

Southwestern Assemblies of God University
Graduate School of Distance Education

Systematic Theology II
THE 5423

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Eschatology in Relation to Theological Aspects of Work

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Semester: Spring 2009

Date: 04/22/09

Specialization: Bible/Theology

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Introduction

Eschatology

People are intrigued with predictions about the future. However, God alone accurately knows the whole future, and He has revealed glimpses of it through His infallible Word. The Bible contains many prophecies that have already been fulfilled, and thus God's Word can be relied upon when it proclaims prophecies of future events yet to be fulfilled. The study of the last events of history is called "eschatology."¹ The Second Coming of Christ is described by Andrew McDearmid as "the outstanding event of biblical eschatology, and all events of the end time are related to it."² While not all biblical scholars agree about the specific details of the future, they do agree about the general outline of events given in the Bible:

Jesus will return to earth in power and glory, the dead shall rise, the last judgment will occur, and the members of his church, that "called-out assembly" from every tongue and nation, will live and reign with him in the new heaven and new earth that shall never end. God will separate the disobedient and unbelieving from his children, and those separated out will be excluded from his presence forever.³

It is important to study what Scripture states about the end times and to apply that knowledge in preparation for the Second Coming of Christ and for eternity, for Jesus Himself says in the apocalyptic book of Revelation, "and behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book" (Rev. 22:7). When Christ returns, "something big is going to happen, but the purpose of eschatology is not so much to tell us the details of what will happen in

¹ The term *eschatology* is derived from the Greek words *eschatos*, "last," and *logos*, "study," resulting in the "study of last things." Technically, Eschatology is comprised of General eschatology and Personal eschatology, where General Eschatology is the study of major future events that affect the entire universe and Personal eschatology is the study of future events that deal with people as individuals.

² Andrew McDearmid, *Eschatology: A Study Guide* (Irving: ICI University Press, 1980), 21.

³ Robert G. Clouse, Robert N. Hosack, and Richard V. Pierard, *The New Millennium Manual: A Once and Future Guide* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 44.

the future as to call us to holy living in the present.”⁴ Therefore, familiarity with eschatology should impact the way people work.

Theology of Work

Practically every adult works in some way, since “work” is broader than just “paid employment.” Work involves using one’s gifts, energy, and resources to serve others. M. D. Geldard defines work in this broader way as “the investment of one’s energy in dominion over nature and the service of others.”⁵ R. Paul Stevens also defines work in a broader way as “purposeful activity involving mental, emotional or physical energy, or all three, whether remunerated or not.”⁶ As a result, businesspersons, manual laborers, homemakers, volunteers offering services, and God are all individuals who work. God has revealed various aspects about work in the Bible. Although biblical scholars have discussed the subject of work periodically throughout the centuries, the term “theology of work” first appeared around 1949,⁷ and the first formal theology of work did not appear until 1950. In the decades following, at least two dozen significant writings on theology of work appeared.

Although “theology of work” is a broad topic, its foundations can be briefly summarized from principles in the first three chapters of Genesis. First, God is a worker⁸ and thus work is inherently good and meaningful. Second, God created humankind in the image of God who works⁹ and thus humans have a nature to creatively work. Third, man works for God and with

⁴ Clouse, Hosack, and Pierard, 178.

⁵ M. D. Geldard, “Work,” in *Encyclopedia of Biblical & Christian Ethics*, rev. ed., edited by R. K. Harrison (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 444.

⁶ R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000; Vancouver, BC: Regent College, 2000), repr. of *The Abolition of the Laity* (1999), 107.

⁷ M. D. Chenu, *The Theology of Work: An Exploration*, (1963), trans. Lilian Soiron (Chicago: Regnery, 1966), originally published as *Pour une Theologie du Travail*, (Paris: Editions du Seuil, [1955]), 4

⁸ Gen. 1:1, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25; 2:2.

⁹ Gen. 1:26-27.

God according to a divine command,¹⁰ the Creation Mandate.¹¹ Fourth, while sin distorted work in the Fall, work did not originate in the Fall as a curse for humankind.¹² Additionally, God is interested in co-working with humanity in the transformation of society as well as in personal redemption. While all of humanity is called by God to work,¹³ Christians who know the Bible should have different motivations, attitudes, and behaviors toward work than the rest of the world. For example, Col. 3:23 says “whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.” As Christians learn God’s perspective on work and incorporate biblical teachings into their lives, then their motivations, attitudes, and behaviors will conform to God’s will concerning their work. Similarly, one’s view of eschatological events will help shape a believer’s current work and give them insight into work in the millennium and the eternal state.

Thesis and Structure of Paper

While discussing eschatological topics at length, this paper shows the impact that various views of eschatology have on people who work and shows theological aspects of work in relation to eschatology. This paper describes first the three main millennial views and then discusses how the three main millennial views affect one’s work. Second, this paper describes the key aspects of the Final Judgment and then shows how a view of the Final Judgment affects one’s work. Third, this paper shows that much of human work might have lasting effects in the new heavens and new earth. Fourth, this paper shows that there will be work in the eternal state of heaven on earth.

¹⁰ Gen. 1:28; 2:15-19.

¹¹ Creation Mandate is a mandate from God to rule over, care for, and serve the rest of God’s creation (Gen. 1:26-30; 2:15). Sometimes it is called the Cultural Mandate.

¹² Gen. 3:17-19.

¹³ In God’s providence, He uses the work of people to supply the needs of societies across the globe.

Theological Aspects of Work in Relation to Eschatology

How Millennial Views Affect One's Work Attitudes

The *millennium* is the thousand-year reign of Christ repeatedly mentioned in Rev. 20:1-7. Due to various interpretations about the end times in regards to this millennium, Christian theologians have proposed, over the years, three main systems to explain the return of Christ and His reign: amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. While premillennialism expects a future intermediate earthly kingdom, postmillennialism and amillennialism see the present church age as representing that intermediate kingdom.¹⁴ “Each of these systems . . . has had devout evangelical Christian adherents.”¹⁵ However, amillennialism is supported mostly by historic Protestants and Catholics; postmillennialism is supported by some Evangelicals and Charismatics, mainline and liberal Protestants, and ecumenical groups such as National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches; and premillennialism is supported by most Baptists, Holiness groups, and Pentecostals along with conservative Evangelicals.¹⁶

Amillennialism

Amillennialism is a view that the millennium, or “one thousand years” of Christ’s reign, in Rev. 20:4-5 is to be interpreted symbolically instead of literally.¹⁷ The prefix *a-* means *non*, and thus the term refers to a non-millennialism, in opposition to the view of premillennialism

¹⁴ Darrell L. Bock, editor’s preface to *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, by Craig A. Blaising, Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., and Robert B. Strimple, edited by Darrell L. Bock (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 7.

¹⁵ Robert G. Clouse, introduction to *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, by George Eldon Ladd, Herman A. Hoyt, Loraine Boettner, and Anthony A. Hoekema, edited by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 13.

¹⁶ Bill Hammon, *The Day of the Saints: Equipping Believers for Their Revolutionary Role in Ministry* (2002; repr., Shippensburg: Destiny, 2003), 410; David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Ser. 16, 1991 (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), 315; David Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 26.

¹⁷ Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 9.

that holds there will be a future millennium reign of Christ on earth. Therefore, amillennialism holds that there will be no future millennium; instead, this view holds that Rev. 20:1-10 “describes the present church age [where] . . . Satan’s influence over the nations has been greatly reduced so that the gospel can be preached to the whole world.”¹⁸ Amillennialism views the Church Age as figuratively consisting of the millennium and the tribulation, until Christ returns. Some Amillennialists hold that Christ is reigning in heaven over the Christians who have already died, but most Amillennialists believe that Christ is reigning spiritually from heaven over people living on earth during the Church Age through the Word and the Holy Spirit; they also believe the events mentioned in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24; Mark 13; and Luke 21) and most of the book of Revelation (except perhaps the last two chapters) have already occurred or should be taken figuratively. Thus, the Antichrist is not considered a real person to be revealed in the future. Additionally, “Since they have no room in their system for a literal restoration of Israel or the reign of Christ on earth, they take the prophecies of the Old Testament that relate to Israel, spiritualize them, and apply them to the Church.”¹⁹

While amillennialism beliefs may have existed in the early church, it was St. Augustine (AD 354-430) who was primarily responsible for formulating the belief system of amillennialism. Often following the teachings of Augustine, the Roman Catholic Church holds much of the beliefs of amillennialism, though they usually do not name their belief system as such. In addition to Catholics, amillennialism is supported mostly by mainline Protestant denominations, including many Reformed churches and some Baptist groups, yet seems to have

¹⁸ Wayne, Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 1110.

¹⁹ Stanley M. Horton, “The Last Things,” in *Systematic Theology*, rev. ed., edited by Stanley M. Horton (Springfield: Logion Press, 1995), 620.

gone out of favor with the more conservative Protestant theological groups.²⁰ Amillennialists anticipate Jesus coming to earth suddenly at the end of the Church Age, gathering the Church together and transporting them to heaven, resurrecting believers and unbelievers for judgment at the same time, and then instituting the eternal Kingdom of the new heavens and new earth.²¹ Of the various end-time views, amillennialism is relatively simple in that all of the end time events occur with each other right after the return of Christ. According to this view, Grudem says “The bodies of believers will rise to be reunited with their spirits and enter into full enjoyment of heaven forever.”²² However, Anthony A. Hoekema, an advocate for amillennialism, says that some misunderstand amillennialism as “teaching a future kingdom which is only spiritual and which has nothing to do with the earth”;²³ however, he supports that the final “heaven and earth will no longer be separated but will have merged. In the final state, therefore, glorified believers will be both in heaven and on the new earth, since the two shall then be one.”²⁴ Most of humanity is sent to hell for eternal punishment, but believers will enjoy heaven on earth.

Postmillennialism

Postmillennialism is a view that Jesus Christ will return to earth after the millennium, or “one thousand years” of Christ’s reign mentioned in Rev. 20:1-7.²⁵ The prefix *post-* means “after,” and thus Christ will return “after” the millennium; whereas the prefix *pre-* means

²⁰ Hammon, 410; Bosch, 315; Miller, 26; Robert Harden, “Eschatology—Different Views,” lecture (Southwestern Assemblies of God University, Waxahachie, TX, June 23, 2005), tegrity video file, <http://tegrity.sagu.edu/tegrity/rharden/THE5423/ESCHATOLOGY/class/Sun.htm?Watchid=1240177150687> (accessed April 6, 2009).

²¹ Horton, 620.

²² Grudem, 1110.

²³ Anthony A. Hoekema, “Amillennialism,” in *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views*, by George Eldon Ladd, Herman A. Hoyt, Loraine Boettner, and Anthony A. Hoekema, edited by Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1977), 185-86.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 184.

²⁵ Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 214.

“before,” and the term *premillennialism* means that Christ will return “before” the millennium. Some other names used for postmillennialism are “Christian Reconstruction,” “kingdom now theology,” and “dominion theology.” Postmillennialism arose during the early nineteenth century and is supported by some Evangelicals and Charismatics, mainline and liberal Protestants, ecumenical groups such as National Council of Churches and World Council of Churches,²⁶ and the Chalcedon Foundation and other groups within the Christian Reconstruction movement.²⁷

Postmillennialism mostly ignores the Rapture and Tribulation. Instead of focusing on those two events that premillennialists anticipate, postmillennialists work toward establishing victory and dominion over every area of society to establish the “millennium” kingdom of God on earth, through proclamation of the gospel and the maturation of the Church in God’s power. They view the “thousand year” millennium as a figurative term for a long time period that becomes as an extension of the Church Age, after which Christ will return for a mature Church that “has taken dominion ‘over every aspect of the societal framework’” and has “control over all the kingdoms of this world.”²⁸ According to postmillennialist author Loraine Boettner, postmillennialism involves “that view of last things which holds that the kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ will occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace, commonly called the millennium.”²⁹ Most postmillennialists (and amillennialists) understand Rev. 20:2-3 as saying that Satan is bound and thrown into the abyss during the millennium, and thus he is unable to deceive the nations and to

²⁶ Hammon, 410; Bosch, 315; Miller, 26.

²⁷ Robert Harden.

²⁸ Horton, 621.

²⁹ Quoted by Robert Harden.

prevent the gospel from being proclaimed with power.³⁰ According to postmillennialism, “the progress of the gospel and the growth of the church will gradually increase, so that a larger and larger proportion of the world’s population will be Christians. As a result, there will be significant Christian influences on society, society will more and more function according to God’s standards, and gradually a ‘millennial age’ of peace and righteousness will occur on the earth.”³¹ Grudem further emphasizes, “The primary characteristic of postmillennialism is that it is very optimistic about the power of the gospel to change lives and bring about much good in the world.”³² In the postmillennial scheme of eschatology, Christ returns to earth at the end of the Church Age for a bride, the church, in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle,³³ then resurrects believers and unbelievers for judgment, and then institutes the eternal Kingdom of the new heavens and new earth.

Premillennialism

Premillennialism is a view that Jesus Christ will return to earth prior to the millennium, during which Christ will reign for “one thousand years,” as interpreted literally from Rev. 20:1-5.³⁴ The prefix *pre-* means “before,” and thus Christ will return “before” the millennium; whereas the prefix *post-* means “after,” and thus the term *postmillennialism* means that Christ will return “after” the millennium. Further, in premillennialism, the seven-year Tribulation period precedes the millennium, which will be one thousand years of peace for all who live under the authority of Christ. After the millennium Satan is conquered by God in a brief, final

³⁰ Horton, 621n66.

³¹ Grudem, 1111.

³² Ibid.

³³ Eph. 5:27.

³⁴ Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 218.

battle, after which Satan is thrown into hell. Premillennialism is supported by most Baptists, Holiness groups, and Pentecostals along with conservative Evangelicals.³⁵

Premillennialism is divided into two main groups: Classic (or Historic) Premillennialism and Dispensational Premillennialism. In Classic Premillennialism, Christ returns to rapture the saints after the Tribulation period and immediately resurrects their bodies and brings that back to a renewed earth to begin the millennium reign. In Dispensational Premillennialism, Christ returns to rapture the saints before the Tribulation, then gives them resurrected bodies and returns to earth with them at the end of the seven-year Tribulation, to the start the millennium reign. In addition to the “post-trib” view held by Historic Premillennialists and the “pre-trib” view held by Dispensational Premillennialism, others lesser held views among premillennialists include the view that Christ could return to rapture the church in the middle of the Tribulation (a “mid-trib” view defended especially by Gleason Archer), or Christ could return to rapture the church just prior to pouring out His wrath in the Tribulation (a variation of the “mid-trib” view called the “pre-wrath” view). Almost all premillennialists believe that the seventieth week (period of seven years) of Daniel 9:27 is equivalent to the eschatological Tribulation period prior to the millennium reign of Christ.

Implications of Millennial Views upon One’s Work

To summarize and contrast the three views, Grudem quotes amillennialists (who hold Rev. 20:1-6 as applying to the present ages) as sometimes saying: “Premillennialists are *waiting* for the millennium, postmillennialists are *working* for it, but we are *enjoying* it.” Although each of the millennial views anticipate the return of Christ, which purified them,³⁶ Dispensational Premillennialists especially believe His return is imminent and will be sudden and unexpected.

³⁵ Hammon, 410; Bosch, 315; Miller, 26.

³⁶ 1 John 3:2-3.

Horton says that it is best that Christians do not know the time of Christ's coming so that they will be more motivated to be faithful in the work that God wants them to do, since they "must always be alert, ready at any time for His coming (Matt. 24:42; 25:13)"³⁷ Thus, Dispensational Premillennialists have a strong emphasis upon the work of evangelism for the lost since time is short before Jesus returns suddenly³⁸ and raptures all saints, yet they seem to place less emphasis upon the value of work for building and transforming society and meeting the non-spiritual needs of people.³⁹ While the other millennial views believe Jesus will return, they believe He will return after particular prophetic signs have been fulfilled or after a greater sense of the Kingdom of God appears on earth (as in postmillennialism), and thus His return is probably still in the distant future, giving people more time for evangelism and for working on longer range projects that build and transform society. However, as a Historic Premillennialist that believes certain signs precede Jesus' return, Grudem says Christians should certainly commit themselves to long-term activities, in obedience to Jesus, "actively engaged in whatever work he has called [them] to," but always being ready for Jesus to come back at any moment and abort such plans.⁴⁰ Yet, postmillennialists probably have the greatest incentive for working hard and bringing a Christian influence into their workplace, since they are working to establish the Kingdom of God on earth to usher in Christ's return. While holding a particular millennial view affects one's work, a view of the final judgment also shapes a person's perspective of work.

³⁷ Horton, 600.

³⁸ "Emphasis on imminence . . . encourages witnessing and missions as well as godly living" (Horton, 626n85).

³⁹ Horton says, "The attention of believers is to be on Jesus (Heb. 12:2-3) and on faithfully fulfilling the Great Commission (Matt. 24:45-46; 25:21, 23)" (602).

⁴⁰ Grudem, 1093.

How a View of the Final Judgment Affects One's Work

Final Judgment

Final judgment is when God “holds nations and persons accountable to him as Creator and Lord” through a judgment at the end of history. God keeps accurate and complete records of all actions, words, and thoughts of everyone, and He will render judgment that shows He is fair in His universe. God the Father has given His Son the right and authority to execute judgment over the entire universe, because He is the Son of Man, according to John 5:26-27. Paul confirms this by saying, “Jesus Christ who is to judge the living and the dead.”⁴¹ Further, Peter says that Jesus Christ “is the one ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead.”⁴² Dispensational Premillennialists view the final judgment as consisting of unbelievers at the Great White Throne Judgment in Rev. 20:11-15 after the millennium, with earlier judgments for the believers and the nations occurring prior to the millennium, yet each of these three judgments are “last judgments” from the perspective that they all occur in the future. For all other millennialists, the final judgment will be one judgment that includes both believers and unbelievers, who will stand before Christ as the judge after the millennium (or Church Age).

Unbelievers will be judged at the completion of the millennium at the “Great White Throne Judgment,” a phrase used in Rev. 20:11 and further described in 20:11-15. Having thrown Satan into the lake of fire (hell), this judgment upon unbelievers (to a destiny of everlasting punishment in hell) is definitely the very last judgment. Through a revelation from God, John describes the Great White Throne Judgment saying in Rev. 20:11-15:

[11] And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. [12] And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book

⁴¹ 2 Tim. 4:1.

⁴² Acts 10:42.

was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. [13] And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. [14] And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. [15] And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.⁴³

John is describing for his readers that the unbeliever, whose name is not written in the book of life,⁴⁴ will be accountable for every work done⁴⁵ and God's wrath will be upon him/her with various degrees of punishment according to the severity of the wickedness performed.⁴⁶

Believers will be judged immediately following the rapture at the "Judgment Seat of Christ," a phrase used in Rom. 14:10, as well as in 2 Cor. 5:10: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." The believer's judgment is based on works, often referred to as the "judgment [*bēma*] seat of Christ,"⁴⁷ where Christians will receive various "degrees of reward for their works or service to God," as shown in Luke 19:17, 19. Since believers have Christ's imputed righteousness and have their names written in the "book of life," they will only be rewarded, and not punished, according to the deeds that they did. Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:12-15 that believers will receive rewards for good work that endures the test of fire, though they will suffer loss of some rewards for works that do not endure the test. Some of the works to be tested at the Judgment Seat of Christ include how faithfully they served Christ,⁴⁸ obedience to the Great Commission,⁴⁹ victory over sin,⁵⁰ self-control with regard to the tongue,⁵¹ as well as many other good works.⁵²

⁴³ Rev. 20:11-15.

⁴⁴ Rev. 20:12, 15.

⁴⁵ Rev. 20:13; Rom. 2:5-7; Matt. 12:36; Eccl. 12:14.

⁴⁶ Luke 12:47-48; 20:47; and Matt. 11:22.

⁴⁷ 2 Cor. 5:10.

⁴⁸ 1 Cor. 9:4-27; 2 Tim. 2:5.

⁴⁹ Matt. 28:18-20.

In addition to the unbeliever's judgment (at the Great White Throne) and the believer's judgment (at the Judgment Seat of Christ), the Bible speaks of a Judgment of the Nations, where there is a judgment of the righteous sheep and the unrighteous goats as seen in Matt. 25:31-36. Amillennialists (and Postmillennialists and others) believe that there is just one final judgment after Christ returns,⁵³ consisting of the three judgments (Rev. 20:11-15; 2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:31-36) that speak of one judgment of believers and unbelievers. However, Dispensational Premillennialists (and perhaps some others) view three different judgments that differ in time, place, and subjects. Thus, the "judgment seat" (2 Cor. 5:10) is the place where Christians receive various degrees of reward immediately after the rapture and before the millennium, the "great white throne judgment" (Rev. 20:11-15) is the place where unbelievers receive various degrees of punishment in the eternal fire of hell at the end of the millennium, and the "judgment of the nations" (Matt. 25:31-46) is where people who are living just prior to the millennium will be judged to determine who enters the millennium.

While the timing of the judgments may vary depending upon one's millennial view, all Christians agree that both the righteous and unrighteous will be judged according to their works. A person's eternal destiny is already settled at a person's death (or at the time of the Rapture for living saints) and demonstrated at the Rapture, with believers being raised from the dead (or from their life on earth) with a transformed, resurrected, glorified body, into the presence of God. Unbelievers who die are immediately punished, awaiting final judgment. At the final judgment(s), the works done by believers while on earth will be rewarded and the works done by

⁵⁰ Rom. 6:1-4.

⁵¹ James 3:1-9.

⁵² "What is the Judgment Seat of Christ / Bema Seat of Christ?" Got Questions Ministries, <http://www.gotquestions.org/judgment-seat-Christ.html> (accessed April 18, 2009).

⁵³ Rev. 20:11-15.

unbelievers while on earth will be punished. Both the rewards and the punishment will be given in various degrees.⁵⁴

Implications of the Final Judgment upon One's Work

The notion of people being judged for their works certainly adds motivation for people to do good works while on earth. Even unbelievers, who lack a total understanding of salvation by grace through faith in Christ, often erroneously attempt to do good works in hopes it will help them on Judgment Day in some fashion. For believers, who may already do good works out of moral consciousness, the love of Christ, or the direction of the Holy Spirit, they are further motivated toward good works as they realize that they will be rewarded accordingly by our gracious God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Grudem says Christians who seek with their heart a future heavenly reward will be motivated to work “wholeheartedly for the Lord at whatever task he calls [them] to, whether great or small, paid or unpaid. It would also make [them] long for his approval rather than for wealth or success.”⁵⁵

Christians are saved by grace through faith⁵⁶ and are “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand.”⁵⁷ Such good deeds that flow from a life committed to Christ will surely include one's vocation and all work rendered as service to others and to God. Col. 3:23-24 says “Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for me; knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve.” Realizing this, Christians should do their work with an inner motivation to

⁵⁴ Some of the many other Scriptures that talk about degrees of rewards for believers include Dan. 12:2; Matt. 6:20-21; 19:21; Luke 6:22-23; 12:18-21, 32, 42-48; 14:13-14; 1 Cor. 3:8; 9:18; 13:3; 15:19, 29-32, 58; Gal. 5:9-10; Eph. 6:7-8; Col. 3:23-24; 1 Tim. 6:18; Heb. 10:34, 35; 11:10, 14-16, 26, 35; 1 Peter 1:14; 2 John 8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12; cf. also Matt. 5:46; 6:2-6, 16-18, 24; Luke 6:35.

⁵⁵ Grudem, 1145.

⁵⁶ Eph. 2:8.

⁵⁷ Eph. 2:10.

please the Lord Who desires them to work well. Horton says that motives (especially love) and faithfulness seem to be the most important characteristics⁵⁸ in determining whether one's work is judged as "gold, silver, costly stones" or "wood, hay or straw," as described in 1 Cor. 3:12.⁵⁹ Good, faithful, and wholehearted work done for the Lord will surely survive the test of fire and be rewarded in eternity, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 3:12-15. Christians having a firm conviction of these biblical truths will be further motivated to perform their work duties wholeheartedly unto the Lord and for the people God desires to serve.

The Lasting Effects of Work in Eternity

Besides the biblical truth that one's work will be remembered by God on Judgment Day, some theologians say that one's work has a lasting effect in eternity as it helps to form the "final" Kingdom. Christians desire meaningful work, which comes from work seen as service rendered to God, accomplishing His purposes as coworkers with Him, with results that outlast their mortal lives.⁶⁰ Whether one views work done on earth as being everlasting and remaining throughout eternity on the new earth depends upon three particular factors: one's view of the goodness of the current world, eschatology, and the new earth to come.

View that the World is Good

If one views the world as good, then the potential exists for man to achieve dominion by working hard and ruling and subduing the earth as God originally commanded. Psalms 24:1 says, "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." Additionally, a good world opens the possibility of helping to establish the final Kingdom on this earth through

⁵⁸ Matt. 25:21, 23; Luke 12:43; 1 Cor. 13:3; Col. 3:23-24; Heb. 6:10.

⁵⁹ Horton, 632.

⁶⁰ Miroslav Volf, "God at Work," *Word & World* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 391-92.

human work. Alternatively, others view the earth as Adam's fallen world and thus people will never be able to fully rule and subdue the earth and achieve dominion, as God commanded Adam.⁶¹ Not even the great and wise King Solomon could fully exercise dominion in a lasting way, as he also lived under the curse in a fallen creation under judgment. Solomon describes work as frustrating and futile, but work is also a gift that people can enjoy.⁶² In its present condition, the world does not seem conducive for man to build gradually the final Kingdom without revolutionary changes accompanying the dramatic return of Christ.

View of Eschatology

Eschatology plays a role in whether work has eternal value. The purpose of "Christian mission" is "to transform reality around it," according to missions expert David Bosch.⁶³ Depending upon one's view of eschatology, or millennialism in particular, the object emphasized for "transforming" varies: premillennialists emphasize saving the individual soul—focusing on the personal—transforming the individual; and postmillennialists emphasize saving society—focusing on the social—transforming society.⁶⁴ Most premillennialists "saw little hope for society before Christ returned to set up his kingdom";⁶⁵ therefore, the Social Gospel and social transformation seemed futile and unwarranted. Their emphasis has been on personal salvation and often includes transformation of personal behaviors. "Post-millennialists believe that the Saints, empowered by the Holy Spirit, will bring in the great harvest and build the Kingdom, preparing the way for Jesus' glorious return."⁶⁶

⁶¹ Tony Payne and David Hohne, "Work: The Big Picture," *The Briefing* 176, June 1996, under "From Dominion to Toil," <http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk/cgi-bin/caw.cgi?&page=resources&rescode=271> (accessed April 19, 2009).

⁶² *Ibid.*, under "Ecclesiastes—Solomon's Toil."

⁶³ Bosch, xv.

⁶⁴ Miller, 24-25.

⁶⁵ Bosch, 318.

⁶⁶ Hammon, 227.

According to Miller, premillennialists have increasingly “moved toward a hybrid position, gradually accepting the importance of saving society, as well as souls.”⁶⁷ Evangelicals have had to struggle between the two biblical mandates of evangelization in the Great Commission⁶⁸ and social concern in the Great Commandment.⁶⁹ While evangelization has had priority over the years, consensus has been reached at the 1974 Lausanne conference and ultimately at the 1983 World Evangelical Fellowship for Evangelicals to include both evangelism and social transformation in its church mission statement.⁷⁰ Thus, humans participate in God’s work as they serve both souls and society. Most within the differing millennial views “believe that God will establish a new Earth surrounded by Heaven where the Saints will work, rule and live with Christ forever [Isa. 65:17-25].”⁷¹

View of the New Earth

Both a view of the goodness of the earth and eschatology culminate in the third essential criteria for determining if work has eternal value: one’s view of the new earth. Scripture is clear that there will be “a new heaven and a new earth,”⁷² but there are two theories as to how this will come about. John F. Walvoord holds that “the present earth and heaven are destroyed and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth”⁷³ by an “act of new creation” and not by renovation.⁷⁴ J. D. Pentecost also holds this view,⁷⁵ and Horton leans toward this view.⁷⁶ The alternative theory, held by Herman A. Hoyt, is that God will form a new heaven and earth by a

⁶⁷ Miller, 41.

⁶⁸ Matt. 28:19-20.

⁶⁹ Matt. 22:37-39.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 42.

⁷¹ Hammon, 227.

⁷² Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13; Is. 65:17, 66:22.

⁷³ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (1966; repr., Chicago: Moody, 1978), 305.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 311.

⁷⁵ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology* (1958; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 561.

⁷⁶ Horton believes the present earth “probably” will be “replaced by a new one,” not renovated (636).

“change or rearrangement” of materials in the present heaven and earth.⁷⁷ W. A. Criswell also holds this view and says “this earth is our home forever and forever into the ages of ages,”⁷⁸ since the new heaven and new earth will be the same heaven and earth as now but will be “redeemed,” “regenerated,” “renovated,”⁷⁹ “remade, washed, cleansed and purified.”⁸⁰ Reformed scholars hold this view that the “present creation will be renewed,” and Grudem believes this view is preferable, “for it is difficult to think that God would entirely annihilate his original creation” that was originally declared “very good.”⁸¹ Further, Paul Enns argues that strong evidence exists for “continuity” between the millennium and the eternal state.⁸² Analogous to the previous findings, Andrew McDearmid says, “The scholars I have consulted are about equally divided between the two theories.”⁸³

Theologians’ Assessment on Work Surviving in Eternity

Whether or not the current earth will remain throughout eternity is crucial in the thinking of recent theological developments concerning work by Volf, Goosen, and Cosden, who argue that work has eternal value as a means of establishing the new creation. “If the world will be annihilated and a new one created *ex nihilo*, then mundane work has only earthly significance,” according to Volf, and “human work is devoid of direct ultimate significance.”⁸⁴ Instead, Volf argues for the eschatological transformation of the world, where many human works will be “cleansed from impurity, perfected, and transfigured to become a part of God’s new creation.”⁸⁵

⁷⁷ Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times* (1969; repr., Winona Lake: BMH, 1995), 224.

⁷⁸ W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation: Five Volumes Complete and Unabridged in One* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 5:106.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 5:106-07.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 5:112.

⁸¹ Grudem, 1160.

⁸² Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 2008), 387.

⁸³ Andrew McDearmid, *Eschatology: A Study Guide*, 1980 (Irving: ICI UP, 1995), 181.

⁸⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (1991; repr., Eugene: Wipf, 2001), 89.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

In opposition to the “annihilationist view,”⁸⁶ Goosen reiterates, “Positive and redeemed work will continue into eternity (not just any work).”⁸⁷

In addition to God redeeming the immaterial soul, God will also redeem material bodies and the physical creation, as a corollary to the Incarnation that established the goodness and importance of material creation.⁸⁸ According to Goosen, “Just as the material world shared in man’s Fall, so too it is called to participate in the new heaven and new earth.”⁸⁹ Creation groans in anticipation (Rom 8:22) of being reconciled and transformed (Col. 1:20) into the new creation. According to Volf and his graduate school mentor Jürgen Moltmann, the new creation should always be the concern of the Christian faith that is insistently eschatological.⁹⁰

Cosden in *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* strongly believes that all work and the things produced by work “can be transformed and carried over by God into heaven.”⁹¹ Furthermore, “Ordinary work affects and in some ways actually adds to (though it does not cause, determine or bring about) the ultimate shape of eternity—the new creation.”⁹² According to Cosden, Christians should value what God values, which are those things that He will save eternally.⁹³ Arguing from Jesus’ Resurrection of His material body, Cosden says that, “in addition to people, human work and the material creation are to be part of God’s salvation.”⁹⁴ Some may feel that work is exerted and then gone forever, but just as “God can raise and

⁸⁶ “Annihilationist view,” here, means a belief that God will destroy the current earth by His judgment in preparation for the creation of a new heavens and a new earth “out of nothing.”

⁸⁷ Gideon Goosen, *The Theology of Work*, Theology Today Series 22 (Hales Corners: Clergy Book Service, 1974), 75.

⁸⁸ James M. Roseman, “Toward a Theology of Work and Business: Reflections on Christianity, Calling, and Commerce,” (October 3, 2003), 13, <http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/Towards1.pdf> (October 20, 2007).

⁸⁹ Goosen, 74.

⁹⁰ Mark Oppenheimer, “Miroslav Volf Spans Conflicting Worlds,” 2003, under “Miroslav Volf Spans Conflicting Worlds,” <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2688> (accessed April 19, 2009), repr. of *The Christian Century*, January 11, 2003, 18-23.

⁹¹ Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (United Kingdom: Paternoster P, 2006; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006), 2.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

transform the dead,” he can also “raise and transform all present and even past (decayed and gone) earthly realities” from work, which He then purifies and integrates into the fabric of the new creation.⁹⁵ If work does last beyond a person’s mortal life and does contribute to the world to come, as Volf, Goosen, and Cosden contend, then such labor has further significance, purpose, and value to people who work. Further, work will continue to be performed by saints in eternity.

Work in Eternity

Although there is a facet of work that ends when this life ends,⁹⁶ there will also be work in eternity, described as serving⁹⁷ and reigning.⁹⁸ The tasks for which God assigns in eternity will not have the toilsome effects of the Fall as the curse will be removed, according to Rev. 22:3. Wilbur M. Smith says “there will be a number of activities in heaven which will be a continuation of our labor for Christ here on earth, without, of course, exhaustion, weariness or failure.”⁹⁹ Gordon Kirk believes work in eternity will be like it was prior to the Fall and illustrates this future work as being like a fun hobby that one enjoys doing.¹⁰⁰ According to Goosen, “There are no images in the Bible to suggest a heaven of glorious immobility,” an idea influenced by Greeks whose idea of a perfect state is “immobile, unchangeable, and static.”¹⁰¹ The most frequent image for heaven is that of a wedding feast, which is not a passive event but a joyous celebration.¹⁰² Heaven will have a perfect balance of contemplation and activity.

⁹⁵ Cosden, 114-15.

⁹⁶ Rev. 14:13, John 9:4.

⁹⁷ Rev. 22:3.

⁹⁸ Rev. 22:5.

⁹⁹ Wilbur M. Smith, *The Biblical Doctrine of Heaven* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1968), 192.

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Kirk, “A Theology of Work: Our Work as an Aspect of our Worship” (sermon, Lake Avenue Church, Pasadena, CA, August 1, 2004), LAC Sermons Online, Real Audio file, <http://www.lakeavefamily.org/audio/wc/2004/20040801wc.rm> (accessed April 7, 2007).

¹⁰¹ Goosen, 75.

¹⁰² Ibid.

Although biblical descriptions of eternity are scarce, there are enough pictures “to excite anticipation for this glorious future.”¹⁰³

Two Views of Future Life

With the few descriptions and pictures given in the Bible about the future life coupled with an overall theological understanding of the Bible, Christians have generally held two views concerning the future life. The first view focuses “on the fulfillment of the believer’s relationship with God and see[s] worship and praise as the primary if not exclusive activities of heaven.”¹⁰⁴ The second view, “while not excluding worship, tend[s] to emphasize reunion with family and friends, social relationships, and activities of service and work.”¹⁰⁵ John Jefferson Davis does a good job arguing a case in his essay that “there will be *new work* for the redeemed people of God to do in the New Creation, and that worship will be a central but not the exclusive activity in the world to come.”¹⁰⁶

God Works in New Creation and so Will Saints Who are Made in His Image

Since the New Creation is a creation of God, God will continue to work by sustaining the New Creation.¹⁰⁷ Further, “God’s essential nature as a free, creative, and omnipotent being will never change throughout eternity; God the Creator will still be creative in the New Creation.”¹⁰⁸ Davis reasons further saying, “Since man, as the image of God, was created to mirror the nature and works of God, it follows that if God continues to work in acts of creation and providence, redeemed humans in the New Creation will continue to reflect the Creator by caring for fellow

¹⁰³ Hoyt, 241.

¹⁰⁴ John Jefferson Davis, “Will There Be New Work in the New Creation?” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31, no. 3 (July 2007): 258.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 257.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 259.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 260.

creatures and by engaging in new, creative acts of art, invention, culture, and worship.”¹⁰⁹ Work was given to man prior to the Fall, so work is not inherently burdensome or a punishment, but it is “a privilege and opportunity to reflect the character, activity, and creativity of the Creator.”¹¹⁰ Since work is inherently good and was given to man in the original creation, and since “the New Creation is the fulfillment of God’s original intention,” God will restore His original intention of work for humans in the New Creation, and thus new work will be a feature of the new world to come.¹¹¹ Although the New Creation will not need God’s work of redemption, His work as Provider and Sustainer will continue since humans, animals, and plants will remain as creatures, which, “by definition, have needs that must be met by others.”¹¹² Only God is totally independent and self-sustaining; “all creatures depend on God and, secondarily, on other creatures for their existence, life, and health.”¹¹³ Humans can once again participate in God’s work of providence by creatively meeting the needs of others and caring for the New Creation.

Heaven on Earth in a Restored Garden of Eden

Because of the Fall in the Garden of Eden, a curse was placed upon the earth by God in Gen. 3:17-18, but in eternity there will “*no longer be any curse*,” as stated in Rev. 22:3. To remove the remnants of the curse, God will purge the existing heavens and earth¹¹⁴ and create a “*new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells*,”¹¹⁵ which is the “final preparatory act anticipating the eternal kingdom of God.”¹¹⁶ “This passing of the present earth is anticipated

¹⁰⁹ Davis, 260.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 261.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 262.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ 2 Pet. 3:10, 12; Rev. 21:1.

¹¹⁵ 2 Pet. 3:13.

¹¹⁶ Pentecost, 561.

in a number of passages (Matt. 24:35; Heb. 1:10-12; Rev. 20:11).¹¹⁷ Dave Hunt believes that endless life will reside not on earth but in heaven¹¹⁸ which he describes as “a new universe of absolute perfection”¹¹⁹ or of “bliss.”¹²⁰ “Many Christians often talk about living with God ‘in heaven’ forever.”¹²¹ However, since Jesus Christ will be dwelling among His people in eternity,¹²² J. D. Pentecost concludes that “the eternal abode of the church” will be “in the new earth, in that heavenly city, New Jerusalem,”¹²³ where a merging takes place of heaven and earth in the new creation.¹²⁴ Randy Alcorn calls this the “New Earth ‘Heaven,’” since the “Earth will become Heaven—and it will truly be Heaven on Earth,” where God dwells.¹²⁵ Hoekema agrees with Pentecost saying “the resurrection of the body calls for a new earth.”¹²⁶ Bruce Ware agrees and reasons that since the saints will have bodies in heaven, therefore they must be back on earth, inhabiting the new earth, which will be the “Garden of Eden restored—restored but better.”¹²⁷ Rev. 22:2 mentions the presence of the “tree of life,” which is motif that John draws from the creation account to suggest that heaven (on the new earth) is a restoration of the Garden of “Eden, when God dwelt with humanity in harmony.”¹²⁸

¹¹⁷ Pentecost, 552.

¹¹⁸ Dave Hunt, *Whatever Happened to Heaven?* (Eugene: Harvest, 1988), 305.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 307.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 308.

¹²¹ Grudem, 1158.

¹²² Rev. 21:2-3; John 14:3; 1 Thess. 4:16-17.

¹²³ Pentecost, 562.

¹²⁴ Grudem 1158.

¹²⁵ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 184.

¹²⁶ Hoekema, 184.

¹²⁷ Bruce Ware, “The Doctrine of Last Things (Part 1),” lecture for TH504-25 Systematic Theology 2, Biblical Training, MP3 Audio file. http://www.biblicaltraining.org/audio/TH504/theology_2_25_Systematics_2_25-low.mp3 (accessed April 8, 2009).

¹²⁸ Alister E. McGrath, *A Brief History of Heaven* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 11.

Eternity is not Idleness but is Worship and Work

Pentecost says, “Our occupation in the eternal state will not be with our position or glory but with God, Himself.”¹²⁹ Just as work was part of paradise in Genesis—not idleness, C. J. Mahaney emphasizes, “Eternal life is not going to be eternal idleness. . . . It will not be boring, it will not be repetitious, and it will not involve idleness. There will be a work involved because it is part of the character and nature of God as a creator and because God works and because we are made in His image, we will want to work too!”¹³⁰ Horton describes eternal life as “a place of joy, of fellowship with Christ and other believers, and resounds with worship and singing (Rev. 4:10-11; 5:8-14; 14:2-3; 15:2-4)”¹³¹ and then notes that Loraine Boettner indicates that “rest” mentioned in Rev. 14:13 does not mean idleness or inactivity but “carries with in the idea of satisfaction in labor or joy in accomplishment.”¹³² According to Criswell, “Every indication points to our increasing responsibilities in a New Jerusalem” and gives an example of the parable of the pounds where the Lord blessed faithful men and placed them in authority over cities.¹³³ Moreover, “In that celestial civilization each man shall have his place according to his faithfulness in this world and in this life.”¹³⁴ Commenting on Jesus’ servants who serve Him in Rev. 22:3, Walvoord says, “This is a picture of blessedness in service rather than of arduous toil.”¹³⁵ Hoyt says, “The attitude of worship will permeate every aspect of activity and employment.”¹³⁶ Hoyt mentions three areas of responsibility and development engaged in by the redeemed: “the area of administration requiring the exercise of wisdom,”¹³⁷ “the area of

¹²⁹ Pentecost, 582.

¹³⁰ C. J. Mahaney, *Why Work?* Quest Tape of the Month, QT161, Audiocassette, [Washington D.C.,] 1991.

¹³¹ Horton, 611.

¹³² Horton, 611n35.

¹³³ Criswell, 5:132.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Walvoord, 331.

¹³⁶ Hoyt, 241.

¹³⁷ Rev. 22:5.

exploration requiring the gift of investigative curiosity (Rev. 21:24, 26),” and “the area of creative and productive.”¹³⁸ Similarly, Grudem supposes “people will work at the whole range of investigation and development of the creation by technological, creative, and inventive means, thus exhibiting the full extent of their excellent creation in the image of God.”¹³⁹ Regardless of the kind of activities assigned, the tasks will surely bring great fulfillment and happiness to the worker.

Conclusion

The study of last things, or eschatology, is a fascinating subject for many people. “Eschatology brings to front and center the ultimate destiny of people.”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, this paper showed that a person’s view of millennialism and of the Final Judgment will affect one’s work today on earth, since there is a correlation between one’s view of eschatology and one’s work attitudes and behaviors. Further, this paper showed that biblical eschatology deals with various aspects of a theology of work. It showed that much of human work might have lasting effects in the eternal state and that work activities will exist in the eternal state of heaven on earth.

Theologians categorize views that explain the return of Christ and His reign into three main systems: amillennialism, postmillennialism, and premillennialism. Those who hold a premillennial view expect Christ to return soon to establish a future intermediate earthly kingdom. Dispensational Premillennialists especially expect Christ’s return to be imminent, and without warning, and thus Christians should be faithfully working according to God’s desires since Christ could come back at any moment and the opportunity for the church to witness will be ended and the opportunity to work and earn rewards in heaven will have ended too. From this

¹³⁸ Hoyt, 242.

¹³⁹ Grudem, 1162.

¹⁴⁰ Ware.

perspective, premillennialism encourages diligent, faithful work and service to God and for people needing spiritual assistance. However, premillennialists tend to have a narrow mission to win souls for Christ and discourage involvement in social action, supporting the “status quo,” and do not emphasize work on projects involving social change. In general, premillennialism has been more pessimistic about society and its future status prior to Christ’s return, whereas amillennialism is more optimistic and postmillennialism is very optimistic about the impact the gospel can make long-term in society. Postmillennialism and amillennialism see the present church age as representing the intermediate kingdom, and thus they are willing to work toward the betterment of society as they see this as part of God’s desire and plan on earth prior to Christ’s return. In addition to millennial views affecting one’s work, a person’s view of the Final Judgment also affects one’s work.

“For believers, the final judgment is an incentive to faithfulness and good works, not as a means of earning forgiveness of sins, but as a means of gaining greater eternal reward. This is a healthy and good motive for us—Jesus tells us, ‘Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven’ (Matt. 6:20)”¹⁴¹ Most consider this present creation as fleeting and that only those works done for Christ will last in eternity in God’s memory, to be rewarded with treasures in heaven on the new earth, which will last forever. Thus, a firm conviction that Christ will reward believers in various degrees in the future for faithful work done for Him will certainly affect one’s work attitudes and behaviors now. Work will be rewarded in eternity.

“Many Christians think of themselves as spending eternity in some ethereal heaven while the Bible plainly teaches us that there will be a new earth.”¹⁴² Some theologians believe that much of human work may resonate in the new earth. According to them, God will preserve work

¹⁴¹ Grudem 1148.

¹⁴² Hoekema, 184.

that is redemptive and transformational, when it is done in accordance with God's purposes. Yet, if God destroys the old earth and the new earth is created "from nothing," then the notion of work having a contribution in the new creation becomes invalid. However, if Goosen, Volf, and Cosden are correct in saying that the new creation will be a transformation of the old creation and that God will raise human work and purify it to shape eternity, then each person's work has eternal value and meaning in God's sight and in the new earth. Regardless, God will certainly preserve each person's work in His memory and reward the works with an inheritance by the Lord.¹⁴³

The final main section of this paper carried on a discussion about the aspects of work that will be performed in eternity, in the new heavens and new earth, or the "New Earth 'Heaven,'" as Alcorn calls it, since Heaven will be merged with the Earth.¹⁴⁴ Contrary to the belief of many, there will be work in heaven on earth. God will still be working to sustain the new creation, and saints are created in God's image as creative workers. Furthermore, just as the Bible starts with Adam and Eve working in the Garden of Eden by the "tree of life" in the first two chapters of Genesis, the Bible concludes with the last two chapters of Revelation with creation restored to its original intent, with humanity taking dominion of creation and serving one another, beside the "tree of life" in an Eden-like environment. Heaven on earth will not be boring, but it will be filled with opportunities to creatively develop the resources through "work" that is fun and enjoyable. With such a long-range view of work discussed in the Bible, one's work attitudes and behaviors should line up with God's will, which is that people do all kinds of work diligently and faithfully unto Christ for as long as one is able, or until Christ returns.

¹⁴³ Col. 3:23-24.

¹⁴⁴ Alcorn, 184.

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