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Theology of Work and Its Practical Implications:
Work has Significance When Connected to God

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OUTLINE

Theology of Work and Its Practical Implications: Work has Significance When Connected to God

Thesis: Does human work have a divine purpose, meaning, and significance for those who labor, according to the Bible? This paper will explore a theology of work and its practical implications.

- I. Introduction
 - A. Contemporary view of work and need for Christian meaning in work
 - B. Significant “theology of work” writings and approaches
 - C. Thesis and main aspects of a theology of work
 - D. Transition paragraph into body of paper
- II. Aspects of a “theology of work” that provide meaning for human workers
 - A. Definition of *work*
 - B. God is a worker
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 - D. Creation Mandate—Divine command for man to work, in partnership with God
 - E. Work did not originate from the Fall, but sin distorted work in the Fall
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 - i. Current world is seen as good or bad
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 - A. Good “theology of work” books support thesis, but more scholarly works needed
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Theology of Work and Its Practical Implications: Work has Significance When Connected to God

Almost all adults work in some way—whether they serve as doctors, computer programmers, teachers, businessmen, pastors, janitors, caretakers of dependents, or homemakers. Yet, 86% of workers are “not satisfied with their job,” and 82% are “unhappy with their work/life balance,” according to a news release in 2004.¹ Many workers feel unfulfilled and frustrated in their work, including Christians. Work can be boring, mundane, stressful, and insignificant. Many do not see a bigger purpose for their work than simply earning money or meeting temporal needs of those served. While satisfying the needs of self and community are necessary, these purposes are ultimately unfulfilling if one does not sense a connection with God’s purposes. Christians often feel that they waste the majority of their time on things that really do not matter in the grand scheme of God, and if they really loved God and people, they feel they should dedicate their lives wholeheartedly to God and minister to the spiritual needs of people on a full-time basis.

Most workers do not see a connection between what they do and what they believe God wants done in the world. A theology of work is necessary to see work from God’s perspective and to realize that one’s work is significant to God. Through the years, many have had a misconception that, in order for a person to be fully pleasing to God and serving Him, one has to go into full-time Christian work by becoming a monk, a nun, a pastor, a missionary, a teacher of the Bible, a worship leader, or by performing some other ministry work. Since most people spend a majority of their waking hours at work, it is critical that Christians see their work as having significance to God and furthering His purposes on earth; otherwise frustration results. 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.² These meaningful connections appear in a proper theology of work.

Although scholars have discussed the subject of work periodically throughout the centuries, the term “theology of work” first appeared around 1949,³ 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.⁴ Many of these books emphasize co-creationism, where man participates with God in His continuous work of creation. Some writers present different approaches to a theology of work. For example, Charles Ringma lists the three approaches identified by the French Jesuit, Joseph Thomas: the penitential, the creationist, and the eschatological.⁵ According to James M. Roseman, a good Christian theology of work rests on a “three-legged stool” that emphasizes key theological categories: the theology of creation, the theology of anthropology, and the theology of the Incarnation.⁶ This paper takes into account most of these notable approaches to a theology of work.

In exploring a theology of work, this paper answers in the affirmative the thesis question: Does human work have a divine purpose, meaning, and significance for those who labor, according to the Bible? After giving both a common and broad definition for *work*, this paper presents the main aspects of a theology of work that contribute meaning to workers. First, God is a worker, and thus work is inherently good and meaningful. Second, God created humankind in the image of God who works. Third, man works according to a divine command, the Creation Mandate. Fourth, while sin distorted work in the Fall, work did not originate in the Fall as a curse for mankind. Fifth, God is interested in co-working with humankind in the transformation of society as well as personal redemption. Sixth, much of human work may resonate in the new earth. Work is full of significance when connected with God.

To sum up the essence of the biblical teaching on work in a reasonable way, Robert Tamasy eloquently writes the following:

Work is sacred. It was ordained by God from the beginning, before the fall of man. After the Fall, it just got tougher, frustrating, exhausting, sometimes even boring. But work pursued with excellence and integrity is still pleasing to God, a way of honoring Him by serving in the unique ways He has equipped us. Our work often provides the opportunities to proclaim Him to a broken, unredeemed world—through our example, as well as by our words.⁷

Work is a gift from God to humanity, to share in His nature and His purposes for civilization.

In defining *work*, society and authors often refer to *work* as “paid employment.” While the Bible addresses this aspect of work, the Bible also uses words for work that encompass broader definitions that embrace dominion over nature, service to others, and all productive activity. Geldard defines work in this broader way as “the investment of one’s energy in dominion over nature and the service of others.”⁸ Stevens also defines work in a broader way as “purposeful activity involving mental, emotional or physical energy, or all three, whether remunerated or not.”⁹ As a result, businesspersons, manual laborers, homemakers, volunteers offering services, and God are all individuals who work. The Bible discusses aspects of work.

The first aspect of a theology of work that provides meaning for human workers is that God Himself is a worker, and thus work has intrinsic value. God was the first worker Who created, designed, fashioned, engineered, molded, and constructed the entire universe. The Bible says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The first two chapters of Genesis show God actively at work, creating all that exists, and His work is characterized as “good” (Gen. 1:10, 12, 18, 21, 25) and “very good” (Gen. 1:31). Yet God continues to work even after the initial week of creation. Paul acknowledges God in Christ as creator of all and that “in Him all things hold together” (Col. 1:17). The psalmist declares that God “who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep” (Ps. 121:4). Jesus said, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself

am working” (John 5:17). Thus, to sum up the biblical references, Paul Minear aptly says, “The God of the Bible is pre-eminently a worker.”¹⁰

God’s activities associated with creating the heavens and the earth and all their hosts describe His “work” (*mela’khah*) in Gen. 2:2. This same Hebrew word is used to describe man’s work in the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:9-10), thus showing a connection. Throughout the Bible, God describes his initial and ongoing work using images from the world of human work. Robert J. Banks explores sixteen of these in his eight-chapter book, *God the Worker*, including God as composer and performer, metalworker and potter, garment maker and dresser, gardener and orchardist, farmer and winemaker, shepherd and pastoralist, tentmaker and camper, builder and architect.¹¹ These images are very helpful in connecting one’s work on earth with the kind of work God does. Therefore, unlike some societies in history that devalued work because their pseudo-gods favored contemplation instead of activity, work on earth has dignity because the almighty God works.

The second aspect of a theology of work that provides meaning for human workers is that God created humankind in the image of God Who works, and thus humans have a nature to work. God, Who works, created man in His image: “Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness’ . . . And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Gen. 1:26-27). God did not create any other creature in God’s image. Pope John Paul II rightly says, “*Work is one of the characteristics that distinguish man from the rest of creatures, whose activity for sustaining their lives cannot be called work. Only man is capable of work.*”¹² The capacity to work is certainly a key characteristic of man and should be a prominent feature of the image of God along with the more customary features.

With reference to passages found later in the Bible, the image of God can refer to “righteousness and holiness” (Eph. 4:24) and to beings that are “free, rational, capable of self-appreciation and self-expression, [and] capable of moral and spiritual understanding.”¹³ “While [Sayers] accepts that a case may be made for the divine image being found in the ‘immortal soul,’ ‘rationality,’ or ‘self-consciousness’ (all of these quite traditional locations of the *Imago Dei*), she argues that the author of Genesis had none of these in mind.”¹⁴ As Sayers mentions in *The Mind of the Maker*, the main thing known about God in the first twenty-six verses of Genesis chapter 1 is that God creates, and since verse 27 says man and woman are created in the image of God, then a main characteristic shared by God and humanity is that of being creative, which Sayers calls “the desire and the ability to make things.”¹⁵ Clearly, humankind does not create things out of nothing, *ex nihilo*, as God does.¹⁶ Explaining Sayers’s view, Harrison says, “God retains the capacity to bring into existence from non-existence, while humans can only order that which already possess being.”¹⁷ Thus, since creative work is part of God’s nature and character, creative work is also a part of man’s nature and character. To work is to express the nature of God, which is meaningful.

The third aspect of a theology of work that provides meaning for human workers is that God gave a divine command for man to work, in partnership with Him to accomplish His purposes, also called the Creation Mandate. Throughout the Scriptures, the Bible shows work to be a divine ordinance for human life.¹⁸ In Gen. 1:28, God commanded Adam and Eve to “fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over” all living things. The words “subdue” and “rule” imply active work and, according to Doorey, “responsible dominion.”¹⁹ Mackenzie and Kirkland say this verse places a stewardship role upon humans whom God calls to work with Himself to further His purposes. “Because of this, the value and significance of our work is directly related to how

connected it is with God's work."²⁰ Part of God's work is providentially caring for the earth and its people; in a practical sense, God uses people and entrusts them with this purposeful work.

The Bible gives the creation mandate to manage the earth's resources and meet human needs in Gen. 1:28. The Bible further expresses this in Gen. 2:15 as "God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it." The Hebrew word for "cultivate" or "till" is *avadh*, meaning to work or to serve, and the word "keep" means "taking pains 'to care for.'"²¹ Thus, man came into partnership with God: God planted the garden (Gen. 2:8), and man cultivated it (Gen. 2:15).²² In addition to working in and caring for the garden, God gives man the enjoyable intellectual activity of naming the animals (Gen. 2:19). God made woman to help man in his God-given tasks (Gen. 2:18). Commenting on Gen. 2:15-19, Horton says, "Adam was given work to do, such as cultivating, trimming and caring for the garden (otherwise the garden could have become a jungle). This work would be healthy and also a joy, thus, God made him a responsible being sharing in part of the work of taking care of God's creation."²³ The mandate given to man was to share in God's work and be His coworkers and partners, cooperating with God according to His purposes. Such work carries significance and meaning.

Although work prior to the Fall was surely different, and certainly enjoyable, a few writers take the position that such work was not considered labor. To an extreme, French layman Ellul holds that Adam did not really work prior to the Fall, at least not in the current sense of the word: "rather he plays. All is given to him by God."²⁴ Although most English versions translate Gen. 2:15 to say that God put man in the garden "to work it and take care of it," Sailhamer prefers Cassuto's translation "to worship and to obey."²⁵ In Hugenberg's scholarly article on Gen. 2:15, he lists four arguments they use for such a translation; then he provides six detailed arguments against their translation overwhelmingly in favor of the traditional translation by analyzing Hebrew grammar and biblical references.²⁶ Although the nature of work was different

prior to the Fall, the Bible shows that man was given responsibility for purposeful, active work as a coworker with God.

In addition to the creation narratives affirming the call of God for man to work,²⁷ the Bible shows work to be a divine ordinance in many other parts of the Scripture. The fourth commandment recognizes that man's nature is to work; he is to work six days (Exod. 20:9) and rest on the seventh. According to Richardson, this commandment surely means, "an honest week's work is every man's duty."²⁸ Additionally, Ps. 104:23 recognizes that man works at his labor until evening. The book of Proverbs is full of exhortations for diligent work and warnings against idleness: "Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise" (Prov. 6:6). Several New Testament Scriptures show work as a moral duty and reveal the attitude Christians should have in their work: Col. 3:22-4:1; Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9; and 1 Pet. 2:18-25. Thus, work is a divine ordinance and command, carrying with it purpose and meaning from the greatest employer.

The fourth aspect of a theology of work that provides meaning for human workers is the realization that work did not originate from the Fall, but was instituted by God prior to it; thus work is not a curse. However, because of man's sin, work was distorted in the Fall. God declared in Gen. 3:17-19: "Cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground." Commenting on Gen. 3:17-19, Horton says, "God put a curse on the ground (not on Adam). What had been pleasant work would now become toil, often unrewarding, often difficult because of thorns and thistles."²⁹ The curse came upon the soil, the work field that man is to cultivate, but Goosen says it also affects all kinds of work—mental and physical as seen in Matt. 13:3-23, 24-30; Gal. 4:11; and Isa. 43:24.³⁰ Drudgery and monotony now characterize all manual, mental, and spiritual

work.³¹ When Gen. 3:19 says, “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread,” Harrison says, “suddenly, human survival comes to depend upon work and productivity.”³² Furthermore, God evicts man from the Garden of Eden, according to Gen. 3:23, “to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.” Clearly, man had to work hard after the Fall.

Some would contend that work is a result of the Fall and part of the curse. To substantiate this argument, some have argued that man did not really work prior to the fall but played, as Ellul says,³³ or he worshipped and obeyed, as Sailhamer and Cassuto believe.³⁴ Therefore, according to Ellul, work is a consequence of the Fall³⁵ and thus has no intrinsic value and cannot be regarded as a vocation or a calling of God. Yet, almost all English Bible versions and theologians properly translate the early Genesis verses to say that man was working prior to the Fall. According to Bystrom, “It is important to emphasize the dignity of work today because many believe Christianity teaches that it is the penalty for sin or God’s retaliation for our rebellion. . . . Most biblical exegetes acknowledge that work is not the legacy of the Fall, only its character as toil.”³⁶ Man worked prior to the Fall, and in spite of man’s rebellion causing the task of work to become more difficult, God continues to require man to work after the Fall—the divine ordinance will continue to stand to the end of history.³⁷ Work is certainly less meaningful when viewed as a curse upon humankind instead of originating as an ordinance from God. With a proper understanding that work originated from God prior to the Fall and that God desires people to still work according to His purposes, work becomes meaningful and significant. In addition, according to Kirkland, the Fall does not change the Creation Mandate; instead, it adds a further responsibility to humans’ role as coworkers, and now mankind assists God in His redeeming work, which includes the restoration of creation to God’s original intention.³⁸

The fifth aspect of a theology of work that provides meaning for human workers is that God is redeeming and transforming all of creation and man gets to partner with Him in this

divine purpose. God is in the process of redeeming not just souls but also all of creation. As Mackenzie and Kirkland say, “He intends to transform and redeem everything and everyone—all that he brought into being”³⁹ as mentioned in Paul’s letters to the Romans (8:18-23), Ephesians (1:9-12), and the Colossians (1:15-20). An overall theme in Colossians, according to Lusk, is the preeminence of Christ and that God is reconciling all things to Himself through Jesus (Col. 1:20), and the latter part of the letter shows some of the areas to be reconciled: husbands and wives (3:18-19), children and parents (3:20-21), employees and employers (3:22-25, 4:1).⁴⁰ God has committed Himself to saving the whole creation, and He is interested in working toward that end even now.⁴¹ Thus, man cooperates in God’s work when he helps to redeem and transform creation, which includes evangelism—leading people to a personal faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord. “Everything we do to counter or reverse the effects of the Fall is a participation in God’s redeeming and transforming work and looks forward to the completion of that work.”⁴²

As centuries have passed, types of work have changed and made work a bit easier. Although a Utopia will not be established by means of technological or socio-political advances, Richardson says “It is not wrong to attempt by means of technological or other improvements to reduce the sheer drudgery of labour; surely the contrary is true, that it is our Christian duty to remove in any way we can ‘the curse of Adam’, to eradicate the ‘thorns and thistles’ and to wipe off the ‘sweat’ from the face of man.”⁴³ Though God will not remove the curse fully until after Jesus returns (Rev. 22:3), Christ’s death on the cross affects every area of life: because of His redemption, “work as a blessing prevails over work as a curse.”⁴⁴ Gordon Kirk says, “Work can be redeemed, even in the fallen world. Anything that helps us overcome the effects of the pain, the hardship, the difficulty, is part of this redemption. Work itself retains some of the quality of the curse, but the attitude of the worker [in Christ] can transform the work.”⁴⁵ Mahaney agrees that transforming one’s attitude will transform one’s job that may be boring and repetitious, and

he says that transformation of one's attitude comes by understanding the transcendent God who created people and His gift of work and His command to work and its purposes.⁴⁶ Any work on earth that emulates God's work, such as redemption and transformation, carries significance, purpose, and meaning for the worker. Three factors contribute to whether or not a person views human work as helping to form the "final" Kingdom: one's view of the goodness of the current world, eschatology, and the new earth to come.

The sixth aspect of a theology of work potentially gives work an eternal purpose if the effects of work remain throughout eternity on the new earth, which depends on three factors, one of which is how one views the current world. 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 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.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.

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.⁴⁹ Depending upon one's view of eschatology, 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.⁵⁰ Most premillennialists “saw little hope for society before Christ returned to set up his kingdom”;⁵¹ 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.”⁵²

According to Miller, premillennialists have increasingly “moved toward a hybrid position, gradually accepting the importance of saving society, as well as souls.”⁵³ Evangelicals have had to struggle between the two biblical mandates of evangelization in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) and social concern in the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-39). 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.⁵⁴ 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].”⁵⁵

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” (Rev. 21:1; 2 Pet. 3:13; Isa. 65:17, 66:22), but two theories exist as to how this will come about. Walvoord holds that “the present earth and heaven are destroyed and will be replaced by the new heaven and new earth”⁵⁶ by an “act of new creation” and not by renovation.⁵⁷ J. D. Pentecost also holds this view.⁵⁸ The alternative theory, held by Hoyt, is that God will form a new heaven and earth by a “change or rearrangement” of

materials in the present heaven and earth.⁵⁹ Criswell also holds this view and says “this earth is our home forever and forever into the ages of ages,”⁶⁰ since the new heaven and new earth will be the same heaven and earth as now but will be “redeemed,” “regenerated,” “renovated,”⁶¹ “remade, washed, cleansed and purified.”⁶² Analogous to the previous findings, McDermid says, “The scholars I have consulted are about equally divided between the two theories.”⁶³

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.”⁶⁴ 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.”⁶⁵ Goosen reiterates, “Positive and redeemed work will continue into eternity (not just any work).”⁶⁶

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.⁶⁷ 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.”⁶⁸ Creation groans in anticipation (Rom 8:22) of being reconciled and transformed (Col. 1:20) into the new creation.

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.”⁶⁹ 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.”⁷⁰ According to Cosden, Christians should value what God values, which are those things that He will save

eternally.⁷¹ Arguing based on 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.⁷² Some may feel that work is exerted and then gone forever, but just as "God can raise and 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.⁷³ If work does last beyond a person's mortal life and does contribute to the world to come, there is further significance, purpose, and meaning in such labor.

In conclusion, it is encouraging seeing the growth of the number of published books and journal articles on "theology of work." Yet, different scholars in this field rightly express a need for more academic writings on a theology of work.⁷⁴ From the discussion of various aspects of a theology of work in this paper, people can recognize the practical implications that work is meaningful, purposeful, and significant in the eyes of God. Work becomes most significant when it goes beyond just working for one's own needs or for society's needs, to working for God and with God to meet the needs of society and one's self. When connected with God, work is significant, for God is a worker and imparts purpose and meaning into work.

Recognizing and appreciating implications of a theology of work is crucial for workers—accountants to zoologists—to see their work as "more than a job."⁷⁵ For the Bible's teaching on work to be relevant to all people, writers must broaden the cultural definition of work as "paid employment" to include home duties, voluntary workers, and unemployed people who are utilizing their gifts in service to others. Furthermore, all people are expected to work, and the Bible gives no indication that work is to be avoided in life; instead, it is given as a divine command to Adam, a regulation in the Mosaic Law, an admonition in the Wisdom literature and in Paul's letters, and as an example of Jesus' early life as a carpenter.⁷⁶ All who work can and should see their work as having a divine purpose, meaning, and significance.

Work matters to God because it is His nature to work. God created the universe and keeps it going through work. Because God works and calls His work “good,” work is intrinsically good. He also created humankind in His image and thus they also have a nature to work; therefore, their work has dignity. God then gave man a command to work purposefully for Him and with Him in cooperation—the Creation Mandate. Work in cooperation with God is very meaningful. Contrary to the thoughts of some, the biblical evidence points to the fact that humankind worked prior to the Fall, and thus work is not a curse upon mankind, but instead work is a gift from God that carries purpose. In God’s providence of sustaining creation, all legal and moral jobs, careers, and tasks have significance to God. God gives all people the opportunity to be co-workers with God, to bring about His purposes on earth, which includes personal redemption and societal transformation.

According to some theologians, such redemptive and transformational work done in accordance with God’s purposes, God will preserve in the world to come. Yet, if God destroys the old earth and the new earth is created “from nothing,” as in the annihilationist view, 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 (Col. 3:23-24). Because God instituted work, made man to work, commands man to work, enables man to work along side Him for His purposes, and establishes and rewards work, there is significance and meaning in human work.

Christians desperately need to know that their work matters to God and that it connects to what God wants done in this world. As a model example, Jesus always did what He saw the

Father doing (John 5:19). Preece aptly says, “By seeing our work in the light of God’s work, we can see God’s hand in our everyday tasks.”⁷⁷ God’s work is a model for people; and one’s work should connect with God’s work. Christians will have a sense of purpose and fulfillment in their work, in part, to the degree in which they see their work as a reflection of God’s work on the earth. The work of pastors, evangelists, and apologists seems to connect readily to God’s own work as Redeemer. Yet, “the work God does is far broader than Christ’s work of reconciling people or helping them grow together in faith and obedience.”⁷⁸ While redemption is central in God’s plan for man, “God is also Creator, Sustainer, Preserver, Provider, Revealer, and Lawgiver.”⁷⁹ Therefore, when people perform some work that emulates God’s work, they feel a connection, as a doctor may reflect God’s desire and work to heal people. In essence, whenever anyone is serving the real needs of people, spiritual or physical, he or she is reflecting God’s work of providentially meeting the needs of society; thus work becomes meaningful, purposeful, and significant. A person should then be able to say, “My work is God’s work.”⁸⁰

 NOTES

¹ Nancy R. Smith, introduction to *Workplace Spirituality: A Complete Guide for Business Leaders* (Peabody: Axial Age, 2006), xiii.

² Miroslav Volf, “God at Work.” *Word & World* 25, no. 4 (Fall 2005): 391-92.

³ 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.

⁴ The following are significant writings on theology of work over the past six decades: Dorothy L. Sayers, “Why Work?” in *Creed or Chaos?* (1949; repr., Manchester: Sophia, 1974), 63-84; Josef Pieper, *Leisure, the Basis of Culture*, trans. Gerald Malsbary, (1948; repr., South Bend: St. Augustine’s, 1998); J. H. Oldham, *Work in Modern Society*, (1950; repr., Richmond: John Knox, 1962); Alan Richardson, *The Biblical Doctrine of Work*, Ecumenical Biblical Studies no. 1, (1952; repr., London: SCM, 1954); Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics: III.4 The Doctrine of Creation*, ed. G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance, trans. A. T. Mackay, T. H. L. Parker, H. Knight, H. A. Kennedy, and J. Marks (London: T & T Clark, 2004), Vol. 3, Part 4, originally published as *Die Kirchliche Dogmatik III: Die Lehre von der Schopfung 4*, (Zurich: Zollikon, 1951); 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]); Edwin G. Kaiser, *Theology of Work* (Westminster: Newman P, 1966); Gideon Goosen, *The Theology of Work*, Theology Today Series 22 (Hales Corners: Clergy Book Service, 1974); Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976); Paul Marshall, “Vocation, Work, and Jobs,” in *Labour of Love: Essays on Work*, by Paul Marshall, Edward Vanderkloet, Peter Nijkamp, Sander Griffioen, and Harry Antonides (Toronto: Wedge, 1980), 1-19; John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter on Human Work: Laborem Exercens*, trans. Vatican (Boston: Pauline, 1981); Dorothee Soelle with Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (1987; repr., Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1988); M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of this World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990); Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (1991; repr., Eugene: Wipf, 2001); Leland Ryken, *Redeeming the Time: A Christian Approach to Work & Leisure* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995); Gary D. Badcock, *The Way of Life: A Theology of Christian Vocation* (Eugene: Wipf, 2002); 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); Alistair Mackenzie and Wayne Kirkland, *Where’s God on Monday? Integrating Faith and Work Every Day of the Week* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2003); Armand Larive, *After Sunday: A Theology of Work* (New York: Continuum, 2004); Douglas J. Schuurman, *Vocation: Discerning Our Callings in Life* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,

2004); Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (Eugene: Wipf, 2005); Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (United Kingdom: Paternoster P, 2006; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006); and David H. Jensen, *Responsive Labor: A Theology of Work* (Louisville: Westminster, 2006).

⁵ Charles Ringma, "Tensions in a Theology of Work," July 1998, under "Doing Theology by Careful Listening and Reflection," <http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk/cgi-bin/caw.cgi?&page=resources&rescode=233> (accessed October 20, 2007). The penitential views work as a curse for original sin and as persistent suffering. The creationist views work as the result of the Genesis mandate to subdue the earth (Gen 1:26-28) and to cultivate and care for it (Gen. 2:15). In the eschatological, work is seen as human effort that contributes towards God's final kingdom in the world to come.

⁶ James M. Roseman, "Toward a Theology of Work and Business: Reflections on Christianity, Calling, and Commerce," October 3, 2003, 10-15, <http://www.dbu.edu/naugle/pdf/Towards1.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2007). A theology of creation views God as a worker in Gen. 1-2 and creates man to work and have dominion over creation. A theology of anthropology emphasizes the *Imago Dei*, or the Image of God in man (Gen. 1:26-27), and the common nature to work. In the theology of the Incarnation, emphasis is on showing the significance of God taking on human form (John 1:14), which shows God's positive view of the material realm and His intent to redeem all of creation and not just immaterial souls and thus people should work toward the transformation of creation.

⁷ Robert J. Tamasy, introduction to *Jesus Works Here*, ed. Tamasy (Nashville: Broadman, 1995), 3.

⁸ M. D. Geldard, "Work," in *Encyclopedia of Biblical & Christian Ethics*, rev. ed., ed. R. K. Harrison (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 444.

⁹ R. Paul Stevens, 107.

¹⁰ Paul S. Minear, "Work and Vocation in Scripture," in *Work and Vocation: A Christian Discussion*, ed. John Oliver Nelson (New York: Harper, 1954), 44.

¹¹ Robert J. Banks, *God the Worker: Journeys into the Mind, Heart and Imagination of God*, North American ed. (1992; repr., Valley Forge: Judson, 1994).

¹² John Paul II, 5.

¹³ *Where We Stand: The Official Position Papers of the Assemblies of God*, (Springfield: Gospel, 2003), 106.

¹⁴ William H. Harrison, "Loving the Creation, Loving the Creator: Dorothy L. Sayers's Theology of Work," *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 251-52,

<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=13117223&site=ehost-live> (accessed October 22, 2007).

¹⁵ Dorothy L. Sayers, *The Mind of the Maker*, (1941; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 1979), 22.

¹⁶ Peter Stuart, "Christians in the Workplace: A Practical Theology of Work," Latimer Occasional Paper No. 6. (Christchurch, New Zealand: Latimer Fellowship. Nov. 2000), 3, <http://www.latimer.org.nz/downloads/theology-work.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2007).

¹⁷ Harrison, 252.

¹⁸ Richardson, 24.

¹⁹ Julian Doorey, "Faith in the Work Place," *Reality Magazine*, 38 (2000), under "'Added Value Work' by Humans," <http://www.reality.org.nz/articles/38/38-doorey.html> (accessed October 20, 2007).

²⁰ Mackenzie and Kirkland, 19.

²¹ Thoralf Gilbrant, ed., *The Old Testament Hebrew-English Dictionary*, vol. 7 of *The Complete Biblical Library: The Old Testament Hebrew-English Dictionary*, ed. Thoralf Gilbrant (Springfield: World Library, 2000), 340.

²² Sherman and Hendricks, 82.

²³ Stanley M. Horton, *The Old Testament Study Bible: Genesis*, vol. 1 of *The Complete Biblical Library: The Old Testament*, ed. Thoralf Gilbrant (Springfield: World Library, 1994), 29.

²⁴ Alistair Mackenzie, "Faith at Work: Vocation, the Theology of Work and the Pastoral Implications," (master's thesis, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, 1997), 57.

²⁵ John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 45.

²⁶ Gordon P. Hugenberg, "Is Work the Result of the Fall? A Note on Genesis 2:15," (Sept. 2002), 2-9, <http://www.parkstreet.org/pulpit/Work-Genesis2.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2007).

²⁷ Geldard, 443.

²⁸ Richardson, 29.

²⁹ Horton, 39.

³⁰ Goosen, 65-66.

³¹ Oldham, 50.

³² Harrison, 255.

³³ Mackenzie, 57.

³⁴ Sailhamer, 45.

³⁵ Ellul, 496.

³⁶ Raymond O. Bystrom, "God as Worker: How it Affects Life and Ministry," *Direction* 32, no. 2 (Fall 2003): 168, 171n8, <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1306> (accessed October 20, 2007).

³⁷ Richardson, 28-29.

³⁸ Wayne Kirkland, "God's Co-workers," *Reality Magazine*, 38 (2000), under "Developing a more biblical view of work," <http://www.reality.org.nz/articles/38/38-kirkland.html> (accessed October 20, 2007).

³⁹ Mackenzie and Kirkland, 28.

⁴⁰ Rich Lusk, "God and Work, Part 2: God Working Through Us, God Working Against Us (Col. 3:22-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-13; Prov. 6:6-11)" (sermon, Trinity Presbyterian Church, Birmingham, AL, June 5, 2005), Trinity Presbyterian Church Sermon Index, MP3 Audio file, <http://www.trinity-pres.net/audio/sermon05-06-05.mp3> (accessed September 29, 2007).

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Mackenzie and Kirkland, 28.

⁴³ Richardson, 28.

⁴⁴ Donald J. Isaac, "Work and Christian Calling," *Direction* 32 (2003): 186, <http://www.directionjournal.org/article/?1308> (accessed October 20, 2007).

⁴⁵ 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 September 29, 2007).

⁴⁶ C. J. Mahaney, *Why Work?* Quest Tape of the Month, QT161, Audiocassette, [Washington D.C.,] 1991.

⁴⁷ David Hohne and Tony Payne, “The Big Picture,” [c. 2000], under “From Dominion to Toil,” <http://www.christiansatwork.org.uk/cgi-bin/caw.cgi?&page=resources&rescode=271> (accessed October 20, 2007).

⁴⁸ Hohne and Payne, under “Ecclesiastes—Solomon’s Toil.”

⁴⁹ David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, American Society of Missiology Series 16. (1991; repr., Maryknoll: Orbis, 2005), xv.

⁵⁰ David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (New York: Oxford UP, 2007), 24-25.

⁵¹ Bosch, 318.

⁵² Bill Hammon, *The Day of the Saints: Equipping Believers for Their Revolutionary Role in Ministry*, (2002; repr., Shippensburg: Destiny, 2003), 227.

⁵³ Miller, *God at Work*, 41.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁵⁵ Hammon, 227.

⁵⁶ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, (1966; repr., Chicago: Moody, 1978), 305.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 311.

⁵⁸ J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come: A Study in Biblical Eschatology*, (1958; repr., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1977), 561.

⁵⁹ Herman A. Hoyt, *The End Times*, (1969; repr., Winona Lake: BMH, 1995), 224.

⁶⁰ W. A. Criswell, *Expository Sermons on Revelation*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1966), 106.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 112.

⁶³ Andrew McDearmid, *Eschatology: A Study Guide*, 1980 (Irving: ICI UP, 1995), 181.

⁶⁴ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 89.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

⁶⁶ Goosen, 75.

⁶⁷ Roseman, 13.

⁶⁸ Goosen, 74.

⁶⁹ Cosden, *Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 2.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid., 33.

⁷² Ibid., 53.

⁷³ Ibid., 114-15.

⁷⁴ See the following for statements about the need for more academic writings on a theology of work: M. D. Chenu, 2-4; Seward Hiltner, "Needed : A New Theology of Work," *Theology Today* 31, no. 3 (October 1974): 247, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000748108&site=ehost-live> (accessed October 22, 2007); Keith Harper, review of *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work*, by Miroslav Volf, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 36 (September 1993): 386, <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000282041&site=ehost-live> (accessed October 22, 2007); Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit*, 69; Curtis Chang, "Work as Sacrament," June 4, 2004, 2, <http://www.the-river.org/resources/Work-as-sacrament.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2007); Jim Lewis, "A Theology of Work," *The Witness*, 2003, 1, <http://www.thewitness.org/generalconvention03/TheologyOfWork.ps-.pdf> (accessed October 20, 2007); Larive, 7; Os Hillman, *God in the Workplace*, DVD, (FaithAndWorkResources.com, 2005); and Miller, *God at Work*, 101.

⁷⁵ Brian D. McLaren, "3 Mandates to Theology of Work," *The Washington Times*, February 21, 2005, <http://www.washtimes.com/culture/20050220-100703-6270r.htm> (accessed April 13, 2007).

⁷⁶ Stuart, 5.

⁷⁷ Gordon Preece, "Work," in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity: An A-To-Z Guide to Following Christ in Every Aspect of Life*, ed. Robert J. Banks and R. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 1124-25.

⁷⁸ Bystrom, 169.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

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