God. It is in each person that exists the image and likeness of God. This thesis posits that the fruit of the gift of the *imago Dei*, at the very least, is the invitation to have the same love for the world that God possesses and commands of us. That command is to love the world through nurturing and improving the world. It is the ethical obligation for each of us to love that which God loves. It is, then, in the unfolding of our daily lives—our labour—that this gift is manifest.

God works, Jesus works, The Holy Spirit is at work. We are created after the image of God. We develop and grow at work and this is pleasing to God. Gowan also makes the statement that there is an expectation that God’s people will improve in their ways. He says, “The conviction about the radical wrongness of life which underlay OT eschatology extended to human nature itself, so that the prophetic hope for a better future also included anthropological changes, a transformation of human beings which would finally make obedience possible...Heart is the most important word in OT anthropology...the promise that God will give a new heart to his people.”<sup>24</sup> However, we do not see, according to Gowan, an expectation that God’s people—as individuals—will take on the role of partnering with God in unfolding history. He asserts:

Old Testament eschatology understands the future to be completely in the hands of God...The basic hope in the OT is not faith in human progress, but the assurance of a coming divine intervention...Old Testament eschatology emphasizes human society more than personal salvation...concern for the fate of the individual after death, which has tended to dominate Christian eschatology, is almost completely missing from the OT.<sup>25</sup>

God’s expectation of obedience clearly leads to the requirement, that God’s people as a society have deeply moral obligations to fulfill in our daily lives. Gowan

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<sup>24</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 69.

<sup>25</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122.

stresses that, “Two aspects of the ethical implications of eschatology may be identified and designated as the *object* and *impetus*. By *object* is meant *what* eschatology says human beings can and should be doing in the world, and by *impetus* is meant *why* eschatology impels us to want to do something about the present world.”<sup>26</sup>

### Eschatological Purpose Brings a Great Moral Obligation: Sacred and Secular are Recombined

A personal moral obligation becomes completely clear in the New Testament. Grenz and Olsen speak about American theologian and ethicist, Reinhold Niebuhr, who they say was “intensely interested in the practical implications of Christian faith...as a result he refused to limit his endeavours to abstract theological discussions, but became an activist, seeking to apply theological insights to realms as diverse as politics, international affairs, human rights and economic systems.”<sup>27</sup> Volf underscores this perspective when he says, “God’s people have social as well as evangelistic responsibilities in his world.”<sup>28</sup> Volf continues, speaking of the Oxford Conference on Christian Faith and Economics in 1987, he states, “Work; stewardship; creation of wealth; justice; freedom and democracy; leisure—a process that in the year 1990 culminated in a document entitled ‘Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics.’”<sup>29</sup>

When we separate the sacred nature of our work with such expressions as ‘it’s just business’ we eschew our work’s eschatological value. It is important to reflect here on the perspective of Wolfhart Pannenberg. He writes:

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<sup>26</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, [Emphasis original] 125.

<sup>27</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 101.

<sup>28</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 6.

<sup>29</sup> The “Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” 2.

Contemporary Christian doctrine has to live up to an inevitable conflict not with human reason, but the mentality of our increasing secularist culture... This applies especially to the Christian eschatological hope for a life beyond death. This hope is sharply opposed to the emphatic worldliness of our secular culture. It is under suspicion of escapism, as if it would cheat people out of the fulfillment of their lives on this earth.<sup>30</sup>

This is a particularly critical point that underscores the challenges addressed in this thesis. Firstly we perceive the challenging task of what are perceived by many as polarities. In a sense it is the ‘time-eternity’ conundrum: work to enjoy life now (in time), versus prepare for a life in the New Creation (in eternity). We are challenged to understand and accept an aligned perspective that work now, conducted for enjoyment, while being conducted morally, is also eschatological in its very nature. The sacred and the secular become one when accepted this way.

Work is important, very important, according to Volf. He says, “The apostolic injunction, ‘if anyone will not work, let him not eat’ (2Thess. 3:10—until recently part of the Soviet constitution!)”<sup>31</sup> By contrast, the *Haredim*, an ultra-Orthodox Jewish sect faces pressure in Israel currently as their country seeks to change their habits. The *Haredim*, literally ‘Those that tremble before God’, according to a Huffington Post article are, “Often living in de-facto ghettos of their own making, the majority of *Haredim* men are allowed to shun the army and dedicate their life to religious study, living off donations, state benefits and the often meagre wages of their wives, many of whom work.”<sup>32</sup> It’s easy to appreciate that the rest of Israel’s workforce do not appreciate this circumstance – one perhaps not unlike the situation that Paul faced in Thessalonica where, according to Da Silva, Paul describes people who had chosen not to

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<sup>30</sup> Braaten and Jensen, *The Last Things*, 1.

<sup>31</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Huffington Post June 6<sup>th</sup> 2013.

pursue fruitful labour, “not just as lazy but as a potentially disruptive element within the noble life of the Christian community.”<sup>33</sup> When we consider work as an eschatological imperative, *all* decisions and actions come into new focus.

### Profound Expectations for Stewardship

Of course, even in a society where most are gainfully employed, we see many issues to raise our concern and to react to as Christians. Today in the west, we are witnessing a wide and worsening income gap between the highest and lowest paid employees. Further, we are witnessing what seems to be an epidemic of corrupt behavior among public servants at virtually every level—an eruption of hubris and self-entitlement that is truly discouraging. Ron Knowles writes that, “The almost gleeful pummeling of unsuccessful leaders reflects a profound skepticism about the motives and competency of leaders in all sectors.”<sup>34</sup>

Volf points to the sadness of, “the mistreatment of particularly vulnerable workers.”<sup>35</sup> This is particularly egregious against the backdrop that it is in the very workplace that so many seek to self-actualize and make their contribution to society, as well as enjoy a complete spectrum of work experiences and leisure pursuits.

The accumulation of wealth is not wrong. Craig Blomberg writes that, “At the time of the coming of the messianic age would come not only political freedom but social prosperity.”<sup>36</sup> There are many parables of Jesus where this issue is confronted. An example is the parable of the two debtors. Blomberg says:

The short parable is embedded in the larger context of Jesus’ dining at the home of Simon the Pharisee relatively early in his ministry. Jesus is anointed by a

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<sup>33</sup> DaSilva *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 548.

<sup>34</sup> Knowles, *Coming to our Senses*, 57.

<sup>35</sup> Volf *Work in the Spirit*, 43.

<sup>36</sup> Blomberg *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*, 110.

disreputable women [likely a prostitute] from the community, with a lavish outpouring of perfume, to the disgust of Simon himself (Luke 7:36-40, 44-50). Two dimensions of this passage demonstrate immediately that Jesus does not object to using one's wealth for various kinds of celebrations... When these meals were hosted by well-to-do leaders, cultural mores would have dictated the provision of a sumptuous feast. Second, Jesus' refusal to rebuke the woman for 'wasting' the contents of an expensive jar of perfume on his feet further reinforces the conclusion that Jesus approves of at least occasional carefree expenditures as demonstrations of people's lavish love for him.<sup>37</sup>

Rather, it appears that it is self-aggrandizement, which leads to social injustice and corruption, which receives a complete rebuke from Jesus. Richard Cassidy takes us to the Gospel of Luke where, he says, "Luke indicates that Jesus was concerned to instruct the disciples with respect to service and humility at several junctures."<sup>38</sup> In particular, Cassidy draws us to Luke 22:24-27, where, Luke describes a more extended response. Cassidy writes, "First Jesus begins by criticizing 'the kings of the Gentiles' for lording it over their subjects and appropriating for themselves the title 'benefactor'. He then admonishes the disciples not to follow such an approach."<sup>39</sup>

Adam Smith, eighteenth century Scottish moral philosopher and economist, was an icon whose writings might have underscored the perspective of this thesis on the eschatological value and purpose of work. Certainly it sounded promising at first. However Volf quickly dismisses this. Of Adam Smith's understanding of work Volf writes, "The very first sentence of Smith's seminal work *Wealth of Nations* testifies to the importance he ascribed to human work: 'The annual labour of every nation is the fund which supplies it with all the necessary conveniences of life...the four stages of society [wrote Smith] are hunting, pasturage, farming and commerce.'<sup>40</sup> Smith

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<sup>37</sup> Blomberg, *Neither Poverty Nor Riches*, 113.

<sup>38</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

<sup>39</sup> Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles*, 6.

<sup>40</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 48.

dismisses any potential for his acceptance of work as having a deeper meaning than the provision of food and shelter at the personal and family level, and an engine of economic output at a societal level. Indeed, notwithstanding his own vocational choice, Smith sees such activities as, “the work of a pastor, philosopher, or politician [as] unproductive because it ‘perish [es] in the very instance of [its] performance.’”<sup>41</sup> Sadly, it seems, Smith’s view was that *productivity* and not what Nouwen introduces as *fecundity* was the goal of human labour. When our work is done in the consciousness of Christ’s indwelling in us we move beyond simple productivity. Nouwen writes, “The word ‘fecundity’ is not used often in daily conversation, but it is a word worth reclaiming, for it can put us in touch with our deepest human potential.”<sup>42</sup> Where ‘productivity’ may be a term that has come to infer consumption of the output of labour, ‘fecundity’ infers lasting fruitfulness and improvement. Volf continues, “In Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, we read: ‘Man was made for action...Labor is not an essential characteristic of human beings without which they could not be human. It is merely a means to satisfy the desire of bettering our condition’”<sup>43</sup> In other words, while the result of productive labour is the economic flourishing of the labourer and ultimately society at large, the workplace was no place to self-actualize; not only does it not contribute to the New Creation, “work does not have human dignity. It has only usefulness.”<sup>44</sup>

Wyszynski provides sharp contrast. He writes, “Man [sic] creates nothing; he [sic] merely transforms God’s ready-made gifts. God alone acts and creates in the true meaning of that word...It is God who creates the conditions for our work. Our work

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<sup>41</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 48.

<sup>42</sup> Nouwen, *Lifesigns*, 43.

<sup>43</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 48-9.

<sup>44</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 50.

would not have any starting point or basis if God did not prepare gifts from which we draw the material for new work.”<sup>45</sup> Put another way, far from being sole-proprietors, we are God’s co-workers! He has prepared us for this role. How uplifting this is. When we see our labour as God-breathed, and summoned of us by him, how can it be treated as our ‘daily grind’?

### Take Your Faith to Work

Grenz and Olson, introduce us to the twentieth century German-American theologian Paul Tillich who, “During his own lifetime was recognized by secular culture as one of the greatest minds Christian theology has ever produced.”<sup>46</sup> Tillich served on the front lines as a Chaplain in World War I before returning to the seminary, ultimately receiving the distinguished title ‘University Professor’ at Harvard. Grenz and Olson write that for Tillich, “theology must be ‘answering theology’; it must adapt the Christian message to the modern mind while maintaining its essential truth and unique character.”<sup>47</sup> Tillich, then, turned his mind to the ontology, the concept of the nature of being of the person of his time—like them, he had many feelings of doubt and anxiety about his purpose, his own salvation. For Tillich, however, these anxieties—particularly the anxieties of ‘non-being’—were paramount. Grenz and Olson observe that, “It is natural for humans to wonder about their own status in relation to being, because in their moments of deepest thought they realize that they are finite, transitory, and temporal.”<sup>48</sup>

This spiritual journey—the thinking through of a potential relationship between the finite—*me* and the infinite—God is, perhaps, the path followed by those who seek to

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<sup>45</sup> Cardinal Wyszyński, *All You Who Labor*, 17.

<sup>46</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 114.

<sup>47</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 117.

<sup>48</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 118.

come to terms with the true meaning of their work.<sup>49</sup> Indeed it may be the answer to a core question of personal identity. Some may begin their working lives in full awareness of this reality, while for others it may be the nagging question for which the answer slowly emerges.<sup>50</sup> According to Grenz and Olson, Tillich arrived at a point where he believed that “Universally implied in human existence is the quest for a new being that will break through estrangement and overcome anxiety and despair by reuniting us with our essence. For Tillich, then, Christ is the answer.”<sup>51</sup> So it is in the sorting out of the true meaning of our daily labour; in putting our souls in our work as well as our backs that is important here. The good news is that Christ is waiting for us. First to comfort us and then to send his Holy Spirit to sharpen us, equip us, strengthen us, and keep us straight in our path.

#### The Early Church Fathers Set the Standard

The Book of the Acts of the Apostles brings insights into the organization of labour within the early church. In reflecting on the early church fathers’ perspective on work, Volf offers this:

In spite of treating the problem of work as only a subordinate theme...the early church fathers reflected on work from two main perspectives. First and foremost, they discussed what influence the new life in Christ should have on a Christian’s daily work. Against the Greek philosophical depreciation of work, they affirmed that there is nothing disgraceful or demeaning about manual labour...The early church fathers affirmed not only the nobility of work but also the obligation to work diligently and not be idle—that Christians should be ‘ever laboring at some good and divine work’...They also stressed that Christians should not work only to satisfy their own needs but also to have something to share with their needy fellow human beings.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> My own journey mirrors the sentiments offered by Tillich. Without deep spiritual purpose in work, life is essentially a grind, sometimes pleasant in terms of its rewards, but often simply hard.

<sup>50</sup> It is certainly the way that my own faith journey unfolded.

<sup>51</sup> Grenz and Olson, *20th Century Theology*, 128.

<sup>52</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 71.

The Apostle Paul provides considerable support for the divine importance of work. In many cases, Paul emphasizes the work of bringing the good news and of church planting (Rom 16:12). More than this, however, Paul emphasizes the importance and sanctity of labour. In Corinth Paul uses strong rhetoric, “Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working for a living?”<sup>53</sup> In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul clarifies that the skills with which we are equipped are gifts from God. He writes, “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.”<sup>54</sup> In 2 Cor we also hear Paul remind his audience of the obligation of those able to share with those less fortunate, “And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything you may share abundantly in every good work.”<sup>55</sup> The caring for others is central to the entire biblical narrative and is a key message for us in the enjoyment of the fruits of our labour. Mark Roelofs writes on the biblical underpinnings of liberation theology. He asserts:

As before with Moses, Jesus’ political radicalism is also a religiosity. Radical egalitarianism, radical communitarianism, and radical pacifism can all be seen as the social expressions of taking the two great, ancient, religious commandments with an absolute, uncompromising personal seriousness: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, all thy strength and all thy mind’ and ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.’<sup>56</sup>

We may not choose to add the label ‘radical’ to such assertions, but we certainly need to take this matter seriously. Issues of the poor appear no less than one hundred and seventy-seven times in both OT and NT passages. In fact in Acts we learn that one of the first crises of organization of the early church, as it shifted from being an itinerant

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<sup>53</sup> Rom 9:16.

<sup>54</sup> Eph 4:11-12.

<sup>55</sup> 2 Cor 9:8.

<sup>56</sup> Roelofs, “Liberation Theology,” 555.

rural ministry to an urban organization, was caring for widows. Luke writes, “Now during those days, when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists complained against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food.”<sup>57</sup> It appears that this controversy led to the early development of organizational structure in the church, specifically to ensure that key tasks were delegated to those equipped for such roles. This resulted in the appearance of deacons, and at 1 Tim 3:8 we find a succinct description of the characteristics of those to be appointed in this role.

We recognize from this that the early church fathers took seriously the role of work and vocation in their interpretation of the Christian life. Swinton and Mowat write, “The task of Practical Theology is to mediate the relation between the Christian tradition and the specific problems and challenges of the contemporary social context.”<sup>58</sup> This is significant for the purpose of this thesis in that it seeks to identify the core of work as a spiritual aspect of all of life. While primarily in the form of subordinate themes, we find broad New Testament evidence for work, both in ministry and in menial labour, to be both divinely inspired and equipped. Work, then, is not adjunct to spiritual matters, but is itself a spiritual experience. Work is a central way of contributing to the society in which we are all participants. We are also introduced to the summons that with the enjoyment of our labour also rests the task of sharing our wealth with others. One is obliged in fact not only to take care of oneself but also to set aside a portion for others. Finally, in Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians we find exquisite and descriptive language that describes the living of a life pleasing to God. The fact that the early church fathers

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<sup>57</sup> Acts 6:1.

<sup>58</sup> Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 26.

not only condoned work but expected that gainful employment would be part of the life of persons is of import to this thesis.

Conyers writes, “While early in the life of the church, the teaching on vocation by Origen and Augustine would have included the call to every Christian, even to every human being.”<sup>59</sup> Volf continues, on the theme of, “*Influence of Work on Christian character*. Occasionally we encounter in [the early Christian Fathers’] writings the quasi-heretical idea of the atoning function of work. For example, the Epistle of Barnabas affirms ‘working with thy hands for the ransom of thy sins’.”<sup>60</sup>

#### The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics

It is worth noting several critical assertions from the *Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* issued in 1990 jointly by over one hundred theologians and economists. Referencing 1 Timothy 6:17 the *Declaration* states, “Production is not only necessary to sustain life and make it enjoyable; it also provides an opportunity for human beings to express their creativity in the service of others.”<sup>61</sup> The workplace is an ideal place to explore and develop creativity, entrepreneurship and competitiveness.

The *Declaration* goes on to make the emphatic statement, “Human work has consequences that go beyond the preservation of creation to *the anticipation of the eschatological transformation of the world*.”<sup>62</sup> This point is critical to this thesis as it undergirds the complete alignment of work with divine imperative.

Volf underscores this point when he says, “Since a theology of work has normative ethical implications, its task is not merely to interpret the world of work in

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<sup>59</sup> Conyers, “Vocation,” 11.

<sup>60</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 71-2.

<sup>61</sup> “Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” 2.

<sup>62</sup> “Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” [emphasis added] 3.

particular, but to *lead* the present world of work, [to quote Moltmann,] ‘towards the promised and hoped-for transformation’ in the new creation.”<sup>63</sup> Already in this thesis, we have chosen our perspective on what will happen at the end of days: the *eschaton*. Against the prospect of the *annihilato mundi*—a radical *discontinuity* between this world and the next, this thesis chooses eschatological transformation—*transformatio mundi*—a transformative *continuity* between the two worlds. 2 Peter 3:10 reads, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.”<sup>64</sup> Disclosed, not necessarily destroyed. Volf makes the compelling statement that:

Every noble result of human work is ultimately significant. It is possible that the fire of judgment will not only burn up the results of work, the worker herself escaping ‘the flames’ (I Cor. 3:15) but that the flames of the ‘absolutely searching and penetrating love of God’ will envelop the evil worker while her work is purified and preserved.<sup>65</sup>

Either way, it is clear that we shall be held to account, therefore we are to act justly. We are to seek out the ‘narrow gate.’ However, if we choose the *transformatio mundi* interpretation, then our work almost certainly has eschatological legacy implications.

It is upon this path that this thesis rests. Certainly the signatories to the *Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* have chosen this interpretation, and so has Volf, who makes the critical assertion that, “The results of the cumulative work of human beings have intrinsic value and gain ultimate significance, for they are related to the eschatological new creation, not only indirectly through the faith and service do they

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<sup>63</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 83.

<sup>64</sup> 2 Pet 3:10.

<sup>65</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 121.

enable our sanctification, but also directly: the noble products of human ingenuity.”<sup>66</sup>

Yes, God wants us to be ingenious! Volf continues, “The significance of secular work depends on the value of creation, and the value of creation depends on its final destiny.”<sup>67</sup>

Put another way, if the ‘end of days’ is transformation of God’s creation, then every effort that we make at work is of value toward that transformation.

### Creation is Incomplete: It is Unfolding and We Have a Role to Play

So far, this thesis has argued that the *eschaton* will bring a transformation of creation rather than annihilation. It has also argued that our work is a response to faith; God’s summons to us to contribute to his New Creation. This calling is a calling equipped by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, these assertions suggest that creation is still unfolding and incomplete. Grenz and Olson make the point that Hegel, “did not agree with his predecessors that reality is static and complete. Instead Hegel taught that reality is active and developing.”<sup>68</sup> In other words, each of us makes a contribution in some way—positively or negatively. Put more starkly, we are working for God or we are working for Satan.

### The Holy Spirit is the Agent, the Equipper, and the Guide

It is significant for us to examine the role of the Holy Spirit, whose role here is the agent who is active in equipping and guiding the work of the believer toward our stewardship endeavours. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes, “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common

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<sup>66</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 91.

<sup>67</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 93.

<sup>68</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 33.

good.”<sup>69</sup> Volf asserts, “One cannot talk about the new creation without talking about the Spirit of God. For the Spirit, as Paul says, is the ‘first fruits’ or the ‘down payment’ of the future salvation (see Rom. 8:23; 2 Cor. 1:22) and the present power of eschatological transformation in them.”<sup>70</sup> Indeed it is not for some of us to make a contribution—it is for all of us. Volf continues. “In the Christian fellowship as the body of Christ there are no members without a function and hence also no members without a *charisma*. The Spirit, who is poured out on all flesh (Acts 2:17ff) imparts also charisms to all flesh.”<sup>71</sup>

DeSilva describes the book of *The Acts of the Apostles* as “Following the leading of the Spirit”<sup>72</sup> and indeed, the leadership challenges, together with the reconciliation of those challenges, as described by Luke are clearly intended to demonstrate to us that it is the Holy Spirit who is leading early Christians in their work in Jerusalem, then in Antioch and beyond. Work that arguably would have been impossible without divine guidance. Martin and Davids draw for us the distinct challenges faced by the early church as it witnessed the rise of the church in Antioch, and the compromise delivered by the Jerusalem council regarding acceptance of Hellenists into the church community and also the acceptance of the role of Paul. They point out that the debates of those ancient days have carried forward to the modern day. They point to Hengel, stating, “Ancient Judaism was extremely pluralistic”.<sup>73</sup> For James, the brother of Jesus, Peter and the Apostles to wrestle with such deliberations and challenges, arguably we must contemplate whether the church could have survived its early developments without the

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<sup>69</sup> 1 Cor 12:4-7.

<sup>70</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 102.

<sup>71</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 112.

<sup>72</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 348.

<sup>73</sup> Martin and Davids, Eds. *Dictionary of the Later New Testament and Its Developments*, 465.

abiding direction of the Holy Spirit. Certainly we should have these lessons firmly in our sight as we wrestle with the business challenges of today.

In Genesis we read, “The Earth was a formless void and darkness covered the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters.”<sup>74</sup> It was the Holy Spirit who was God’s agent of change at the creation, and it is the Holy Spirit who is God’s agent of change now. Volf says, “The Spirit of God calls, endows, and empowers Christians to work in their various vocations. The charismatic nature of all Christian activity is the *theological* basis for a pneumatological understanding of work.”<sup>75</sup> Our gifts of the spirit are multiple, and are also provided to us as we develop. Volf says, “One would misinterpret the nature of God’s action, however, if one were to think of charisms coming only, so to say, ‘vertically from above.’ Some capabilities human beings are born with, and many others they acquire in the course of their life through interaction with other human beings and their cultural and natural environments. These capabilities too, are gifts of God’s Spirit.”<sup>76</sup>

*The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit, through whom, “God gives talents to individuals for the benefit of the whole community.”<sup>77</sup> As the saying goes, ‘God does not call the equipped—He equips the called.’ In other words some of our gifts are innate, most, perhaps, are awarded to us as our circumstances and our environments unfold. Nowhere do we witness this more than we do at the events of Pentecost as described for us in Acts where we read, “All of

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<sup>74</sup> Gen 1:2b.

<sup>75</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 113.

<sup>76</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 130.

<sup>77</sup> “The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” 4.

them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.”<sup>78</sup>

Moltmann adds an important dimension as to the nature of our changing vocational situations. He says, “Our *callings* are historic, changing, changeable, temporally limited, and are therefore to be shaped in the process of being accepted in terms of call, of hope and of love. The call always appears in the singular. The callings, roles, functions and relationships which make a social claim on a man [sic] always appear in an open multiplicity.”<sup>79</sup> Put another way, God nudges, and then equips us, to grow and to adapt.

### We Crave Deep Purpose in Our Labours

As prelude to the remainder of this thesis, consider the last two verses of an English truck-driver’s lament:

You may sing of your soldiers and sailors so bold  
But there’s many and many a hero untold  
Who sits at the wheel in the heat and the cold  
Day after day without sleeping

So watch out for the cops and slow down at the bends  
Check all your gauges and watch your big ends  
And zig with your lights when you pass an old friend  
You’ll be champion at keeping ‘em rolling<sup>80</sup>

While somewhat bawdy in the balance of the lyrics, what we read in these verses is a call for recognition. Recognition of a life and vocation that while clearly ‘blue-collar’ is nonetheless important to the writer and, in the writer’s view, society at large. The men that Jesus called as his disciples were ‘blue collar.’ Many of those with whom he spent time were, likely, a bawdy lot. We do not know if the writer of this lyrics—the truck

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<sup>78</sup> Acts 2:4.

<sup>79</sup> Moltmann, *Theology of Hope*, 333.

<sup>80</sup> Lyric: “I’m Champion at Keeping E’m Rolling,” Author unknown.

driver—was a person of prayer, but we do know that the writer wanted us to notice his work. Jesus would have noticed. In Matthew 4:18-20 we hear Jesus call the two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother; Jesus said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people.”<sup>81</sup> Cardinal Wyszynski writes, “This direct link between physical and apostolic work was the starting point for the admiration in which work was held in all Christian thought.”<sup>82</sup>

In the First Letter to the Corinthians, the Apostle Paul writes, “the work of each builder will become visible, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each has done.”<sup>83</sup> We will be held to account for the effort we have put forward. It is critical for Christians to keep firmly in front of them that ‘the thief’ may come tonight—we are working on our legacy, for good or bad, every single day.

## SUMMARY

So many of us feel spiritually unfulfilled. Perhaps saddest of all, we do not realize that our work, far beyond its personal and societal economic value, is deeply pleasing and desired by God as a contribution to the kingdom. Yet, the earliest of scriptures confirm the place of work and economic activity in God’s plan. The Torah includes specific and detailed guidelines for the conduct of commerce, including the use of debt, the charging of interest and methods of atonement for inappropriate business conduct.

The Bible’s eschatological message includes the call for fecundity over productivity. When we see our work in this light we appreciate much for fully God’s

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<sup>81</sup> Matt 4:19.

<sup>82</sup> Cardinal Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 20.

<sup>83</sup> 1 Cor 3:13.

clear expectation for our vocational conduct. When lived out this way, our vocational efforts become central to God's plan.

We are created in God's image. The New Testament introduces Jesus as our role model. Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we conduct our work as glorification to God for the vocational and resource gifts he has given to us. As we improve ourselves both skillfully and morally, we improve the world—bettering the future for God's Kingdom. As stewards of God's Kingdom we are accountable to use what we need while using our resources to care for and develop others. There is a deep moral expectation of us in this effort.

To seek to fulfill God's expectation in our work is to find sanctification in our work. This provides a foundation that places our labour—our economic activity, regardless of domain, firmly and completely into a central tenet of God's expectation of all of us. No different that God's purpose for Adam and Eve, His purpose for us is the employment of the gifts that we have been given, nurtured by the Holy Spirit, in co-operation with God, in preparing for his coming Kingdom.

Undergirding this entire thesis is the requirement for a decision regarding the nature of the *eschaton*. Will it bring annihilation or transformation? The choice one makes establishes the foundation for how one perceives the eschatological value of human endeavor. This thesis chooses transformation. This also asserts that creation is incomplete. Each of us makes a contribution to the unfolding history of the Cosmos.

From the opening pages of Genesis we are told that there is a God-breathed rhythm of life: work, rest and worship. The Sabbath, and for Christians the Eucharist

celebration, is the fulcrum point of our week. Work is elevated to equal importance by God in this sacred cycle of activity.

All domains of human endeavor, when carried out in the image of Christ, are enjoyed by God and are important to him. Eschatological purpose also implies a great moral resolution on our part. We are stewards of the Earth's resources, and we are summoned to care for all humanity. The early church fathers set the standard for us in terms of responding to our vocational calling. However, it is the Holy Spirit who enables and equips us to execute the work that God calls us to perform.

## CHAPTER 2: SPIRITUALITY OF WORK

Synopsis: Work should be a spiritual endeavour. This spirituality becomes stronger when we understand the rhythm of work as God intended it to be, with the Sabbath as the climax of that rhythm. Understanding that our vocational calling is our means of being salt and light in the world will prepare us and strengthen us for moral leadership. Even though we will experience the ‘sweat of our brow,’ our work is not penance, but in fact the path to becoming ennobled. Indeed the Holy Spirit does not remove the difficulty of work, but the Spirit does lift our work to heaven.

### Work Should Be Enjoyed

The constructive argument of this thesis, put simply, is that human endeavour should be enjoyed, and exalted because it is summoned<sup>1</sup>, equipped and enjoyed by God. Thus, our work should be treated with the dignity and honour it deserves. Our work is a means for personal economic security. Our work provides the means for us to contribute to society and also to share our wealth with others. Our work is soul-full. It can be our path to self-actualization and, above all else, our work is of eschatological importance.

Ronald Rolheiser writes, “It is no easy task to walk this earth and find peace...we are forever restless, dissatisfied, frustrated, and aching.”<sup>2</sup> Our souls are longing for us to find peace and purpose in all our endeavours. Rolheiser makes the statement, “Spirituality is about what we do with the fire inside us.”<sup>3</sup> This thesis is about bringing forth our spirituality, our fire of purpose, fully into our work—integrating the

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<sup>1</sup> When responding to The Jews regarding his healing a man on the Sabbath, Jesus responded “My Father is still working, and I am also working.” John 5:17b. If God is always working, and is equipping us for our work, then his work is a summons; a command to perform.

<sup>2</sup> Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 1.

<sup>3</sup> Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 11.

spirituality of our work with the rhythm of our entire lives. And, in so doing, we find peace.

### Sabbath is Sacred and is The Climax of The Rhythm Of Life

It will be of value to move now to a discussion of the meaning of ‘Sabbath.’ The *Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* emphasizes the point that “the Biblical concept of rest should not be confused with the modern concept of leisure. Leisure consists of activities that are ends in themselves and therefore intrinsically enjoyable.”<sup>4</sup>

The concept of Sabbath is clearly a critical biblical principle, appearing one hundred and thirty-three times in one hundred and sixteen verses, from Exodus (cf. Exod. 16:23) in the Old Testament, to Paul’s Letter to the Colossians (cf. Col. 2:16) in the New Testament. Throughout scripture, there are two critical purposes of Sabbath. Exodus 31:14-15 is explicit and exacting, “You shall keep the Sabbath, because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it [offends its sacredness] shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from the people. Six days of work shall be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to the Lord.”<sup>5</sup>

The Sabbath, then, is both a time for rest from one’s labour and it is a time for solemn worship—a day to give to God. It is a day of atonement and complete rest, we are told in Leviticus (cf. Lev. 16:31). The *Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* asserts that, “Rest consists of the enjoyment of nature as God’s creation, [and that] worship is central to the Biblical concept of rest.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> “The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” 4.

<sup>5</sup> Exod 31:14-15.

<sup>6</sup> “The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics,” 4.

Rest then, is a critical part of the rhythm of life, as is labour—a Biblical rhythm of labour, rest and worship. For Jews the Sabbath is the fulcrum point in this rhythm. Heschel writes, “Friday evenings in my home were the climax of the week.”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, for Jews, Friday evenings, twenty minutes before sunset, was the precise arrival of the Sabbath. This was the end of the work week and the time for family and for worship. Soelle and Cloyes make the very affirming statement, “I have come to realize that our capacity to praise hinges on our capacity to involve ourselves in creation.”<sup>8</sup> Dare we go even further with the importance of the rest offered by Sabbath and suggest that this day may be, for us, a glimpse of the cosmic? Indeed, Sabbath may be the moment in the week where the temporal, if we allow it, can meet with the eternal, if only for a moment. Heschel writes, “Six days a week the spirit is alone, disregarded, forsaken forgotten.”<sup>9</sup> Working under strain, beset with worries, enmeshed in anxieties, man has no time for ethereal beauty. But the spirit is waiting for man to join it.”<sup>10</sup> For Christians, it is the stunning invitation of Christ to join him in the Eucharist that punctuates this beauty; this day of rest. If, as Soelle and Cloyes suggest, life is a rhythm of work, rest and worship, all the elements of which are interdependent, then Sabbath rest and worship is the zenith, not the nadir of our work week. As Heschel states, “The Sabbath is not for the sake of the weekdays; weekdays are for the sake of Sabbath. It is not an interlude but the climax of living.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, vii.

<sup>8</sup> Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work and to Love*, 1.

<sup>9</sup> When we fail to view our work as sacred, we ignore the Spirit’s activity in our work.

<sup>10</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 65.

<sup>11</sup> Heschel, *The Sabbath*, 14.

Our Work Must Be Fulfilling and Enjoyable and in Rhythm with Rest and Worship

Soelle and Cloyes write, “Good work is a basic human need. We destroy the human being if work means functioning without joy, without fulfillment, without imagination.”<sup>12</sup> This thesis argues that all must have the opportunity to perform joyful, fulfilling and imaginative work, especially if we hold that our work has eschatological importance.

This rhythm of work, rest and worship reflects the work of Henri J. M. Nouwen, whose writings are full of metaphors for this spiritual rhythm. For Nouwen, the most sacred punctuation point of this rhythm is the Eucharist—our celebration of the gift that Jesus made of himself to us just as he took on the greatest work of his earthly existence—his work on the Cross. Perhaps Nouwen’s most poignant reference to the Eucharist is in *Sabbatical Journey*, the diary of his final year. Hahn underscores the centrality of the Eucharist. He says, “St. Josemaria [founder of Opus Dei] taught that all human activity—political life, family life, social life, labor and leisure—should be restored to Christ, offered to God as a pleasing sacrifice, united with the sacrifice of the cross, united with the sacrifice of the Mass.”<sup>13</sup>

Following baptism, where Wainwright says, “God there does what he says, cleansing from sin and generating a new life destined for eternity,”<sup>14</sup> it is the Eucharist, “a responsibly celebrated Eucharist [that] exemplifies justice.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, the sacraments of baptism, atonement and Eucharistic communion are central to the sacred uplifting of daily endeavor—from toil to kingdom contribution. Added is the emphasis

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<sup>12</sup> Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work and to Love*, 85.

<sup>13</sup> Hahn, *Ordinary Work, Extraordinary Grace*, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Wainwright, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 11.

<sup>15</sup> Wainwright, *The Oxford History of Christian Worship*, 14.

that time with family is also an essential part of this rhythm of work, rest and worship. For so many in the early years of their career, effort spent ‘getting ahead’ is so often at the cost of time that could otherwise be spent with family. To emphasize this thought, Henri Nouwen’s encouragement that *being* may be, at times, more important than *doing*, resonates for us all. We must reflect on committing more to ‘being,’ realizing that time with precious people is as much a part of a contribution to the Kingdom—a legacy—than any labour we may undertake.

### Vocation: Salt and Light

If work, rest, and worship form the *metabolism of purpose* for our human existence, then it is entirely appropriate that the work element is genuinely and intrinsically pleasurable to us at the same time that it is pleasing to God.

This brings us to the concept of vocation. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth,”<sup>16</sup> and, “You are the light of the world.”<sup>17</sup> In the same way that salt lends its savour to food, Judith Thompson and Ross Thompson write, “the salt and the gospel are there to bring change to the world...what light needs to do is to be seen. It needs to stand as a sign and means of shedding the light of Christ.”<sup>18</sup> So there is our task. We are to accept our work as vocation—God’s call to us to turn our daily endeavour into a contribution to his New Kingdom. To be clear, such an expectation is not solely for the ordained minister, although most assuredly it is central to their role, this call is to all of us. This thesis invites us all to perceive our work as a form of ministry, and it comes to us, as Thompson and Thompson write, “by the kenosis

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<sup>16</sup> Matt 5:13.

<sup>17</sup> Matt 5:14.

<sup>18</sup> Thompson and Thompson, *Minding Ministry*, 11.

of Christ.”<sup>19</sup> This calls us to add time for reflection and meditation to our work day—time when silence allows Christ and the Holy Spirit to enter, to restore us, to equip us, and to guide us. We must let God’s wisdom become our friend. Thompson and Thompson write,

The image of Lady Wisdom suggests something crucial. Lady Wisdom is a close friend—even some might say a consort—of God:

I was beside him, like a master worker;  
And I was daily his delight,  
Rejoicing before him always,  
Rejoicing in his inhabited world  
And delighting in the human race. (Proverbs 8:27-31)

This delight in God and God’s creative work needs to be the core energy of the Christian leader.<sup>20</sup>

Responding to God’s invitation to vocation can be challenging. Like Jonah, as James Houston writes, “Our natural tendency is to maintain earthly values and to resist focusing on our heavenly destiny.”<sup>21</sup> Accepting this invitation requires us to contemplate the infinite: our own mortality and our hoped for resurrection at the coming of God’s New Kingdom. We turn again to Houston, who states:

Paul’s earliest letter, 1 Thessalonians, salutes those who have ‘turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath’ (1 Thess 1:9-19). Then later Paul elaborates on the hope of the resurrection for Christians, now dead, who will be ‘caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air’ (1 Thess 4:13-18)—changed indeed!<sup>22</sup>  
Our faith in Christ leads us to our hope in an eschatological transformation. This

faith changes everything in terms of our work—our response to faith. This response transforms work into vocation and this vocational call requires a behavioural standard

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<sup>19</sup> Thompson and Thompson, *Minding Ministry*, 50.

<sup>20</sup> Thompson and Thompson, *Minding Ministry*, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Houston, *Joyful Exiles*, 52.

<sup>22</sup> Houston, *Joyful Exiles*, 58.

that is worthy of God's summons to us. Soelle and Cloyes write, "The vision of self-expression and self-fulfillment in work is more than a utopian dream of people who suffer under the cursed tradition of meaningless work... We need to understand ourselves as co-creators who require constructive and joyful work in which we are challenged to develop our creative potential."<sup>23</sup>

### The Command for Moral Leadership

The headline reads, "DHAKA, Bangladesh – Thousands of mourners gathered Tuesday at the wreckage of a Bangladeshi garment factory building to offer prayers for the souls of the 1,127 people who died in the structure's collapse last month, the worst tragedy in the history of the global garment industry."<sup>24</sup> As believers we *cannot* turn our faces from headlines such as this. Soelle and Cloyes assert that, "In the world of exchange and profit, individuals are atomized and isolated from one another."<sup>25</sup> To be forced, through necessity, to work in these conditions may be on par with slavery. We must find a solution to this clear injustice. Once again we turn to *The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics* which affirms, "In assessing economic systems from a Christian perspective, we must consider their ability both to generate and to distribute wealth and income justly."<sup>26</sup> This is a God-summoned matter. We must respond to such issues, even when it means that we must have the courage to stand apart from the consensus view. As Houston reminds us, "Jesus' ministry is on a collision

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<sup>23</sup> Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work and to Love*, 85.

<sup>24</sup> Global News Story: Online <http://world.topnewstoday.org/world/article/5934514/> May 14<sup>th</sup> 2013.

<sup>25</sup> Soelle and Cloyes, *To Work and to Love*, 63.

<sup>26</sup> "The Oxford Declaration on Christian Faith and Economics," 2.

course with the vested interests of the Jewish leaders and the temple economy in Jerusalem.”<sup>27</sup>

Christian life, including our work life, does indeed mean living on the edge occasionally, even often. This is what it means to stand up for our faith. This thesis asserts that as co-operators in God’s creation who require constructive work does not mean that every moment of our working lives must be enjoyable. Michael Novak adds to this who says, “Enjoying what we do is not always a feeling of enjoyment; it is sometimes the gritty resolution a man or woman shows in doing what must be done—perhaps with inner dread and yet without whimpering self-pity.”<sup>28</sup> The memoirs of the life and travails of Nehemiah, among the last events of the Old Testament, is an example of this. For the purpose of this thesis it is worthy of note that the memoirs of Nehemiah and Ezra confirm, as Longman and Dillard state, “Holiness is no longer restricted to special places.”<sup>29</sup> The building of the walls, and by association, the labour of the builders, this thesis argues, are consecrated.

#### Work is Not Our Penance for Adam’s Sin, but Adam’s Sin Has made Work Laborious

We are not of the world, but we are most certainly in the world, as is our labour. Hahn poses the question, “If Jesus restores the original plan for work, why do our labours today still bear the marks of Adam’s sin? (cf. Gen 3:17) Why must our work be fraught with sweat, frustration, tedium, and failure?”<sup>30</sup> In emptying himself, Jesus did not exempt His own earthly life from suffering. His labours were difficult, as are ours. Cardinal Wyszyński offers that, “Work mysteriously encompasses joy and

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<sup>27</sup> Houston, *Joyful Exiles*, 86.

<sup>28</sup> Novak, *Business As A Calling*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 211.

<sup>30</sup> Hahn, *Ordinary Work*, 31.

pain...Certainly we discover both joy and grace in work. But we also meet toil, grief, and suffering there. Even if we raise work from the realm of suffering to the highest degree of supernatural-ness we are not able to lift the whole burden from it.”<sup>31</sup>

In his Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (The Concern of the Church for the Social Order), Pope John Paul II writes:

The story of the human race described by Sacred Scripture is, even after the fall into sin, a story of constant achievements, which, although always called into question and threatened by sin, are nonetheless repeated, increased and extended in response to the divine vocation given from the beginning to man and to woman...A part of this divine plan, which begins from eternity in Christ, the perfect ‘image’ of the Father, and which culminates in him...is our own history, marked by our personal and collective effort to raise up the human condition and to overcome the obstacles which are continually arising along our way. It thus prepares us to share in the fullness which ‘dwells in the Lord.’<sup>32</sup>

Here Pope John Paul states clearly that our work is of divine importance and calling, but that we must, “In Him...conquer sin and make it serve our greater good.”<sup>33</sup> Work, then, is the centerpiece of our vocation.

#### Our Ability to Respond to God’s Command Rests on the Health of our Interior Life

For the strength we need to respond to God’s call to vocation we must also have a deep interior life—our personal spiritual work; our prayer life. John 15 begins with the well-known verse, “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine grower.”<sup>34</sup> Cardinal Wyszynski says, “In every shoot changes can be seen: there is growth, development, and the bearing of fruit. However, these external phenomena are the consequences on an inner process that takes place in the vine.”<sup>35</sup> In contemplation of our goal of eschatological contribution, Wyszynski makes the direct and compelling point, “it is

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<sup>31</sup> Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 87.

<sup>32</sup> Pope John Paul II “*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,” 29.

<sup>33</sup> Pope John Paul II ‘*Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,’ 30.

<sup>34</sup> John 15:1.

<sup>35</sup> Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 103.

impossible to ‘help God’ in the regeneration of the world without first calling on His help.”<sup>36</sup> We are reminded, here, of the life of St. Patrick, Patron Saint of Ireland, who turned to prayer many times a day. Prayer is regenerating. Volf also underscores the need for the systematic rhythm we have been discussing here. He says, “Wolstertorff has rightly maintained that the ‘rhythmic alternation between work and worship, labour and liturgy is one of the significant distinguishing features of a Christian’s way of being-in-the-world.”<sup>37</sup>

Prayer is not easy. Many of us spend years, even a lifetime, without contemplating prayer. Henri Nouwen’s own journey is stark evidence that even the most focused mind will lose connection with the Divine from time to time. In the opening pages of *Sabbatical Journey*, Nouwen testifies that, “The truth is that I do not feel much, if anything, when I pray. There are no warm emotions, bodily sensations, or mental visions.”<sup>38</sup> These comments, perhaps oddly, provide the strength to know that there are many times when silence and contemplation are critical, even when it seems that nothing is happening. Prayer is an activity to work on, for God’s sake. Zylla points out that, “We cannot pretend to know all there is to know about God and God’s presence/absence in our lives and in our experiences of the world. However, the biblical call to prayer is the invitation to move, in the deepest hour of need and desperation, toward God.”<sup>39</sup>

Christopher Halls calls this “Reading Christ into the heart” Hall says, “We are ‘already but not yet’. We still ‘live between the times’, and the spiritual discipline of

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<sup>36</sup> Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 105.

<sup>37</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 139.

<sup>38</sup> Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, 5.

<sup>39</sup> Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 9.

*lectio divina* is particularly concerned with the incompleteness, the imperfection, the ‘not yet-ness’ of our present condition.”<sup>40</sup> To read scripture is to encounter God. Contemplative reading—listening to the word of God, followed by meditation and prayer; these activities help us to straighten ourselves out in the skewed and distorted environment that is our daily lives. Parker Palmer underscores the need for solitude. He writes, “The treasure of ‘true self’ can be found as we draw back from active life and enter into contemplative prayer.”<sup>41</sup> This is a valuable juxtaposition of action and contemplation; one which Jesus taught us.

Learning to centre ourselves<sup>42</sup> in our daily work is more important than we might, at first, believe. So often we encounter a workplace that, far from being spiritually stimulating is, it seems, under the control of the forces of evil, either tempting us or attempting to ensnare us. As Auer says, “God created man [sic] to live in community and in the cosmos. But sin brought about chaos in both society and in the universe.”<sup>43</sup> Satan is at work in the marketplace and in the office towers.<sup>44</sup>

#### In Our Labour we are Both Enabled and Ennobled

This thesis suggests that for the believer it is by the empowering and enacting of God’s Spirit that we are both enabled and ennobled in our work. Not all agree. MacKinnon writes that Max Weber’ thesis suggests, “Calvin’s predestinarianism insists that no earthly means are available by which salvation can be procured. Deliverance does not come from man’s efforts but from God alone whose eternal decree can never

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<sup>40</sup> Hall, “Reading Christ,” 141.

<sup>41</sup> Palmer, *The Active Life*, 2

<sup>42</sup> I have found that the discipline of daily reflection, usually beginning or ending with prayer (sometimes silent) is a way to contemplate our working lives with less risk of being caught up in the temptations that occur there.

<sup>43</sup> Auer, *Open to the World*, 83.

<sup>44</sup> This is the notion of territorial evil.

be known.”<sup>45</sup> MacKinnon continues, “Calvin’s *sola fide* [by faith alone] categorically rejects works and human efforts to establish the certitude of election.”<sup>46</sup> So what are we to make of the eschatological value of work? Indeed, MacKinnon presents one view that suggests there is very little value. He points out that:

The old covenant is formally expressed by the ceremonial law of the Jews and the Ten Commandments handed down through Moses. God extends his covenant to the Jews on the condition of perfect obedience which cannot be fulfilled because, after the fall, human nature is mired in corruption and decay and only capable of sinning...Calvin’s theological mentor, St. Augustine had similar convictions: that man’s absolute depravity makes it impossible for him [sic] to contribute to his own salvation.<sup>47</sup>

It is possible, however, that human work takes on other-worldly value when its dynamics include divine initiative.<sup>48</sup> Story suggests the Book of Acts, in Luke’s account of the Jerusalem Council, confirms that “The Spirit’s power is evident in concrete human activities.”<sup>49</sup> The Apostle Paul said, “We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”<sup>50</sup> Bruno makes the point that St. Augustine and Luther conceived a high wall separating the domains of work and grace.<sup>51</sup> However, Bruno goes on to say that, “Martin Buber, one of the most renowned Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century, stressed that God was an all-encompassing presence who engaged humanity through the experience of living in the world...[Buber said] ‘Man cannot reach the divine by reaching beyond the human.’”<sup>52</sup>

When we volunteer alongside those serving the homeless and working poor in

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<sup>45</sup> MacKinnon, *Calvinism*, 145.

<sup>46</sup> MacKinnon, *Calvinism*, 146.

<sup>47</sup> MacKinnon, *Calvinism*, 152.

<sup>48</sup> Here again, we contemplate inner work—the salvific action of Jesus Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, lifting up our outer work so that it becomes valuable to God.

<sup>49</sup> Swinton, *The Jerusalem Council*, 52.

<sup>50</sup> Rom 8:28.

<sup>51</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 19.

downtown Toronto, invariably we sense that they are serving God in preparing for the New Creation. As Bruno says, “Acting according to God’s commands transforms the merely temporal movements of daily life into something sacred...The Muslims, Jews and Christians [that Bruno interviewed for his paper] became partners with God because they eased a muscle pain, solved a billing problem, transported someone, painted a room, sawed a piece of wood, taught a class, or cut a piece of kosher meat.”<sup>53</sup> Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to the least of one of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”<sup>54</sup>

Is this thesis, therefore, supporting the Pelagian view—which the church dismissed as heretical in favour of St. Augustine—that “by contrast, disputed the Augustinian version of sheer grace, insisting that when man acts virtuously before the law he [sic] does so of his [sic] own free will, and is rewarded by God for his [sic] efforts?”<sup>55</sup> On the contrary, this thesis holds fast to the soteriological view that we are saved by divine grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

It is the charismatic indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us that raises our work to divine meaning and value. As Volf says, “For charisma implies both *endowment* with a gift and the *call* of God to exercise this gift in a particular way for the benefit of the community. There is no charisma without a call; this is what the use of ‘vocation’ underlines. But there is no genuine call without an endowment by the Spirit.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 220.

<sup>54</sup> Matt 25:40.

<sup>55</sup> MacKinnon, *Calvinism*, 152.

<sup>56</sup> Volf, “Eschaton,” 130.

### The Spirit Does Not remove the Difficulty of the Work

As most will attest, work is still difficult. Cardinal Wyszynski offers, “Work, by its difficulty, redeems, liberates, ennobles, and sanctifies.”<sup>57</sup> Standing firm on issues of social justice in the workplace can be very hard. To do so requires great strength; risking being treated as a pariah. This is a brick in the path to the narrow gate.

The Hebrew name for the two books of Chronicles is ‘Events of the Days’. Longman and Dillard inform us that “In a number of passages unique to Chronicles, the author specifically articulates the theme of an immediate divine response to precipitating events.”<sup>58</sup> In Second Chronicles we read of the events of the life of King Jehoshaphat who, feeling powerless against an impending invasion; stood before his people and prayed to God, saying, “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”<sup>59</sup> God’s answer was, “This battle is not for you to fight; take your position, stand still and see the victory of the Lord on your behalf.”<sup>60</sup> When we invite him, God, through the power of the Holy Spirit and our faith in Jesus Christ, will guide us in our moments of despair, on the battlefield and in the decisions, dilemmas and injustices that we face daily in our work. By the same empowerment, when our work is delivered up to God for his Kingdom purpose, our work is sanctified. Referring to the medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury, Grenz and Olson argued that, “the great churchman [was] a devout scholar seeking to bring reason into the service of faith.”<sup>61</sup> In other words, to ground faith in service and, this thesis argues, to confirm that our faithfulness is justified in our

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<sup>57</sup> Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 98.

<sup>58</sup> Longman and Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, 199.

<sup>59</sup> 2 Chr 20:12b.

<sup>60</sup> 2 Chr 20: 17a.

<sup>61</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 68.

work. Grenz and Olson say that, “Barth declared, Christians are to serve God ‘in the whole range of their humanity’ and thus in the world or secular sphere.”<sup>62</sup>

### All Work, Not Just Some Work

We turn to the stories of working people and their expressions of faith. In the introduction to his paper, *Justified by Work: Identity and the Meaning of Faith in Chicago's Working-Class Churches*, Robert Bruno offers, “I did feel inspired by the volume of steelworkers, postal clerks, nurses, food store employees, electricians, plumbers and other hardworking folks who said that God was a part of their lives.”<sup>63</sup> Bruno’s research interviews confirmed overwhelmingly the answer by sociologist Robert Wuthnow to the question ‘what influence does faith have on a person’s daily work?’ Wuthnow’s answer, “It is practice and being in some kind of relationship with God that matters.”<sup>64</sup> They did not require deep and thorough knowledge of theology or biblical instruction to convince them. Grenz and Olsen underscore this when they reflect on Kierkegaard, who held that:

Because it is a paradox, the truth of Christianity is grasped only by faith and not by reason. Perhaps, when people work in the most simple of duties, the clarity of God’s call for them to do their best and to do it honestly is more easily understood. Being a Christian, therefore, involves a willingness to venture forth in faith where reason cannot take us.<sup>65</sup>

Bruno has sharp criticism for religious historian Alan Wolfe. Bruno points out, “A review of the index of Wolfe’s book subtitled *How We Actually Live Our Faith* does not include a single reference to ‘work’ or ‘labour’. The Table of Contents does, however, address the topics of ‘doctrine’, ‘morality’, ‘sin’, ‘worship’, ‘tradition’, and

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<sup>62</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 157.

<sup>63</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, ix.

<sup>64</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 6.

<sup>65</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 65.

‘witness’ among others.”<sup>66</sup> Bruno continues, “If our work is debilitating, humiliating, and valuable only as a means to survive, then traditional Christian views of work as a curse and punishment...And, most important, the work we do can never save our souls.”<sup>67</sup> Failure to reflect on this not only misses the sacred value of work; it also pushes the worker further away from the church.

### Work As an Instrument of Salvation

Cardinal Wyszynski, by contrast, goes to the heart of this thesis when he says, “Work is an instrument of salvation—work is not the curse of man [sic] [nor is] toil humiliating, for it contains hope. The sweat of one’s brow and the labour of one’s hands do not debase; they raise up and exalt.”<sup>68</sup> What began as Adam’s curse can now become the path to redemption and eschatological legacy. To take this further, if our work is an instrument of salvation—a response to God’s summons, then our work becomes an act of discipleship. Our behaviour, our language, our character and our response to the challenges of the workplace will become a way for those around us to meet Christ. This will be a difficult journey. Moltmann writes:

If I confess the truth, if I fight for righteousness, if I put myself on the side of the persecuted, then I myself shall be isolated. I shall have to put up with slights, and my children will have to suffer for it too; but we shall have the infinite joy of being able to walk upright and hold our heads high. We have to choose. And we have to choose every minute.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 13.

<sup>67</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 14.

<sup>68</sup> Wyszynski, *All You Who Labor*, 99.

<sup>69</sup> Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, 83.

## SUMMARY

Human endeavour is enjoyed by God and it should be enjoyed by us. To enjoy it fully is to perceive work as our response to God's call to us, in the same way that we are called to obey his commandments. We must come to regard the Sabbath as the climax of the work week—the pivot in the cycle of work, rest and worship, and back to work. As it was in ancient times, so it should also be for our modern Christian life.

Through the diligent carrying out of our vocational effort, we are salt and light. We 'salt' our workplace environments with God's gifts of stewardship, fellowship and human caring, together with the gifts of our technical abilities.

Moral leadership is our light, following the model provided to us by Jesus Christ. This is the evidence that we are presenting our labour as a response to God's call to us and should provide a beacon for others. We must understand and accept that this response can make our work lives harder, sometimes, not easier, particularly as temptations can beckon us toward the easier way—the way dominated by self-interest.

Far from being our penance for Adam's sin, we should perceive that our work is both important and pleasing to God. However, to live a Christian life of work requires a healthy interior life of prayer. This is when we allow the Holy Spirit to enter, renew and develop us and in this way work becomes an instrument of salvation.

## CHAPTER 3: RE-IMAGINING WORK AND THE CHURCH

Synopsis: There is a hunger for deeper purpose in our work. The church can satisfy that hunger through a careful and caring interpretation of the scriptural view of the importance of our work. We really do have an awesome role to play when we fully grasp that the New Creation is the real bottom line of our labour. Pastors, ministers, and chaplains can be the guides to the unfound door through spiritual purpose can be realized. They can also help us to recognize evil in the workplace, and confront it there by employing the ethos that the Bible has been laying for us from the beginning.

### Perceiving the Realities of The Workplace

Those who are tasked with the ministry of care and compassion in the church can imagine eavesdropping on a conversation similar to that recounted by David Batstone, who writes, “‘Think about how much of our lives we spend at work,’ the executive of a New York publishing house said wistfully to me. Then consider how ambivalent—and a bit ashamed—most of us feel about the corporations who employ us.”<sup>1</sup> If the company is a community of its employees, suppliers, customers, and its stakeholders then it is a community of souls. It is then, a community that likely longs to attend to ‘its’ soul, and the church needs to help. When there is an interdependence of morality—an ‘interior-ness’, then the workplace can indeed become a place of actualization for all—a place where hope can flourish. Does this sound farfetched? Perhaps, but it certainly stands as a beacon of aspiration. This thesis supports the view of Batstone when he says that, “Economic growth [by itself] does not necessarily bring social progress.”<sup>2</sup> Economic

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<sup>1</sup> Batstone, *Saving the Corporate Soul*, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Batstone, *Saving the Corporate Soul*, 74.

policy that allows, even unintentionally, for the extreme polarity of wealth that exists today cannot be accepted as sufficient.

### There Is a Hunger That the Church Can Satisfy

Marie McCarthy writes, “To what can we attribute the enormous popularity of spirituality today? Corporate executives seek opportunities for silent retreats. Major businesses add meditation rooms to the workplace environment.”<sup>3</sup> We are hungry for purpose, but we do not know how to confess this hunger. We do not understand how we can express ourselves fully in our work, and most of us have never been offered the hope that, following our confession of faith, our work may be inspired by the Holy Spirit, and lifted up to God for his Kingdom purpose. This hope would expand the potential for our work to be preserved as our legacy—a legacy that may endure the eschatological transformation of the world.

In his 2008 article, Bruno makes the sharply worded admonishment that, “The Church’s approach to an intelligent carpenter is usually confined to exhorting him not to be drunk and disorderly in his leisure hours and to come to church on Sundays. What the church should be saying to him is this: that the very first demand that his religion makes upon him is that he should make good tables.”<sup>4</sup> If *Practical Theology* is about the theological interpretation of situations, then it is time for the church to offer a deeper understanding of how to bring the word of God to the heart of the workplace. Indeed, notwithstanding a number of workplace-oriented outreach endeavors, the corporate office, the factory floor and all the places that we make our living may be the most underserved of mission fields—and they are right in front of us. Bruno has several

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<sup>3</sup> McCarthy, “Spirituality,” 193.

<sup>4</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 18.

strong statements to make on this matter. Bruno quotes the, “eminent pastor Tex Sample [who] goes so far as to point out how irrelevant most church services are for working people.”<sup>5</sup> Bruno also quotes Armand Larive, who speaks of, “the importance of what they—workers—do and how poorly it is honored by the church.”<sup>6</sup>

### Jesus Is, Once Again, Our Role Model

It is hard to understand how we got to this point where such a rift exists between sacred and secular. Jesus met people in their place of work, in the tax-collector’s home, at the well, and by the shore. Paul supported his ministry by his work. Long before there were churches, the word of the Lord was passed from person to person in the marketplace and in homes—during and after a day of work.

In many ways this thesis turns on comments by Grenz and Olsen that since the turning of the 20th century, “Scholars had come to realize that eschatology had been the central feature of Jesus’ proclamation and of the New Testament as a whole.”<sup>7</sup> It is the proclamation of hope; and where do we express our hopes and fears the most? It is in our working lives—our daily attempts to do good work, learn better methods, please others, cope with bad situations, and pay our bills. A very great number of us diligently execute a fifty hour work week year after year. For many of us those years are, literally, lived in darkness—to work in many enterprises is to be at our desk before dawn and to get home at dusk or later—every day! For a very large number of us it was on the job, not in the pew, that we began to agonize over the purpose of our work. It was the workplace where we encountered Jesus and began a more humble walk, often without mentorship, simply through our poorly articulated prayers.

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<sup>5</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Bruno, *Justified by Work*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 171.

### Careful, and Caring Interpretation of Scripture is Critical

The challenge that regularly encounter in reading both biblical and apocryphal books is the nature of the multivalent narratives of the ancient texts. The ambiguities and, sometimes seeming contradictions that we uncover in them require considerable thought, supported by literary and contextual analysis, together with other methods, before we can use them to instruct our behavior and response to situations in the modern workplace. The Apostle Paul's ministry to the Gentiles provides many examples. He had an extensive stay in Corinth, resulting in a number of house churches, in a community that was largely freed slaves from Rome and elsewhere in a former Greek city state that had been destroyed by Roman forces in 146 B.C.E. DeSilva writes that, "Corinth was a highly competitive environment, with people vying in business, politics and claims to status."<sup>8</sup> Thus we see in Corinthians very specific contextual examples of Paul's ministry and messages. His use of metaphors is completely specific to the situation, which must be unpacked and understood.

Another relevant example for the critical need for careful and sensitive interpretation of scripture is provided by Clark Pinnock in a paper delivered at the 2002 Edinburgh Christology Conference. This paper provides a thoughtful perspective on dealing with the apparent exclusivity of salvation by Christ alone; specifically Peter's statement in Acts, which reads, "There is salvation in no other name under heaven given among mortals by which we must be saved."<sup>9</sup> Pinnock's analysis is especially poignant in the pluralistic nature of the workplace today. Pinnock writes:

Let us remember that Peter, when he says there is salvation in no other name, would be intending not only such names as Buddha and Krishna, but also names

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<sup>8</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to The New Testament*, 556.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 4:12.

of Old Testament worthies like Moses and David as well. His point is that no other name has *ever* had in it the power to do what can be done in Jesus' name only. Only Jesus can bring messianic salvation, even to the point of raising up the cripple. A new era has opened up and Peter is magnifying the name of Jesus and the messianic salvation he has brought. We should not read him as denying that there have been and are lesser instances of saving power at work in the world, where Jesus' name is unknown. We do not have to take him to be denying that the Spirit has been active everywhere in the world long before the Christian message reached non-Christian people.<sup>10</sup>

Grenz and Olson observe that, "Kant's understanding of religion as essentially ethical molded his Christology. He described the goal of creation as the coming into being of a morally perfect human-kind. This goal is eternally present in the divine mind as God's only-begotten Son, who is the object of our faith."<sup>11</sup> Phipps says, "The Christian, biblical view of the world we live in and of our lives within it, is Threefold. (1) The world is man's [sic] means of freedom. (2) The world is God's means of communication with man [sic] in his freedom. (3) The world is man's [sic] means of response."<sup>12</sup> It is time to return to this simplicity of understanding. The Apostle Paul's work in Corinth provides example. DeSilva describes a situation where, "Prominent among the problems facing the Corinthian Christians are the divisions within the church."<sup>13</sup> DeSilva explains that, "Paul turned this [division] on its head by focusing on the mystery of the cross and the abundance of God's generosity."<sup>14</sup>

Charles Winquist says, "Ministry needs to be conceptualized so that it attends to what is real and important at the heart of religious experience even as it attends to everyday problems in parish life."<sup>15</sup> He goes on:

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<sup>10</sup> Pinnock, "No other Name," 22.

<sup>11</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20<sup>th</sup> Century Theology*, 29.

<sup>12</sup> Phipps, *God on Monday*, 12.

<sup>13</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 566.

<sup>14</sup> DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 567.

<sup>15</sup> Winquist, "Re-visioning Ministry," 27.

*The Cost of Discipleship* [Bonhoeffer] vividly contrasted ‘cheap grace’ and ‘costly grace’. Cheap grace refers to what we might call ‘churchianity’, the type of religion that believes that salvation comes easily, by means of the belief of doctrines. In Bonhoeffer’s words, ‘Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without Church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without contrition’. Costly grace, in contrast declares that salvation is costly. It cost God his son. And it demands obedience, that is, a life of discipleship. Luther discovered costly grace when he returned from the cloister to the world, Bonhoeffer declared, for he learned that the only way to follow Jesus was by living in the world.<sup>16</sup>

### Evil is a Real and Present Danger in The Workplace

This thesis places some considerable emphasis on the presence of evil in the workplace. This presence requires our full attention in a dialogue on our vocational effort as a response to faith and of God’s summons to us to perform that effort in service of the Kingdom. This emphasis is underscored by Jesus’ very first encounter as his ministry began following his baptism by John the Baptist. The Gospel of Matthew informs us that, “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.”<sup>17</sup> In the same way that the Holy Spirit ensured that Jesus was inured to Satan’s ways, so must we also. Indeed we are called to live in this world. Grenz and Olsen write, “Throughout his life [Bonhoeffer] struggled with the question ‘where is Christ to be found,’ concluding that he is in the world, not merely in some special, religious sphere.”<sup>18</sup> It is important to emphasize here that Bonhoeffer found Satan in the world also, and confronted him there, paying the highest price that a human being can pay for this confrontation.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 151.

<sup>17</sup> Matt 4:1.

<sup>18</sup> Grenz and Olsen, *20th Century Theology*, 153.

<sup>19</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer became known for his staunch resistance to the Nazi dictatorship. Involved with a plot to assassinate Adolf Hitler by members of the Abwehr (the German Military Intelligence Office), Bonhoeffer was arrested in April 1943 by the Gestapo, imprisoned at a Nazi concentration camp for

Proverbs 1:20 says, “Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice. At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks.”<sup>20</sup> Wisdom did not cry out in the Temple. This passage underscores the reality that we need God’s wisdom—the power of the Holy Spirit and the need for guidance on how to model our Lord Jesus Christ in the workplace. It is when we face a strategic business dilemma, an office bully, a co-worker in distress, or an unethical professor, that we confront Satan.

### From the Pew to the Cubicle

The church has to articulate how to cleave to biblical instruction in a postmodern, pluralized world. As difficult as it may be from time to time we cannot shy away from learning how to take the narratives from such books as the Old Testament Book of Kings<sup>21</sup>, or Jesus’ Parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:25-37 and recast them in the vernacular of the workplace of today. In his book *The Business Bible*, Rabbi Wayne Dosick interprets the books of the *Tanakh* in a compelling way. Turning to Micah, Dosick says, “When you walk humbly, you understand that the very best leader is, in reality, the very best servant.”<sup>22</sup> The big issue here is role-modelling. Dosick says, “The words you speak echo forever.”<sup>23</sup> When we focus on humility, on servant leadership, on the avoidance of pride, we maintain our self-awareness. This is a daily discipline that we must model, and we need to help of the Holy Spirit. As the verse of Henry Lyte’s hymn, *Abide with Me* reads:

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nearly two years, and after a very brief, biased trial with other plotters as the Nazi regime collapsed, executed by hanging on April 9, 1945.

<sup>20</sup> Prov 1:20-21.

<sup>21</sup> For example, Kings as theodicy: literature that seeks to justify the way that God has dealt with people. It vindicates divine nature in the face of evil.

<sup>22</sup> Dosick, *The Business Bible*, 73.

<sup>23</sup> Dosick, *The Business Bible*, 26.

I need Thy presence every passing hour.  
 What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?  
 Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?  
 Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me.<sup>24</sup>

Stevens and Ung say, “The workplace is a major arena for the battle of our souls”<sup>25</sup>

This thesis underscores the belief that Satan is active in the workplace and our ministry must equip believers to confront him there. This thesis contends that in the experience of many this simply is not happening. Boyd points out that, “Jesus refers to Satan as ‘the prince’ (*archon*) of this present age three times (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:31). The Greek term *archon* was used in secular contexts to denote the highest official in a city or region. In short Jesus acknowledges that Satan is the highest power in this fallen world, at least in terms of his present influence.”<sup>26</sup> If you were going to lay in wait for someone; to set a trap for them, where would you do it? You would do it where they spend most of their time—at work!

In his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, Nouwen tells us that, “Jesus’ first temptation was to... turn stones into bread.”<sup>27</sup> What Nouwen does not specifically articulate here is who Jesus was tempted by. The Gospel of Matthew does: “Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.”<sup>28</sup> To be a follower of Jesus is to follow him into battle—and a key battleground that we face is the workplace. The war will not be over until the *eschaton*; therefore, for us who live in this ‘now but not yet’ time, the presence of evil is a brutal fact.

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<sup>24</sup> Lyte, *Abide With Me* (Hymn) Verse 6 Written by Scottish Anglican Henry Francis Lyte as a poem in 1847, Online [http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Abide\\_with\\_Me/](http://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Abide_with_Me/).

<sup>25</sup> Stevens and Ung, *Taking Your Soul to Work*, 11.

<sup>26</sup> Boyd *Satan and the Problem of Evil*, 35.

<sup>27</sup> Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus*, 30.

<sup>28</sup> Matt 4:1.

St. Teresa of Avila is, in contrast to Nouwen, quite specific in naming the source of our suffering. She says, “Terrible are the crafts and wiles which the devil uses to prevent souls from learning themselves and understanding his ways.”<sup>29</sup> She goes on, “[Satan] has many legions of evil spirits in each room to prevent souls from passing from one to another.”<sup>30</sup> St. Teresa of Avila, who lived in sixteenth century Spain, wrote the widely acclaimed work *Interior Castle*. She was not speaking of what we today would consider the workplace. She spoke in context of her situation in her time; in the context of her vocation. While he does not identify Satan as the cause or source, the Apostle Paul speaks to his own struggle with temptation. In Romans, he says, “When I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.”<sup>31</sup>

Satan and the presence of evil require more dialogue from the pulpit, particularly in terms of a theology of work. Beltz says clearly, “Like it or not, we are part of a war of epic and eternal proportions that affect every facet of our lives.”<sup>32</sup> This thesis seeks to reinforce that we spend most of our lives at work—the place where temptation presents itself more than anywhere else. Beltz speaks again on this, “The great reformation theologian Martin Luther used to say that we can’t keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we keep them from building nests in our hair.”<sup>33</sup> In other words, ethically, we must be on guard—there is a thin end to every wedge. Warren Bennis also refers to Martin Luther. He says, “He said that all life was interrelated, all humanity part of one process, and to the degree that I harm my brother, to that extent I am harming myself.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, 25.

<sup>30</sup> St. Teresa, *Interior Castle*, 25.

<sup>31</sup> Rom 7:21b.

<sup>32</sup> Beltz, *Becoming a Man of Prayer*, 92.

<sup>33</sup> Beltz, *Becoming a Man of Prayer*, 92.

<sup>34</sup> Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader*, 83.

This is a key point—loving our neighbor as ourselves—this is a critical element in the battle against evil. Satan’s influence will not be extinguished until Jesus’ triumphant return. We each have a role, indeed an obligatory role, to play until then.

### Our Awesome Role in the Cosmos

We turn now to the notion that creation is unfolding. That it will not be fully complete until Christ’s return (cf. Rev 21) and that we as human beings and believers have a sacred role to play in the unfolding history of the cosmos. Genesis 2 informs us that, “On the seventh day God finished all the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done.”<sup>35</sup> This thesis has as its central tenet the practical theology that we are taking up where God’s creation work left off—as co-operators with God in his unfolding history. This reality, James Whitehead says, is, “waiting to be further imagined and played, [with] the delight and risk of ongoing invention.”<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Whitehead affirms that, “Creation has been envisioned by Christians as something to be *worked*. This industrial metaphor grows out of a specific interpretation of the original creation in a six-day (work) week.”<sup>37</sup> Phipps makes the point that while the discussion of a work-centric practical theology is encouraging, “There is still room to cry for a training that will equip us better to play our part in making Christian judgments about the secular, and so of being of more use to the laity.”<sup>38</sup> Phipps goes on, “I believe God has called us to a professional ministry, not just a ministry of the Sacraments, which can easily be fitted in on Sundays, but also of His

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<sup>35</sup> Gen 2:2

<sup>36</sup> Whitehead, “The Practical Play,” 43

<sup>37</sup> Whitehead, “The Practical Play,” 43

<sup>38</sup> Phipps, *God on Monday*, 55

Word.”<sup>39</sup> God’s words that envelope us at all times and in all places. There has been much improvement in recent decades, to be sure, but the majority of businesses in the west—and perhaps an even larger number of them in the developing world—still value the financial bottom line alone.

### The New Creation is the Bottom Line

Alderson and McDonnell make some stark observations when they write, “Too often business defines winning as winning at any cost...customers become important only because they spend. Equipment is purchased only if the bottom line allows its purchase. Employees are the most expendable factor in the profit-generating equation.”<sup>40</sup> Ministers and those called to be Christian leaders must be equipped both in biblical and pastoral knowledge together with grounding in the realities of the workplace. It is also likely that business education falls short. In his starkly titled book, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople* John Knapp questions the influence of business education. Knapp writes:

It was only in the late twentieth century that management theories—springing from the *Homo Economicus* assumptions of neoliberal liberal economists like Milton Friedman (a Nobel Laureate)—began promoting an oddly constricted conception of human nature and purpose. By regarding people solely as self-interested maximizers who can be predicted to make decisions strictly on the basis of rational economic criteria, business education infused corporate culture with a philosophy that left little room for altruism, love of neighbor, or the subordination of self-interest for the sake of others.<sup>41</sup>

This underscores the importance of role-modelling by clergy and Christian business leaders alike. In this way the image of God is reflected by us in ways that clearly light up the path for those that wish to follow. A path that is sought enthusiastically by those

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<sup>39</sup> Phipps, *God on Monday*, 57

<sup>40</sup> Alderson and McDonnell, *Theory R Management*, 10.

<sup>41</sup> Knapp, *How the Church Fails Businesspeople*, 19.

in search of the ‘narrow gate’ - who wish to fully integrate their faith lives with their vocational calling.

### God Enjoys Our Work

We should be overjoyed at this news. Yamamori and Eldred write, “God enjoys seeing his character reflected in our lives. It is key to understanding why God gave us the moral commands he did. And it is the key to understanding why human beings have an instinctive drive to work, to be productive, to invent, to earn and save and give, and to do the thousands of things that fill our days.”<sup>42</sup> This thesis offers several concrete steps that can be taken by pastors and ministers to guide and assist their congregations in gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities of living as Christians in the workplace. This can be delivered in ways that are practical and applicable in everyday situations—all from the perspective of service to the kingdom. A deeper awareness and understanding of these workplace management practices will assist those in ministry in their desire to engage with their congregations in discussion of the dynamics of the marketplace and how scripturally-based guidance can be of value.

### Understanding Roles and Expectations

We all have two fundamental questions: What is expected of me? And, how am I doing? Surprising as it may seem these questions are frequently answered incompletely or not at all. C. William Pollard says, “In all of [the uncertainty of the work environment] there is a constant—people: People who are looking for a mission and a purpose in their work; people who are seeking to understand the *why* not simply the *how* *to* of their job.”<sup>43</sup> In other words, while we provide instruction on the mechanics and

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<sup>42</sup> Yamamori and Eldred, *On Kingdom Business*, 128.

<sup>43</sup> Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm*, 128.

procedures required to fulfil a given role, let us also instigate a dialogue on the purpose and value of the work.

### Conflict Resolution

With Jesus' words, "Let your word be Yes, Yes, or No, No,"<sup>44</sup> as an ever present foundation, it is critical to learn and understand the values that underpin conflict, which surface particularly during times of change, whether forced internally or externally. Learning that the Christian response is to 'make peace,' not necessarily to 'make nice.' Jesus was certainly disruptive when the situation demanded. Pollard makes an important point here when he says that we must learn, "to initiate what Drucker has referred to as 'organized abandonment.' It simply means stopping or eliminating activities or functions that are no longer relevant for the future."<sup>45</sup> This is particularly relevant when people become entrenched in protecting the status quo. Leading through change is a critical test for the workplace, both for the person in the role of change leader and for others who have to cope with such change. The incorporation of testimony, case study and biblical teaching for such times requires deep understanding by the pastor in developing coping dialogue both as sermon and in one-on-one counseling.

### Working Through Growth

From small business environments to multi-person, multi-layered, and multiple locations we must understand how can we effect organizational and cultural change while ensuring that everyone still feels personally relevant. We must ensure that each person can identify their role and feel accountable and rewarded for their efforts. Pollard

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<sup>44</sup> Matt 5:37.

<sup>45</sup> Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm*, 135.

says, “People are creative, productive, and want to contribute.”<sup>46</sup> The pastor’s role is to help remind and reinforce the Christian principle that we have all been created in God’s image and deserve dignity and the assurance of worth.

### Learning to Delegate

Luke 10:1 tells us that, “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town where he himself intended to go.”<sup>47</sup> Such lessons are as important for peer-to-peer delegation as for any situation. This is also where careful communication is critical. James Autry says, “The manager is always on a tightrope... You must represent the viewpoints, philosophies, and directives of the organization or of senior management to your people, and you must represent the concerns, interests, and ideas of your people to senior management.”<sup>48</sup>

### Ensuring Appropriate Behavior

God said, “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; I will be swift to bear witness against the sorcerers, against the adulterers, against those who swear falsely, against those who oppress the hired workers in their wages.”<sup>49</sup> Chewning, Eby and Roels approach the important biblical call for social justice through compensation structure. They write, “Christians living in a market economy must ask whether the market is just in all cases... The market sometimes reflects specific cultural values that cannot be justified in the light of scripture.”<sup>50</sup> Here and now, in our culture, in many situations, income discrimination based upon gender is still an issue which needs to be confronted.

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<sup>46</sup> Pollard, *The Soul of the Firm*, 129.

<sup>47</sup> Luke 10:1.

<sup>48</sup> Autry, *The Servant Leader*, 155.

<sup>49</sup> Mal 3:5.

<sup>50</sup> Chewning, Eby and Roels, *Business Through The Eyes of Faith*, 69.

## Being a Role Model

The Apostle Paul, the great contextualizer of the New Testament, stands as our role model for bringing the word of God to the marketplace. Paul used as his authority his own testimony of very earthly-oriented work alongside his deep theological understanding and teaching. In 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8, Paul says, “For you, yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, and we did not eat anyone’s bread without paying for it; but with toil and labour we worked night and day, so we might not burden any of you.”<sup>51</sup> Perhaps Simon Phipps could do so well in his ministry to working people because he was given the opportunity to work among working people as an Industrial Chaplain in the Diocese of Coventry in England—at that time the heartland of the British automotive sector—giving a view of life that his contemporaries seldom saw.

In *The Way of Life* Gary Badcock gives a succinct expansion of how the church perhaps can better understand and approach the notion of vocation. While Badcock affirms that, “the fundamental human vocation is to do the will of God,”<sup>52</sup> he confirms that one’s life work “can be a moral and spiritual project.”<sup>53</sup> Each day can begin with contemplating Jesus’ words, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.”<sup>54</sup> Badcock takes us to the word *strength* in Mark 12:30. He says, “One’s strength here denotes more than simply physical strength or natural ability. It brings into focus human energy and the

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<sup>51</sup> 2 Thess 3:7-8.

<sup>52</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 15.

<sup>53</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 16.

<sup>54</sup> Mark 12:30.

whole practical side of the reality of human existence.”<sup>55</sup> This underscores the need for clergy to engross themselves in the places and ways that the Spirit’s gifts are being worked out and employed in service to the kingdom. Badcock takes this further:

To serve God with one’s strength is to do the will of God in this everyday sense, in action and deed rather than merely in theory. There is really no such thing as an ‘armchair Christian’...indeed it is a necessity according to Mark 12:30. The point is to locate action, and the whole practical sphere of human existence, at the centre of things rather than at the periphery. In this way, the practical side of the concept of vocation can be seen as a fundamental dimension of the human response to God, rather than something peripheral or derivative.<sup>56</sup>

In the same way that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah saw holiness transcend the temples, so must we also ensure that, today, the word of God transcends the sanctuary.

Stevens speaks of the:

Priestly ministry of movement from *space to place*. Most workplaces are canned environments, raw space. But out of raw space a place can be created. It is priestly work...further, perhaps paradoxically, priests create movement from *information to mystery*... We are moving hell-bound into an age when words will be processed rather than fondled...where people will be catalogued rather than cared for. More than ever the workplace needs a priesthood that lives on the edge of mystery.<sup>57</sup>

It is the priesthood that holds the unique position to place our workplace challenges within a cosmology of eschatological purpose and to engage in a dialogue that sheds new light on the sacred value of human endeavour and that brings deep comfort to the worker who is searching for deeper meaning in their life. This truly presents an opportunity for an entirely new discipleship outreach.

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<sup>55</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 16.

<sup>56</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 16.

<sup>57</sup> Stevens, *Doing God’s Business*, 56-7.

### Spiritual Vitality is Essential

Of particular importance is the maintenance of spiritual vitality. Autrey says, “Remember this: Burnout is not a crisis of time, it is a crisis of the spirit.”<sup>58</sup> This may be one of the most critical topics that a pastor can engage in with his/her congregation and in one-on-one discussions, yet it may be the most difficult. Bennis addresses this, by quoting Roger Gould, “It’s how you feel about things that dictates how you behave. Most people don’t process their feelings because thinking is hard work.”<sup>59</sup> Indeed, simply asking the question, ‘what is keeping you up at night’ can be the key to opening a deep dialogue of reflection on business issues and getting people to articulate problems. As Bennis says, “As weather shapes mountains so problems make leaders.”<sup>60</sup> Addressing the loneliness that accompanies business leadership is also critical here. Barton says, “Leadership involves a very peculiar kind of loneliness. It has to do with seeing something others do not see, do not see as clearly, or perhaps have lost sight of.”<sup>61</sup> Indeed, this maybe the nexus between business and church leadership; both are fraught with loneliness—and mutual reflection and counseling may be golden.

### Pastors and Ministers Not Only Lead the Way to the Un-found door, They Unlock It

It is to these, hopefully, very practical situations where the minister can learn to insert himself/herself. In the view of this thesis, it is not about simply becoming more equipped to be a counselor in industrial/psychological counseling. It is a means, this thesis argues, to open the door—the unseen door—for the working person to find deep spiritual guidance; that only a pastor can provide. Rolheiser writes, “Among the

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<sup>58</sup> Autrey, *The Servant Leader*, 209.

<sup>59</sup> Bennis, *On Becoming A Leader*, 107.

<sup>60</sup> Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader*, 136.

<sup>61</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 155.

Norwegians there is a beautiful legend that, before a soul is put into the body, that soul is kissed by God and, during all of its time on earth, the soul retains a dark, but powerful, memory of that kiss and relates everything to it.”<sup>62</sup> Perhaps it is this memory of God’s kiss that causes such dissonance in an environment in which our souls cannot express themselves.

Ruth Haley Barton gives meaningful guidance here in her work *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*. Barton speaks of “calming the chaos in our souls and listening to the Spirit of God, whom the Scriptures describe as the wind, the *pneuma*, the very breath of God.”<sup>63</sup> As the pastor focuses this practice, so too can she, by being present in the life of a member of her flock, bring this peace to them. Barton also gives insight to the reason why this thesis suggests that it is the pastor, alone, that can do this work. Palmer writes, “The soul is like a wild animal—tough, resilient, resourceful, savvy, and self-sufficient. It knows how to survive in hard places.”<sup>64</sup>

Barton says, “The soul is a tender thing...it is also shy, just like a wild animal it seeks safety in the dense underbrush. If we want to see a wild animal, we know that the last thing we should do is go crashing through the woods yelling for it to come out.”<sup>65</sup> This is a very significant issue today. Our workplace is filled with chaos, and the noise that chaos makes as it crashes, indiscriminately, through our lives can bring great distress to our souls. In her essay on *Finding Wisdom and Purpose in Chaotic Times* Isabel Lopez says:

Chaos is a process that is entered into willingly when one makes a career change; uncertainty and questions abound. Others make career changes unwillingly.

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<sup>62</sup> Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing*, 15-6.

<sup>63</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*, 58.

<sup>65</sup> Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, 26.

They also enter a time of uncertainty. In both cases those who embrace the potential for renewal are the ones who thrive...I am convinced that we must find our own centre, and that once we have found it all the chaos becomes irrelevant.<sup>66</sup>

Confronting chaos, like many potentially traumatizing events, often requires the assistance of a *paraclete*—someone who ‘comes alongside’; sometimes to *guide*, sometimes just to *be*.

### Knowing, Being, and Doing

To do such work requires the deepest understanding of how to put biblical knowledge to use. From knowing, to being, to doing. Henri Nouwen uses a large number of spiritual polarities in his work. One of the most profound is the concept of presence and absence. In the Gospel of John, Jesus introduces to his disciples the promise of the work of the Holy Spirit when he says to them, “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.”<sup>67</sup> Nouwen uses the mystery that, “God’s intimacy with us is not just in Christ’s coming, but also in his leaving—that in his physical absence from us we may have a more profound experience of him.”<sup>68</sup> Nouwen uses this dynamic of presence and absence as a vital pastoral practice.

So it is the work of the pastor and minister, *knowing* the word of God, *being* present in the lives of the member of the congregation – in their vocational milieu and not just in the sanctuary, and *doing* the pastoral work that brings meaning and purpose in the context of the person’s work—work that is for the kingdom. This point requires underscoring. For most business-people, particularly in business leadership, the notion

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<sup>66</sup> Lopez, “Finding Wisdom,” 80-1.

<sup>67</sup> John 16:7.

<sup>68</sup> Nouwen, *The Living Reminder*, 44.

of being silent, in solitude, that is most alien. Yet this is the very time that God can do his work. In *A Work of Heart* Reggie McNeal stresses that we must go, alone, to a quiet place. McNeal says, “This is your room. Yours...and another’s. The one who gave you life comes here too. This is where you let God work on your soul.”<sup>69</sup>

Kathleen Cahalan emphasizes a critical role of ministry, made all the more pivotal if we are to shepherd our flock toward the great commission for the working person. She writes, “Communities of disciples are not naturally or invariably able to embrace their calling and enact faithful ways of life without some sort of accountability and direction, and this is what ministry brings.”<sup>70</sup> This thesis adds to this the emphasis that full engrossment in the working lives of the congregation has to undergird the dialogue that leads exercising such a role—we must engage with the context of the situation of the person we are counseling. Jonathan Edwards says, “There are two ways of representing and recommending true religion and virtue to the world; the one, by doctrine and precept; the other, by instance and example...God also in his *providence* has been wont to make use of *both* these methods to hold forth light in mankind [sic].”<sup>71</sup>

### Putting Jesus at the Centre of a Dynamic World

This chapter concludes by returning to Phipps, who writes:

The world will not fit or stay in any bag. It is not static, it is dynamic. It is developing all the time. There is no such thing as the ‘known world’. And it can change faster than men [sic] in their own time can easily discern. If the Bible’s theology says that God speaks in and through the secular world, then it is the secular world that man [sic] must stand and listen for what He says...God [is] saying new and bigger things in the new and bigger economic situation, raising bigger issues, asking bigger questions, opening up bigger opportunities for a

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<sup>69</sup> McNeal, *A Work of Heart*, 1.

<sup>70</sup> Bass and Dykstra, “for life abundant,” 70.

<sup>71</sup> Edwards, *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, v.

Love that [is] prepared to 'increase more and more in knowledge and in all discrimination.'<sup>72</sup>

Phipps eloquently captures the essence with the task that God is calling us to take on. That task is to reflect on the lessons given by God in the ancient texts and scripture, while at the same time discerning and unpacking the realities, practices, influences and vicissitudes of the modern workplace. To this we are summoned to reflect the image of Christ in such a profound way that, through us, the relevance of the Christian faith is maintained both inside the walls of the church and outside. This is how work becomes sacred.

## SUMMARY

Good work, by the sweat of our brow, is critical to our personal well-being, and in its own way to the well-being of society and to the world. Yet far beyond this—it is pleasing to God when we conduct our work in keeping with his ordinances, as demonstrated by our divine role model Jesus Christ. This good news—the news our work holds critical eschatological meaning is the satisfying revelation that brings rest and assurance to the weary worker. Our role in ministry must include the articulation of this news. The clergy, pastors, ministers, chaplains, and teachers: We are God's pilots in this grand calling of vocation.

There is a divine rhythm to our lives; the rhythm of work, rest—and the enjoyment of family—plus the Sabbath's call to worship—the ritual celebration of the Eucharist; all held together by daily prayer—a time of solitude and reflection—this is the time when we invite God, through the Holy Spirit, to do his work in us.

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<sup>72</sup> Phipps, *God on Monday*, 37-8.

We are saved by faith. The Apostle Paul states, “For we hold that a person is justified by faith.” It is also Paul who demonstrates, by his own actions, the importance of work, defending his manual work in the face of criticism by the Corinthians. This thesis asserts firmly that it is God’s vocational call to us, empowered and endowed by the Holy Spirit that results in the lifting up of our work to divine importance.

Work is not the cause of our salvation; rather it is an instrument of our salvation. When carried out in faith our work is, in effect, eschatological. If work is eschatological then it is tied to God’s creation, both in the ‘now’ and the not yet.’

All work, including the most mundane, is work in the Spirit, when it is endowed by the Spirit following a confession of faith; all Christian work is legacy work and should be carried out with the weight that this implies—in other words, ethically.

## CHAPTER 4: A TELEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE ON WORK

Synopsis: God is with us now, and he is calling us from the future—from a place beyond time. That place is the *eschaton*, when time is replaced by eternity, when our accountability has been reconciled, the books have been balanced, and our work is assessed. Our work is, by each of us, bricks in the road to the narrow gate. Grace brings everything together, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit and our labours are lifted up. On that road we are called to be stewards of the kingdom and our work is our means and our evidence of that stewardship. The fruit of work is the service of others—our fellow travelers. We are the bringers of a new spiritual order.

### The church is The Beach-Head

The Prophet Jeremiah foretells God's new covenant with his people, "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah."<sup>1</sup> When that day comes, Jurgen Moltmann says, "Sermons will be superfluous. No one will preach them and no one will have to listen to them. Church will be superfluous...Clergy, teachers, professors and students of theology will be superfluous. The theological faculties can be closed down."<sup>2</sup> In anticipation of this, Wolfhart Pannenburg writes, "The church is constituted as a preliminary form of the Kingdom of Christ. In its community it anticipates the coming reality of the Kingdom of God that will bring the fulfillment of the social destiny of man [sic], of the destiny of the individual to community with all other men [sic]."<sup>3</sup> Cosden writes:

A Christian teleology which involves transformation is not content to be historical (or historicized) teleology. This would mean that the end would be construed simply as development within time. Rather, the eschatological *telos* is

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<sup>1</sup> Jer 31:31.

<sup>2</sup> Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> Pannenburg, *Jesus – God and Man*, 373.

the *telos* of history (rather than the *telos* which is history), and is at the same time the *telos* of the created order. Therefore, a Christian view of history, and thus a Christian teleology, must include the idea of a beyond time eschatology.<sup>4</sup>

It may be challenging to contemplate the mystery that is offered by this view. This view, by extension, effectively holds that the fruits of our labour may endure into the ‘beyond time.’ With this view in mind, the aim—the final cause, then, of our work—is twofold. Firstly it is to conduct our work in a way that it has intrinsic value in addition to its extrinsic value. In other words, the extrinsic value of work is economic—a day’s work for a day’s pay. It is the opportunity for self-improvement and advancement. It is the invitation to make a contribution to the nation’s economy through paying one’s taxes and investing. These can all be achieved laudably—they are the extrinsic components. Secondly, the cause of our work is to uphold social justice, philanthropy, and morally appropriate behavior. To exercise judgment, and the treatment of others that is in adherence to Jesus’ fundamental commands and his further instruction. In other words the deontological—the moral and ethical elements of scriptural instruction as found in the Gospels—these are the intrinsic components—carried out for their own (or God’s) sake.

### Grace Brings It All Together

Kenneth Collins writes:

One of Wesley’s more well-developed ways of understanding grace, and one that is embedded in the very structure of the *ordo salutis* in a graphic way, is terms of divine and human co-operation: ‘God worketh in you; therefore you can work....God worketh in you; therefore you *must* work.’ Lest this maxim be interpreted simply in a synergistic, nearly semi-Pelagian way, it must be immediately noted that a broad prevenience richly informs such a divine co-operation. In other words, for Wesley, the *initiative*, the first movement in the reality of redemption, is *always* taken by God.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 91.

<sup>5</sup> Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley*, 155-6.

Our task is to respond.

Volf offers several critical observations here. Firstly, he notes that “It is plausible that the statement in Revelation about the saints’ resting from their labours, for their deeds follow them (Rev. 14:13 cf. Eph. 6:8) could be interpreted to imply that earthly work will leave traces on resurrected personalities.”<sup>6</sup> He continues:

In the past few centuries Christian theologians have come to view human work as *cooperation with God*... [However,] there is another, more recent, theological tradition that bases [a] theology of work on human proleptic cooperation in God’s *transformation mundi*. It includes the essential elements of the understanding of work as cooperation with God in preservation of creation and places them in the eschatological light of the promised new creation.<sup>7</sup>

Until then, and in hopeful preparation for that day, we have much work to do. As Volf says, “one should not confuse waiting with inactivity.”<sup>8</sup> Turning to the ministry, undergirded by the seminary, Richard Osmer says, “Pastors and other leaders face the focal questions of the three tasks of practical theological interpretation: What is going on? Why is this going on? How might we respond? A key pedagogical task for theology courses is to educate students in ways that prepare them to carry out practical theological interpretation in their future ministries.”<sup>9</sup> Without question, pastors accomplish their interpretation and response to situations such as tragedy, illness, death, grief, sorrow and such life events with appropriate therapeutic care and expertise.

### Cultural Pluralization Brings Added Challenge

As Osmer points out, there are new complications to address. He offers:

Greater cultural pluralism, including religious, lifestyle and ethnic diversity [means that] people have freedom to choose their affiliations; pastors no longer

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<sup>6</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 97-8.

<sup>7</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 98-9.

<sup>8</sup> Volf *Work in the Spirit*, 100.

<sup>9</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 14.

automatically have special authority because everyone goes to church—rather they must ‘earn’ their authority; the secularization of modern institutions [means that] we now have a compartmentalization of religion to a very narrow sphere of life.<sup>10</sup>

This thesis argues that we can *preserve* the world only by working on its *transformation*, in cooperation with God, through the equipping grace of the Holy Spirit. Osmer goes into some detail regarding what he describes as the, “Integrative task of congregational leaders...guiding the congregation as a community of [scriptural] interpretation [of practical issues].”<sup>11</sup> Stressing that, “this must be a two-way conversation with people [especially] when life brings them up short, helping them rework their interpretations of self, marriage, church, work.”<sup>12</sup> To state that leadership in the Christian community is challenging is, perhaps, to state the obvious. It is complex, but it is worth doing always.

Stevens writes:

Work should have *lasting value*...what lasts, as Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 3:10-15 and 13:13, is not faith, hope and love as ‘pure’ virtues unattached to our lives, but *what is done in faith, hope and love*. In the end, these works, purged of sin as fire burns out the dross and leaves the pure metal (2 Pet. 3:12-13).<sup>13</sup>

Osmer emphasizes this when he states, “In short, the leaders of congregations carry out the tasks of practical theological interpretation to guide their community in participating in the priestly, royal and prophetic office of Christ.”<sup>14</sup> However, this statement becomes heavy with *gravitas* when we consider these tasks in the light of eschatological participation. Volf makes it clear when he says, “The point is not simply to interpret work religiously as cooperation with God and thereby glorify it ideologically, *but to*

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<sup>10</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 24.

<sup>12</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Stevens, *Doing God's Business*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Osmer, *Practical Theology*, 29.

*transform work into a charismatic cooperation with God on the 'project' of the new creation.*"<sup>15</sup>

### We Are Justified Through Our Work. When Our Work is Empowered by The Holy Spirit

Volf resoundingly underscores the work of the Holy Spirit, both in equipping and in preparing us. Thus it is through us that God does his work. In effect this means that all leadership is pastoral because our leadership is, in effect, a partnership with the Holy Spirit in discerning the charisms that we are given as leaders together with the charisms given to those who are placed into our care as leaders. As shepherds, it is our guidance, both practical and spiritual, that is important. Guidance that reflects both elements of presence and absence, thus assuring that the person finds courage to move ahead on their own. Moltmann says, "Anyone who always wants to be kept safe never learns to walk upright. Anyone who always lets himself [sic] be guided and led will never raise his [sic] head and become a person in his [sic] own right."<sup>16</sup> This is our leap to morality, our realization that our work is theocentric.

Bauman writes,

Talmudic sage Rabbi Hillel offered 'love thy neighbor as thyself' as the only yet complete, answer, encapsulating the totality of God's injunctions. Accepting such a command is a leap of faith; a decisive leap, through which a human being breaks out of the carapace of 'natural' drives urges and predilections, takes a position away from and against nature, and turns into the 'unnatural' being that, unlike the beasts, humans are.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, Bauman adds that to 'love thy neighbor as thyself' "is also the fateful passage from the instinct of survival to morality."<sup>18</sup> When the Pharisees asked Jesus to

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<sup>15</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 116 [emphasis added].

<sup>16</sup> Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Baumann, *Liquid Love*, 78.

<sup>18</sup> Baumann, *Liquid Love*, 78.

tell them which of the commandments is the greatest, this is what he told them, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”<sup>19</sup> In a world that Baumann says, “seems to be conspiring against truth”<sup>20</sup> this, then, may be the threshold event for us as we begin to see our work in the eschatological light presented in this thesis.

Seeing Work as an Eschatological Imperative Relieves the Tension of Living in the ‘Now but Not Yet’

Jackelen writes, “Eschatological thought expresses the recognition of the predicament of human life as being the tension between the already and the not yet.”<sup>21</sup> Jackelen continues, “The eschatological distinction finally, by bouncing back and forth between the already and the not yet, gives priority to the mode of potentiality, which is the future.”<sup>22</sup> And so, *everyone, who is able, deserves to work!* When we lose the opportunity to work we lose not only the economic security that comes from our wages. We lose dignity, we lose the opportunity for personal growth—for self-actualization and, most critical—fecundity—participation in the future. We lose the God-given opportunity to contribute to the new creation.

Chewning, Eby and Roels observe, “Developing ourselves and others is not an end in itself. It is part of our worship of God to develop and use the skills that God has given. Our own renewal in the image of God is enhanced as we seek the full development of ourselves and those with whom we work.”<sup>23</sup> With God’s grace, we find

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<sup>19</sup> Matt 22:37.

<sup>20</sup> Baumann, *Liquid Love*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 969.

<sup>22</sup> Jackelen, “Relativistic Eschatology,” 968.

<sup>23</sup> Chewning, Eby and Roels, *Business Through the Eyes of Faith*, 87.

ourselves in a workplace where there is, as Ann Coombs says, “spiritual well-being ...physical, and emotional well being on both an individual level and a corporate level. Philanthropist Sir John Templeton defines the spiritual ideal as the, ‘purpose, intent, desire, motivation, incentive, and the spirit in which you do anything.’”<sup>24</sup>

### The Fruit of Labour Must Be the Service of Others

This thesis places emphasis on the specific biblical call to serve the poor. Donald Dorr asks, “When you set out to serve the world, whose world are you serving? Is it the world as structured by the rich and powerful...Or is the world as God wants it to be, one in which structural poverty and powerlessness are challenged, and the poor are privileged agents of God in bringing about the Kingdom?”<sup>25</sup> If we, indeed, have, as our *telos*, partnership with God in preparing for his new creation, the eradication of poverty would be a good place to begin. Mary Robinson, President of Ireland from 1990-97 wrote:

In my speech at Oxford at the beginning of my term as [UN] High Commissioner in 1997, I had declared the ‘poverty itself is a violation of numerous basic human rights’...I was quickly corrected in my use of the term ‘violation’. Violations are committed by states. Strictly speaking, poverty cannot violate human rights. But my point was that poverty undermines human rights to a devastating extent.<sup>26</sup>

Dorr speaks of a renewed spirituality, of which, he continues, “One of the most important [elements] is that it enables us to rediscover one of the central themes of the Bible: God’s special concern for the poor...Christians find themselves called to a genuine solidarity with the poor of the world. When this call is answered, Christian faith

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<sup>24</sup> Coombs, *the living workplace*, 126.

<sup>25</sup> Dorr, *Spirituality And Justice*, 202

<sup>26</sup> Robinson, *Everybody Matters*, 280-1.

comes alive.”<sup>27</sup> This thesis asserts that it is through our good work that our vocational efforts are sanctified. Gustavo Gutierrez asserts that such work is salvific. He writes:

When we assert that man fulfills himself [sic] by continuing the work of creation by means of his [sic] labor, we are saying that he places himself [sic], by this very fact within an all-embracing salvific process. To work, to transform the world, is to become a man [sic] and to build the human community; it is also to save. Likewise, to struggle against misery and exploitation and to build a just society is already to be part of the saving action.<sup>28</sup>

If we give the energy to responding to the needs of the poor that scripture calls us to give, a soul-full opportunity to self-actualize arises in a most meaningful way. Burton Porter writes, “the [place that the] self appears to reside is internal rather than external, a matter of mind, not body, the spiritual not the material part.”<sup>29</sup> If self-actualization—self-realization—is the search for the closest approach to perfection, then perfection is of the soul. It becomes our essential selves. This aligns our quest for self-actualization with the work we are to accomplish in cooperation with God in his New Kingdom. Federico Suarez adds, “Paradoxically as it may seem, it is not the *wide road*, the affirmation of the ego that enables us to find ourselves and attain the fullness of our personality. It is the *narrow road* the denial of self [which is the affirmation of God] that leads us to this end.”<sup>30</sup>

Referencing the work of R. Bellah, Volf says, “Work, ‘as a contribution to the good of all and not merely as a means to one’s advancement...work that is intrinsically interesting and valuable is one of the central requirements for a revitalized social ecology.’ Indeed, in a society that seeks the common good in a postindustrial age, such

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<sup>27</sup> Dorr, *Spirituality And Justice*, 203.

<sup>28</sup> Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, 159.

<sup>29</sup> Porter, *The Good Life: Options in Ethics*, 91.

<sup>30</sup> Suarez, *The Narrow Gate*, 24 [emphasis added].

work should, in Bellah's opinion, be a 'Primary form of civic virtue.'"<sup>31</sup> Business does depend on virtuous behavior. Novak says that "Business has a vested interest in virtue. It cannot go forward with realism, courage, wisdom, honesty and integrity without a highly motivated and virtuous work community."<sup>32</sup> Taken to a societal level, this matter brings a massive challenge for us. Matthew Fox says,

Clearly the chaos of our culture, and specifically of its work world, is on display. The lack of opportunity for work has everything to do with riots in our inner cities, but so does the lack of integrity in the work of media, politicians, business people, and the economic structures of this civilization. Work that reinforces adultism, racism, sexism, unemployment, poverty, avarice—is this human work? Is this authentic work? Can we afford for this to continue?<sup>33</sup>

These words were published in 1994—long before riots in Greece, Italy, and Cyprus.

Long before the riots in the middle east, and long before the appalling conditions exposed by tragedies in the factories of Bangladesh. In a *Bloomberg News* column, Pankaj Mishra writes that, "mass democracy and capitalism, far from being natural partners, are antagonists in the age of globalization...the demands of the majority cannot be fulfilled by private wealth creation."<sup>34</sup>

### A New Spiritual Order

Can work be sacramental? The Anglican Church speaks of the, "Two sacraments ordained by Christ himself—Baptism and the Supper of the Lord."<sup>35</sup> Of the Sacraments, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer observes:

Sacraments ordained of Christ be not only badges or tokens of Christian Men's [sic] profession, but rather they be certain sure witnesses, and effectual signs of

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<sup>31</sup> Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 4.

<sup>32</sup> Novak, *Business as a Calling*, 115.

<sup>33</sup> Fox *The Reinvention of work*, 45

<sup>34</sup> Mishra "Democracy's Failures are Filling the Streets," Bloomberg News <http://www.sddt.com/News/article.cfm?SourceCode=20130715cj&t=Democracys+Failures+Are+Filling+Worlds+Streets> July 20, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> BCP, 878.

grace, and God's good will towards us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our Faith in him.<sup>36</sup>

If our work, is desired by God, inspired by God, equipped by God, focused toward God, and enjoyed by God, can it not be viewed as pious, and therefore sacramental? Can the workplace not become our weekday altar?

Fox asks, "Is it time for a new spiritual order? [One where] its spirituality will be creation centred, which is to say that it will honour the Divine wherever it is found."<sup>37</sup>

Fox yearns for a spirituality of work that is centred on a cosmology—an ultimate fate—a *telos* wherein, he says, "work [is seen] as sacrament; sacrament as work."<sup>38</sup> Greenman and Kalantzis also write on the concept of recovering spirituality. They offer, "as Michel DeCerteau has shown, both the term *mysticism* and the word *spirituality* came to refer to interior experiences detached, to a lesser or greater degree, from their roots in the religious experience of participation in the liturgical life of the church."<sup>39</sup> So perhaps it is not so much that we should seek a new spiritual order, but rather a *renewed* spiritual order. Mark Jensen speaks of the, "pain and grace of starting over."<sup>40</sup> Lamentations 3:22 reads "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases."<sup>41</sup> The book of Ezekiel follows Lamentations, and here we find words of great comfort concerning the promised renewal of Israel, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you."<sup>42</sup>

### Once Again, Jesus is Our Role Model

Jesus is our model for vocation. Jensen points out that, "Jesus reveals to us the vocation of humanity under God, deepening the meaning of what it is to be truly

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<sup>36</sup> BCP, 872.

<sup>37</sup> Fox, *The Reinvention of work*, 187-9.

<sup>38</sup> Fox, *The Reinvention of work*, 296.

<sup>39</sup> Greenman and Kalantzis, *Life in the Spirit*, 93.

<sup>40</sup> Jensen, *Shattered Vocations*, 140.

<sup>41</sup> Lam 3: 22a .

<sup>42</sup> Ezek 36:26a.

human.”<sup>43</sup> Thomas a Kempis writes, “The devout man carries his consoler, Jesus, everywhere with him, and he says to Him: ‘Be with me, Lord Jesus, in every place and at all times.’”<sup>44</sup> That said, Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes that in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, “was establishing an entirely new and different kingdom... there is nothing more fatal than for the natural man [sic] to think that he can take the Beatitudes and try to put them into practice. Hence [the seventh Beatitude, *Blessed are the peacemakers*] reminds us that this is utterly impossible. Only a new man [sic] can live this new life.”<sup>45</sup> Porter writes, “Within a culture, actions are judged to be right when they follow the time-honored customs and wrong when they are opposed to these customs.”<sup>46</sup> A new man or a new woman stands, with every choice they make, on the thin end of the wedge of immorality. Literally every hour can provide us with a new opportunity to choose a better path.

#### God is With Us Now, and Calling us From the Future

God is both transcendent and immanent. He calls us from beyond—from the time when “he will wipe every tear from their eyes.”<sup>47</sup> He also is with us in the present—giving us hope in the here and now. While this thesis has focused most of its energy on a theology of the workplace—a practical theology, it is critical to point out that this thesis contends that there is an important distinction between *action* and *meaning*. Badcock makes the following critical observation, “There has been a strong tendency in recent Western thought to see all meaning as a function of practical activity... [Seeing] truth and value as contextual, practical constructs that enable

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<sup>43</sup> Jensen, *Shattered Vocation*, 136.

<sup>44</sup> Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ*, 62.

<sup>45</sup> Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 100.

<sup>46</sup> Porter, *The Good Life*, 46.

<sup>47</sup> Rev 21:4.

humans to live together in community.”<sup>48</sup> If God is both transcendent and immanent, meaning cannot and must not lie in *use* alone. As Badcock stresses, “It is God who gives meaning, creatively and redemptively.”<sup>49</sup>

This thesis argues that our activities, whether industrial/commercial, voluntary and familial are the efforts that form our response to God, to the *logos* of God, as understood in the person of Jesus Christ, empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit. Seeking the Holy Spirit is, indeed, critical. Referencing David Brainerd’s diary, we find an entry, one of many such entries, “I again found the assistance of the Holy Spirit in secret duties, both morning and evening, and life and comfort in religion through the whole day.”<sup>50</sup> Some knowledge of Brainerd’s life brings emphasis to this statement. Edwards writes, “Another imperfection in Mr. Brainerd...was his being *excessive in his labours*; not taking due care to proportion his fatigues to his strengths.”<sup>51</sup> The work that this thesis calls us to do is labour in the extreme. Thus, quiet reflection, and prayer are essential.

### We Must Build Spiritual Capital

Malloch writes that beyond financial capital, human capital, and social capital, we must build *spiritual capital*. He writes,

This is built up in another way. It comes from another relationship altogether than the relations of human society; the relationship with God. The reaching out towards God through worship, prayer, devotion and pious observance is a specific kind of discipline, which is not the discipline of human society. It involves an act of metaphysical submission, a bowing down of the whole spirit to a power that lies beyond the world of our perception.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 19.

<sup>49</sup> Badcock, *The Way of Life*, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Edwards, *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 8.

<sup>51</sup> Edwards, *Life and Diary of David Brainerd*, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Malloch, *Spiritual Enterprise*, 119.

Most challenging, at times, can be the vilification we must endure at the hands of others when we live out our work in the praise of God. Zylla says, “One of the most exacting challenges...is to offer an articulation of the presence of God in the places of God’s seeming absence.”<sup>53</sup> Barton speaks of loneliness, and so does Zylla, who says, “At the root of suffering is a profound loneliness, an experience of not-being-understood.”<sup>54</sup> It is crucial to enter into a dialogue on this issue.

Speaking of the interaction between laity and clergy, Carnegie Calian says, “It is important for us all to be aware that we are standing on a common platform. This fact is often forgotten during worship, the pastor stands above the congregation...The fact is that we are all one people under God, whose concerns and needs are remarkably similar.”<sup>55</sup>

For many, their faith journey begins with the question: Is our world the result of a giant, but completely accidental, cosmic event, or was it designed? Porter writes, “The teleological argument points to various remarkable facts as proof. For example, the earth has been positioned so as to sustain life...In addition, an envelope of water surrounds the earth, and all organisms require water to live, [etc.].”<sup>56</sup> Add to this that as our human endeavours have evolved over the millennia, a common thread has remained. That thread is the call from God to steward our resources and to employ them in the service of His kingdom.

Adam Smith wrote:

A wise man [sic] never complains of the destiny of Providence, nor thinks the universe in confusion when he [sic] is out of order. He [sic] does not look upon

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<sup>53</sup> Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 2.

<sup>54</sup> Zylla, *The Roots of Sorrow*, 2.

<sup>55</sup> Calian, *Today's Pastor in Tomorrow's World*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> Porter, *The Good Life*, 132.

himself [sic] as a whole, separated and detached from every other part of nature...He [sic] enters, if I may say so, into the sentiments of that divine being, and considers himself [sic] an atom, a particle, of an immense and infinite system.<sup>57</sup>

We are not inert particles, but we are atoms of engagement—engaged in teleological effort.

Each of us is called to shape others. This is especially true for those of us called as teachers, ministers, business leaders. We are a community of caring. We are also a people of hope. Ben Wiebe writes:

Jesus' mission was addressed to the people of God, and it envisaged the eschatological restoration of the people of God... The interpretation and discernment of the appropriate response to God's initiative in Jesus could not take place as an intellectual operation by the lone individual. The promise of Jesus to actualize his will had as its context the community gathered in his name.<sup>58</sup>

We now live at a point in our society where, according to Miller, "Increasingly, businesspeople and workers of all types are tired of living a bifurcated life. No longer are they willing to leave their souls in the parking lot outside the workplace."<sup>59</sup> There is an opportunity to reach these people who are hungering after spiritual guidance and real meaning in their work—perhaps to reach them in very large numbers.

So here is our work, summed up succinctly by Moltmann:

Anyone who really lives his [sic] life with conscious awareness probably cherishes an undefined longing for deliverance: deliverance from tension, from uncomprehended suffering, from the daily demands of work and the claims made on us through our living together with other human beings. We want to escape from the emptiness of existence and attain a full life.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Modern Sentiments*, 325.

<sup>58</sup> Wiebe, *Messianic Ethics*, 21.

<sup>59</sup> Miller, *The Faith at Work Movement*, 301.

<sup>60</sup> Moltmann, *The Power of the Powerless*, 64.

This thesis suggests that we are called into our vocation as a contribution to his coming Kingdom.

## SUMMARY

The church is a preliminary form of the Kingdom of Christ. The church is the body of Christ. The body of Christ and its members have work to do—work for the church, work in the world. Work is what we do on the days between Sabbath rest and worship.

In the parable of the rich man, we hear the words of Jesus, “Go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven.”<sup>61</sup> We are called to this so often that our service to others, especially to the poor, is perhaps the most important measure of our morality.

Our efforts are equipped, guided and given strength by God through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. All our efforts, in labour, love, prayer and worship are constituent parts of God’s creation, now and in the future. God calls us from a future beyond time and in that call is the gift of hope and grace.

The work of each of us, when it is all bound together in Christ, constitute the unfolding of history. This history, of which each of us is a part, has the *eschaton* as its *telos*. Thus the *eschaton* is the *telos* of our work.

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<sup>61</sup> Mark 10:21.

## THE MESSAGE OF THIS THESIS

In the introduction of this thesis is the hypothesis that there exists a deep spiritual purpose in our working lives. A theology of work is the response of this thesis to the question, ‘what is this spiritual purpose’?

Daniel’s apocalyptic vision, “on the banks of the great river,”<sup>62</sup> presents a glimpse of the “end of days.”<sup>63</sup> In Revelation we read, “See, I am coming soon: my reward is with me, to repay according to everyone’s work.”<sup>64</sup> I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.”<sup>65</sup> Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega. He is our judge and also our role model.

In the Gospel of John we read “During supper Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God, got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin began to wash the disciples feet.”<sup>66</sup>

Thus, as a farmer, accountant, professor, investment dealer, corporate executive or street sweeper we are, from the beginning to the end of our lives here on earth, servants of the Lord and servants of the world—in whatever role our Lord calls us to perform. It is not what we do, but the humility with which we do it.

We are called upon to work earnestly, diligently and ethically, in faith in Jesus Christ’s saving grace. We are called upon to carry out the vocations for which we are endowed and also to support each other. In Proverbs 27 we read, “Iron sharpens iron,

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<sup>62</sup> Dan 10:4.

<sup>63</sup> Dan 10:14.

<sup>64</sup> Rev 22:12-13.

<sup>65</sup> Rev 22:12.

<sup>66</sup> John 13 4-5a.

and one person sharpens the wits of another.”<sup>67</sup> This thesis asserts that to see work as an eschatological imperative is to fully appreciate our vocations. Our work, when regarded this way, is to take great comfort in realizing that our work, is sanctified by God, it is made sacred, when we perform that work in response to His grace.

Butler Bass writes, “[Are we] struggling toward new understandings of God, how we should act ethically and politically, and who we are deep in our souls?”<sup>68</sup> This thesis offers an equally deep response. Cosden writes, “Teleologically, human purpose necessarily includes conceptions of ends as well as origins...This vision of the eschatological new creation...suggests that human purpose in the new creation will be related to, although not in every way identical with, human purpose as found in the initial creation.”<sup>69</sup> To be a Christian is to respond completely to the ministry, life and message of Jesus Christ and through Jesus’ invitation to participate in the intimacy of the Trinity. We cannot begin to fully comprehend the mystery that is God’s creation, but this thesis suggests that every element of our existence is both tethered to and engaged in God’s creation.

In the introduction to thesis was the assertion of its four-fold purpose: That we may find sanctification in our work, that we may leave a legacy that contributes to the new kingdom, that Satan will oppose us when we seek to our work in service of God, and finally that this thesis offers thoughts and instruction for those entering ministry. The chapters in this thesis have addressed these four objectives, and this thesis rests, on the assertion that we must reintegrate the sacred and the secular. All human endeavour, carried out for kingdom purpose, is sacred. A ministry that fully embraces the entire

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<sup>67</sup> Prov 27:17.

<sup>68</sup> Butler-Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 5.

<sup>69</sup> Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 144.

rhythm of life—work, rest, prayer and worship—will be of extraordinary value to its congregation. Thanks be to God.

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