

**More than Rulers:
Rethinking Genesis 1:26-28 and Our Work**
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Introduction

In his book, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation*, Darrell Cosden observes, “Although theological reflection on work is as old as Christian theology itself, the concept of a ‘theology of work’ is a quite recent development.”¹ He traces the phrase, “theology of work,” to the middle of the 20th century, when Catholic theologians coined the phrase “as a new way toward a theological understanding of the nature and meaning of work.”² Since then, many resources in many forms have been produced in order to help Christians better understand the relationship between their faith and their daily work. This proliferation of faith and work resources does not appear to be waning. In some ways, this is good. As new challenges arise in the many enterprises in which Christians are employed, and as new and familiar challenges arise in our greater culture, the people of God should intentionally reflect upon and engage these challenges from a biblical and theological framework.³ There are some challenges as it relates to developing a theology of work itself, though. For example, while the current faith and work discourse applies to certain types of professional jobs and industries, it might not apply well to working-class and blue-collar jobs and industries.⁴ While there are various answers as to why

¹ Darrell Cosden, *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation* (2004, Repr., Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 4.

² Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 5.

³ Regarding theological anthropology in particular, Marc Cortez comments that “it is a task that is never complete; indeed, it is a task that *cannot* be completed.” He continues by observing that it “is a task that every generation is called to understand anew; in every age, theological anthropology must begin anew.” *Theological Anthropology: A Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2010), 8-9. I utilize Cortez’s thinking in a parallel fashion with the theology of work; as each passing generation and any given culture is confronted with changes and new challenges, it is imperative that fresh theological reflection be applied to these adjusting circumstances.

⁴ Jeff Haanen, “God of the Second Shift: The Theology of Work Conversation is Thriving. Why are Most Workers Missing from it?” *Christianity Today*, 62 no. 8 (Oct 2018): 34-41.

this is the case, one that must be considered is how faith and work discourse interprets and applies the Bible to matters of human work. We must continue giving proper reflection to the theological and biblical foundations for a theology of work in ways that are truly theologically anchored and rooted in faithful interpretation of the biblical text, and do so in a way that is meaningful for those working in all jobs and industries.

It does not take long for one to recognize the importance of Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 in the current faith and work discourse. Books on faith and work use these passages for biblical and theological support; seminary courses emphasize their use when explaining and contextualizing a theology of work; and faith and work initiatives rely upon them as a foundational starting point when explaining and applying a theology of work.⁵ It is important to use biblical and theological scholarship to cross-examine the faith and work discourse's use of these passages. For this reason, we will consider theology of work literature's use of Genesis 1:26-28 in light of John Kilner's *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God*.⁶ Kilner's book challenges assertions made by the current faith and work discourse. We will then consider theology of work literature's use of Genesis 2:15 in light of Gregory Beale's *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*.⁷ These findings will provide a platform to make observations and suggestions for how the church and the academy can faithfully steward faith and work discourse together. In particular, regarding matters of theological anthropology, further developing a theology of work that works for all people.

⁵ For example, TH672 - Theology of Work, and TM500 - Introduction to Mentored Formation, are courses at Denver Seminary that utilize Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15. As well, the 5280 Fellowship of the Denver Institute for Faith and Work builds upon Genesis 1-2 as a primary biblical and theological foundation.

⁶ John F. Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny: Humanity in the Image of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁷ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004).

Kilner's Argument in *Dignity and Destiny*

According to Stanley Grenz, the historically dominant view of what it means to be made in God's image is "*Imago Dei* as structure," whereby the image of God is seen as "referring to certain characteristics or capacities inherent in the structure of human nature."⁸ This is affirmed by Kilner, who does an in-depth critique of four primary characteristics historically affirmed as defining what it means to be made in God's image: "reason, righteousness, relationship, or rulership."⁹ He argues that no one characteristic of God's character should define what it means for humanity to be created in God's image because "human attributes have more to do with the purposes and consequences of being *in* the image of God than with what actually defines being in God's image. Attributes are evidence of what it would look like to manifest God's image fully."¹⁰ While this image will involve demonstrating particular attributes such as rulership, rationality, relationship, and righteousness, equating the image with one of these characteristics does not reflect the biblical account as a whole, and leads to potentially harmful conclusions. Regarding each of the four above-mentioned characteristics, Kilner provides the following arguments.

First, *reason* has been considered either "a component of being in God's image" or "a starting point for understanding the image."¹¹ This view often disassociates the image of God from a person's physical body, and emphasizes "a different dimension of human existence, variously called humanity's personhood, soul, mind, or spirit,"¹² limiting the constitution of the

⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 142.

⁹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 177. Kilner does not base these four categories on historical interpretations of Genesis 1:26-28 alone. He bases these categories on historical interpretations of the image of God as seen in Genesis 1:26-28; 5:9; 9:6; 1 Corinthians 11:7; and James 3:9. These four categories will later provide the interpretive lens through which we will consider theology of work literature's use of Genesis 1:26-28.

¹⁰ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 104.

¹¹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 179.

¹² Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 180.

image of God to these elements. The influence of Greek thought on the Western world has contributed to this particular connection, according to Kilner, even though the references to God's image in Genesis "[provide] little evidence that the author is trying to make a statement or affirmation about reason."¹³

Second, Kilner shows that equating *righteousness* to the image of God is also not what the biblical texts indicate. This particular view sees "being in God's image [as] about how people are excellent, how they are like God, and/or how they are unlike animals."¹⁴ The implications of this line of thinking also lead to some potentially destructive applications such as not treating criminals with dignity or evaluating people's worth based on a potentially arbitrary set of externally observed behaviors. A person's dignity and worth should not be determined by how excellent they are or are not.¹⁵ Even if it is assumed that Christ's excellence is attributed to a person because they are in Christ, this would mean that all people who are not in Christ would not be considered in the image of God. While this view was popular among Reformers such as Calvin and Luther¹⁶ and other historical figures such as Owen, Edwards, and Wesley,¹⁷ this perspective is also not portrayed in the biblical texts that address the topic of the image of God.

Third, Kilner argues that being made in God's image should not be equated with *relationship*. Some have held to this view because Genesis 1:26-27 describes how God created both men and women in His image and for relationship with each other, and others look to Genesis 2 for this relational connection.¹⁸ Kilner argues against this view because sin has

¹³ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 182.

¹⁴ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 190.

¹⁵ Kilner describes excellence in terms of people having a certain "moral capacity" or being "like God;" *Dignity and Destiny*, 190.

¹⁶ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 189.

¹⁷ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 190.

¹⁸ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 215.

damaged relationships but it has not damaged the image, and as well, though relationships occur to varying degrees, Scripture does not portray the image in varying degrees.¹⁹

The fourth interpretive category is *rulership*.²⁰ Many have read Genesis 1:26-28 and correlated the commands to subdue the earth and to have dominion over creation with the image of God. This view often draws from “the ancient Near Eastern backdrop . . . with its connection between kings and images.”²¹ Related to our current study, Kilner observes that a significant implication of this view relates to human work.²² This has led many to focus on humanity’s need to shape culture and exercise authority as God’s co-creators in the world.²³ Kilner posits that “support for a rulership concept of what it means today for people to be in God’s image can involve more cultural than biblical influence.”²⁴

While there is a connection to rulership in the Genesis 1:26-28 passage, Kilner provides three primary arguments for why image-as-rulership is not a faithful interpretation of the passage. 1) Because rulership is not a point of emphasis in the other biblical passages that refer to the image of God we should not conclude that rulership in and of itself is what it means to be created in God’s image.²⁵ If rulership, or any other intrinsic quality, were the definition of being an image bearer, the Scriptures should emphasize this elsewhere, but they do not. 2) Reductionist thinking, whereby the image is thought of primarily in terms of rulership, could lead us to believe that angels, demons, and even Satan himself are created in the image of God because of their exercise of authority and dominion as seen in passages such as John 12:31 and Ephesians

¹⁹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 216.

²⁰ As will be demonstrated below, this *rulership* category is the primary interpretation of theology of work literature, and will therefore be expanded upon here more so than the first three characteristics.

²¹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 200.

²² Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 200-1.

²³ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 201.

²⁴ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 205.

²⁵ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 202-3.

6:12.²⁶ 3) Sin's presence has damaged humanity itself, but not the image. This means sin has damaged our understanding and any demonstration of authority and rulership, but the image itself is undamaged. Kilner observes, "Although God has always intended for humanity to exercise godly rulership over all creation, Hebrews 2:8-9 explains that this comprehensive rulership is 'not yet . . . but we do see Jesus.'"²⁷ In this way, Kilner attempts to understand the image of God as seen throughout the canonical record and not just from Genesis 1:26-28.

If the image is not one of these four characteristics, what is it? The drumbeat throughout Kilner's book is that of intent: "God's image is about God's *intentions* for humanity, not ways that people are actually like God."²⁸ This intent for humanity is a blueprint of sorts. It is something that is extrinsic to the person rather than intrinsic. God's intention is specifically for humanity to be connected to Him in a unique way and reflect Him to the rest of creation.²⁹ This connection and reflection applies both to all of humanity collectively, and to each individual person as part of the whole.³⁰ While connecting to God in a special way and reflecting Him in a meaningful way³¹ may include demonstrating the above-listed characteristics to varying degrees at different times, humanity as created in the image of God is primarily about intent. Kilner bases his understanding on the Hebrew term, *tselem*, which the original biblical audience would have understood within their own culture. As well, the use of the Hebrew preposition translated as "according to" in Genesis 1:26-27 leads many to believe that people themselves are not the image of God, but are rather made in or according to His image, thus indicating intent: "The

²⁶ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 204. See also pp. 100f.

²⁷ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 204.

²⁸ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 204 (emphasis added).

²⁹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 54-5; 58-62; 118-21; 286f.

³⁰ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 306. Regarding a corporate understanding of the image of God, Kilner observes, "Contemporary readers can easily miss this point if they are located in societies like the United States that emphasize individualism, personal freedom, and autonomy," 85.

³¹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 54

basic idea here is that God has a likeness-image, and God has created people with that in view. It is a standard for what God intends humanity ultimately to be.”³² Kilner summarizes this point, observing that the likeness-image concept “involves humanity’s special *connection* with God, which makes it possible for humanity to become a meaningful *reflection* of God.”³³

Theology of Work Literature’s Use of Genesis 1:26-28

Having lined out Kilner’s argument in *Dignity and Destiny*, we will now turn our attention to considering how theology of work literature has used Genesis 1:26-28. Regarding how I organize theology of work literature, I draw from and adapt Cosden’s three classifications of theology of work literature: “systematic theology,” “focused studies,” and “ethical/contextual” studies.³⁴ Systematic theology resources sometimes look at how a theology of work is incorporated as a subtopic or application of other theological doctrines within the framework of “comprehensive theological treatises.”³⁵ Focused studies start with a theology of work as the primary subject of reflection. The particular focus might be theological, Biblical, pastoral, or sociological in nature, but the goal is to offer a greater understanding of work from a Christian perspective.³⁶ Ethical/contextual studies are works that reflect on work “indirectly while attempting to explore or resolve other pressing ethical issues.”³⁷

Using Cosden’s classifications as a model, the three categories of theology of work literature specifically explored in this paper will be referred to as: *focused*, *situational*, and *contextual* studies. The *focused* study literature will be the same as Cosden has defined above.

³² Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 92. For a broader conversation regarding the use of the Hebrew preposition in Genesis 1:26-27, see 88-92.

³³ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 114 (emphasis original).

³⁴ Cosden. *A Theology of Work*, 37-9.

³⁵ Cosden. *A Theology of Work*, 38.

³⁶ Cosden. *A Theology of Work*, 39.

³⁷ Cosden. *A Theology of Work*, 39.

These will be resources that specifically explore work itself or aspects of work from a Christian perspective as their primary focus. Examples of this category are Cosden's *A Theology of Work*, Miroslav Volf's *Work in the Spirit*,³⁸ R. Paul Stevens' *The Other Six Days*,³⁹ and Timothy Keller and Katherine Alsdorf's *Every Good Endeavor*.⁴⁰ For the *situational* studies, I will use a nuanced definition of Cosden's ethical/contextual studies, focusing primarily on works that address how people engage work. These resources will not simply focus on the ethics of work, but also the manner in which people engage their work. Examples of works in this category are Jeff Van Duzer's *Why Business Matters to God*,⁴¹ Judith Allen Shelly's *Not Just a Job*,⁴² and William E. Diehl's *The Monday Connection*.⁴³ The third research category will be what I call *contextual* studies. These are resources that have a primary focus other than work itself, but within which work is a subsidiary focus placed within the context of the resource's primary focus. For example, Andy Crouch's *Culture Making*⁴⁴ has a broader focus than just work, but work is a significant subsidiary topic. Other examples include Christopher J. H. Wright's *The Mission of God's People*,⁴⁵ and Lesslie Newbigin's *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*.⁴⁶

A survey of the theology of work literature written from 1980 to the present reveals that Genesis 1:26-28 is an important biblical passage used to support a theology of work.⁴⁷ Of the

³⁸ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1991).

³⁹ R. Paul Stevens, *The Other Six Days: Vocation, Work, and Ministry in Biblical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁴⁰ Timothy Keller and Katherine Leary Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Riverhead, 2012).

⁴¹ Jeff Van Duzer, *Why Business Matters to God (And What Still Needs to Be Fixed)* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2010).

⁴² Judith Allen Shelly, *Not Just a Job: Serving Christ in Your Work* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1985).

⁴³ William E. Diehl, *The Monday Connection: On Being an Authentic Christian in a Weekday World* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991).

⁴⁴ Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008).

⁴⁵ Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010).

⁴⁶ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

⁴⁷ In my research, I did not necessarily look for these three verses when referenced as a whole, but rather for any or all of these three verses within theology of work literature. For example: Wolters cites Genesis 1:28 only

eighty-five sources surveyed, sixty-one either directly referenced or alluded to this passage as it relates to humanity being created in the image of God. Twenty-eight out of thirty-one focused study resources surveyed either directly reference or allude to this passage. Of the thirty-one situational study resources surveyed, seventeen either directly reference or allude to this passage. Twenty-three contextual study resources were surveyed, and sixteen either directly reference or allude to this passage. When looking only at these numbers it is clear that focused studies in particular place a stronger emphasis on humanity being created in the image of God than situational and contextual studies. What this confirms is that when reflecting and writing on work from a theological perspective, the image of God passage from Genesis 1 is an important biblical foundation. While this passage is found in the majority of situational and contextual studies, its lack of frequency in comparison with focused studies indicates that it is still important, but the image of God may not have been a support for the particular point or points being made within a particular resource as it relates to work.

Having considered how often Genesis 1:26-28 is used within theology of work literature, it will now be helpful to consider *how* the image of God is referenced in the works that allude to or directly reference these verses. In order to categorize the use of the image of God, I will establish an interpretive lens to evaluate how the image of God is described and applied within theology of work literature. To do so, we will need to look at the dominant historical interpretations of the image of God because they have influenced contemporary interpretations of what it means for humanity to be created in the image of God. To do this, we will utilize Kilner's four categories of reason, righteousness, relationship, and rulership.

in *Creation Regained: Biblical Basics for a Reformational Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 36; Keller and Alsdorf cite at different points Genesis 1:26b, 28, and 28b in *Every Good Endeavor: Connecting Your Work to God's Work* (New York: Riverhead, 2012), 35, 46; and Nelson quotes Genesis 1:26-28 in its entirety in *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 21.

First, we consider *reason*. This particular interpretation of the image of God was not found in the theology of work literature surveyed and was not relevant to this study. Second, *righteousness* was not found as the primary interpretation of the image in any of the theology of work literature surveyed. It was, however, partially represented in two of the resources, which are discussed below in the image-as-rulership section. Third, *relationship* was found as the primary interpretation in three of the resources surveyed and as a partial interpretation in six of the resources surveyed: *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*⁴⁸ and *A Theology of Work: Work and the New Creation*,⁴⁹ both by Darrell Cosden, and *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation*, by Dorothy Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes.⁵⁰

Cosden argues that work is more than instrumental in and of itself and that the image of God should be understood first in terms of relationship. He does not deny that there is an instrumental aspect of being made in the image of God, but that the instrumental nature of work is based on who we are in relationship to: “theologically, it is important to consider a thing’s function in light of its relationship to the ultimate, that is, to God.”⁵¹ In this way, Cosden starts with ontology and then moves to function, as opposed to starting with function and then trying to determine ontology. There are particular relationships explored by Cosden: people with each

⁴⁸ Darrell Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006).

⁴⁹ Cosden, *A Theology of Work*.

⁵⁰ Dorothee Soelle and Shirley A. Cloyes, *To Work and to Love: A Theology of Creation* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984). Soelle and Cloyes provide some insight into the image-as-relationship interpretation, but they do so in a different manner than Cosden. While including a chapter in their book entitled “Created in God’s Image,” Genesis 1:26-28 is not referenced, but instead, Isaiah 58:6-12 is used to support their thoughts. They claim that “anyone whose anthropology begins with the individual is not in harmony with the biblical tradition. We are made, created together. It is within our social existence that all the affirmations of the good creation are made, questioned, become true,” 30.

⁵¹ Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 93-4.

other,⁵² people with Christ,⁵³ people with God,⁵⁴ and people with the rest of non-human creation.⁵⁵ Ultimately, according to Cosden, people do not find their identity as God’s image bearers in work itself, but rather in relationship to God. This is then expressed in our work as we relate to each other and the material world around us: “Our relationship with God, our imaging him, is our essence as humans – while the working activity is the expression and realization of that essence.”⁵⁶

Fourth, we consider the image of God as *rulership*. This particular interpretation or emphasis is found in the majority of theology of work resources surveyed. Thirty-nine resources use this as the primary or sole interpretation, and nine resources use it in conjunction with one of the other categories. As an example of how rulership is portrayed in theology of work literature, in his book, *Economic Shalom: A Reformed Primer on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing*, John Bolt describes humanity as “the crown of creation, blessed and given royal authority over the rest of God’s creatures.”⁵⁷ Specifically in regards to Genesis 1:26, 28, Bolt equates humanity’s being created in the image of God with royal positions, “We are to be kings and queens in our work.”⁵⁸ Keller and Alsdorf utilize the role of vice-regent⁵⁹ and the ideas of stewardship and trusteeship to describe the sort of rulership humanity has over creation.⁶⁰ This sort of rulership is seen as “bringing order out of chaos, creatively building a civilization out of

⁵² Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 88.

⁵³ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 88. Here Cosden connects our understanding of what it means to be made in God’s image to Christ as the fulfillment of that image, “we likewise ‘in Christ’ become participants in the completed image (what Adam was intended to be),” 88.

⁵⁴ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 89.

⁵⁵ Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 124-5.

⁵⁶ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 89.

⁵⁷ John Bolt, *Economic Shalom: A Reformed Primer on Faith, Work, and Human Flourishing* (Grand Rapids: Christian’s Library, 2013), 28.

⁵⁸ Bolt, *Economic Shalom*, 28.

⁵⁹ Keller and Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, 36.

⁶⁰ Keller and Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, 45.

the material of physical and human nature, caring for all that God has made.”⁶¹ Gillett also emphasizes the idea of stewardship, stating that men and women “are to be the ‘hands’ of the creator in what they do with the earth.”⁶²

Lee Hardy draws from historical resources to describe what it means to be made in the image of God. In describing how those in the Renaissance era thought of work, Hardy emphasizes the physicality of being created in the image of God. He writes, “To be created in the image of God meant not only possessing an intellect, but hands as well.”⁶³ As a result, “Humankind would now create a world out of nature and thus become a demigod.”⁶⁴ Utilizing Calvin’s thinking, Hardy points out that “we become most Godlike not when we turn away from action, but when we engage in it.”⁶⁵ Then drawing from the Catholic view, Hardy emphasizes the continued work of creation God has given humanity, including exercising authority “over the raw material of nature, actualizing the potentials tucked away in the world . . . [and] when we carry out this project in our own work we do something godlike. We image God.”⁶⁶

In *Work Matters: Connecting Sunday Worship to Monday Work*, Tom Nelson summarizes what it means to be created in God’s image with two purposes. First to “exercise proper dominion over creation,” and, second, to “reflect who God is to his good world.”⁶⁷ These two purposes are carried out in our work. Nelson goes on to equate being made in God’s image with the instrumental reality of work, “we have been designed to work, to be fellow workers with

⁶¹ Keller and Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, 36.

⁶² Richard W. Gillett, *The Human Enterprise: A Christian Perspective on Work* (Kansas City: Leaven, 1985), 87.

⁶³ Lee Hardy, *The Fabric of the World: Inquiries Into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 27.

⁶⁴ Hardy, *The Fabric of the World*, 27.

⁶⁵ Hardy, *The Fabric of the World*, 57.

⁶⁶ Hardy, *The Fabric of the World*, 72.

⁶⁷ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 21. Here Nelson somewhat aligns with Kilner’s proposal that the image of God is about God’s intent for humanity to reflect Him to the rest of creation.

God. To be an image-bearer is to be a worker.”⁶⁸ Ryken shares a similar sentiment regarding work’s relationship to what it means to be created in God’s image and being tasked with having dominion over creation. He points out the creative nature associated with work, “Work was creative; it declared the creature’s humanity.”⁶⁹ In his book, *Culture Making: Recovering our Creative Calling*, Crouch expands even more on the role creativity plays in humanity’s work and attributes this creativity to God’s creativity as Creator. He observes, “Genesis [1:1-26] presents God as both Creator and Ruler of the universe. Creators are those who make something new; rulers are those who maintain order and separation.”⁷⁰ According to Crouch, the dominion given to humanity is reflected through creativity.⁷¹

Hamilton emphasizes that the function of dominion results from being made in the image of God, “Genesis 1:26 presents God intending to grant *dominion*, royal rule, over the animal kingdom from the moment he decides to make man in his own image and likeness – indeed, dominion *because* made in God’s image and likeness.”⁷² While those that describe the image-as-rulership view primarily emphasize the instrumental nature of work, Shelly emphasizes the manner in which people are to carry out their work. She observes that “the dominion that God assigns to human beings in Genesis 1 is a commission to care for the earth and its inhabitants with tenderness and love, to rule the world with justice, and to make wise use of the resources he has provided.”⁷³ The characteristics of dominion are given as joyful, exciting (not boring,

⁶⁸ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 22. Others who also equate being made in the image of God with work itself: Doug Sherman and William Hendricks, *Your Work Matters to God* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1987), 81; Ben Witherington, *Work: A Kingdom Perspective on Labor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), xii.

⁶⁹ Leland Ryken, *Work & Leisure in Christian Perspective* (Portland: Multnomah, 1987), 164.

⁷⁰ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 21.

⁷¹ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 102-3.

⁷² James M. Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2017), 19 (emphasis original).

⁷³ Shelly, *Not Just a Job*, 15.

frustrating, or meaningless), making sure those within our realm have a fair deal, and wisely using the resources God has given us.⁷⁴

Along with those who hold to an image-as-rulership interpretation, there are some who draw from other interpretive positions in concert with rulership. Sherman's starting point for her overall argument in *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* is the *tsaddiquim*, the righteous people of God as described in Proverbs 11:10. Sherman emphasizes that "when the righteous prosper, their prosperity makes life better for all."⁷⁵ The righteous she is referring to are also those who have influence and power and are called upon to improve the lives of the poor.⁷⁶ Along with this emphasis on righteousness, Sherman also describes a view of the image of God as rulership as seen in her observation that "made in God's image we have talents from him and *authority* to use them. We have vocational power. And it is God's gift."⁷⁷ As well, she uses the vice-regent role to describe humanity's relationship to God because He has shared His power with Adam and Eve.⁷⁸ While Sherman does not necessarily advocate for one clear interpretation of the image of God, her emphasis on the righteousness *and* rulership is unique within theology of work literature. Harrower is another example of someone who draws from multiple interpretive categories when describing what it means to be made in the image of God, utilizing three of Kilner's four historical categories: relationship,⁷⁹ rulership,⁸⁰ and righteousness.⁸¹ It is also worth noting, in all of the ways that Genesis 1:26-28 is used within

⁷⁴ Shelly, *Not Just a Job*, 16.

⁷⁵ Amy Sherman, *Kingdom Calling: Vocational Stewardship for the Common Good* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2011), 17.

⁷⁶ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 18.

⁷⁷ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 136 (emphasis original).

⁷⁸ Sherman, *Kingdom Calling*, 136.

⁷⁹ Scott Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 39 no. 3 (2015): 220.

⁸⁰ Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," 223.

⁸¹ Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," 225.

theology of work literature, not one resource looked to other passages in the Bible regarding humanity being created in the image of God to help inform the manner in which this particular passage was being used to support particular points.⁸²

In light of Kilner's argument, and the tendency in faith and work literature to interpret and apply the image according to rulership, how might we better understand what it means to be created in the image of God as it relates to our daily work? To answer this question we must also consider the relationship between Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15. In this next section we will consider how faith and work resources written from 1980 to the present utilize Genesis 2:15. These findings will be considered in light of Gregory Beale's, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*.

Gregory Beale's Understanding of Humanity's Priestly Role

Beale demonstrates there is a temple theme in Scripture, running from the Garden of Eden to the New Heavens and New Earth as a city-temple covering the whole earth. There are implications of this temple theme as it relates to the priestly role given to humanity. Beale goes to Genesis 2:15 and shows how the two words usually translated "to cultivate/work and keep" are usually translated as "serve and guard" elsewhere in the Old Testament. The term that is translated as "cultivate" can be understood as an agricultural task when used by itself, but when

these two words (verbal [*abad* and *samar*] and nominal forms) occur together in the Old Testament (within an approximately 15-word range), they refer either to Israelites 'serving' God and 'guarding [keeping]' God's word (approximately 10 times) or to priests who 'keep' the 'service' (or 'charge') of the tabernacle (see Num. 3:7-8; 8:25-26; 18:5-6; 1 Chron. 23:32; Ezek. 44:14).⁸³

⁸² I take this as an indication that, in light of Kilner's argument, it would be beneficial for the faith and work movement to develop a theological anthropology based on a broader use of the biblical texts that speak to the image of God.

⁸³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 67. Beale cites Wenham and Walton in support of these ideas.

In essence, just as the Garden was the first archetypal temple, Adam is the first archetypal priest who served in and guarded the temple.⁸⁴ This connection is made not only from the manner in which these two terms in Genesis 2:15 are used elsewhere in contexts of worship, but also because the Garden was seen as the first archetypal temple. As a result, “the manual labor of ‘gardening’ itself would be priestly activity, since it would be maintaining the upkeep and order of the sanctuary.”⁸⁵

Similarities can also be found between the Garden scene and Solomon’s temple. In Genesis 2:16 God gives Adam the first command, or *Torah*, to not eat from a particular tree in the garden. Beale points out the parallels between this first narrative and what God commands of Solomon after the completion of the temple in 1 Kings 9:1-6. Adam was “cut off” from the garden for his disobedience to this command, and God warns Solomon that Israel will be “cut off” if they live in disobedience. Adam’s disobedience and being cut off from the garden is parallel with Israel’s disobedience and being cut off from the land of Israel. Beale points out:

This is an indication that the task of Adam in Genesis 2:15 included more than mere spadework in the dirt of a garden. It is apparent that priestly obligations in Israel’s later temple included the duty of ‘guarding’ unclean things from entering (cf. Num. 3:6-7, 32, 38; 18:1-7), and this appears to be relevant for Adam, especially in view of the unclean creature lurking on the perimeter of the Garden and who then enters.⁸⁶

This point is reinforced by what we now know of pagan temple practices. The priests in these temples were tasked with guarding the temple and killing any intruders as well as guard any sacred texts.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 68.

⁸⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 68.

⁸⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 69.

⁸⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 69.

Beale summarizes Adam's role as a "priest-king," being placed within the Garden-temple "to begin to reign as his priestly vice-regent."⁸⁸ The connection Beale makes between Adam's responsibilities within the Garden-temple not only describe him as a royal gardener and watchman, but also as a purveyor of worship.⁸⁹ Beale points out that as a result of the fall, Adam lost his priestly role and the responsibility of guarding the Garden was given to two Cherubim.⁹⁰ While the priestly role may have been stripped from Adam, the commission to fill the earth is repeated to key Old Testament characters who followed after Adam.⁹¹ Beale connects this idea to what is stated in Genesis 1:28, linking the fact that humanity is made in God's image with the priestly duties given in Genesis 2:15: "God's ultimate goal in creation was to magnify his glory throughout the earth by means of his faithful image-bearers inhabiting the world in obedience to the divine mandate."⁹²

This is comparable to what we find in Babylonian and Egyptian traditions. The physical images were signposts, letting people know who was king of that territory or region. Instead of making physical statues, God made humanity to be that physical representation to the world. With this in mind, and in light of what is stated in Genesis 1:26-28, "Adam's commission to 'cultivate' (with connotations of 'serving') and 'guard' in Genesis 2:15 as a priest-king is probably part of the commission given in 1:26-28."⁹³ As a result, the description in Genesis 2:15 is simply a continuation of the commission to subdue creation and fill the earth as those made in the image of God. Beale claims there is both a functional and ontological component of this

⁸⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 70.

⁸⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 81.

⁹⁰ Gregory K. Beale. "Eden, the Temple, and the Church's Mission in the New Creation" *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*, 48, no. 1 (March 2005): 8.

⁹¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 94-5.

⁹² Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 82.

⁹³ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 83.

image and likeness. The functional aspect was enabled by the ontological aspect.⁹⁴ Beale is not alone in this connection, citing John Walton as a proponent of this observation. Walton contends that “Adam was much more than a gardener but was to maintain the created order of the sacred space of the sanctuary. [Walton] also concludes that such maintenance indicates that the ‘cultivating’ and ‘guarding’ of Genesis 2:15 is an expression of the ‘subduing and ruling’ of chapter 1.”⁹⁵

The priestly role given to Adam in the Garden may have been lost after the fall, according to Beale, but that doesn’t mean the priestly idea was discarded altogether. Within God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel, a priestly role and function was woven into the overall economy of what it meant to be the people of God. This priestly role was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, for He is our perfect High Priest. Revelation 21:22 then presents a future reality within the New Heavens and New Earth in which there is not a physical temple building within the city because the presence of God Himself is the temple. The continuity from Genesis to Revelation is fairly straightforward in this regard. But there are two curious passages, one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament, that give indication there is something more to this temple-priest motif and God’s intention for His people within that motif.

Exodus 19:6 states, “You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” This was stated prior to when the Aaronic priesthood laws and descriptions were given. According to Beale, “the entire nation was to live in the midst of God’s presence, so that they all would become like priests before God in his temple, being intermediaries between God and the unbelieving nations.”⁹⁶ In essence, there were formal priests within the line of Aaron, but all of

⁹⁴ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 83.

⁹⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 84; see also J. H. Walton. *Genesis*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 174.

⁹⁶ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 304.

Israel was expected to be priestly in some manner as a witness to the other unbelieving nations. And in 1 Peter 2:5, 9 we read, “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ...But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession.” The priestly role was not done away with in Christ. As Peter is writing to a primarily Jewish audience who believe in Christ, the connection between Exodus 19:6 in particular, the Old Testament priestly function in general, priestly fulfillment in Christ, and a continued priestly reality for God’s people must be considered together. In light of Beale’s observations about Genesis 2:15 and Adam’s priestly role, we will now consider how Genesis 2:15 is utilized within theology of work literature.

Theology of Work Literature’s Use of Genesis 2:15

Genesis 2:15 is an important biblical passage for the theology of work. This particular verse is either directly referenced or alluded to in forty-six of the eighty-five surveyed resources. While references to Genesis 2:15 occur less frequently than references to Genesis 1:26-28, the frequency of its use indicates that it is an important passage for supporting various assertions within the theology of work. Regarding the resources that did use Genesis 2:15, twenty were focused studies, fifteen were situational studies, and eleven were contextual studies. Of the three categories of theology of work literature surveyed, focused studies was the only category that had more than half of its resources utilize Genesis 2:15 in some way (twenty of thirty-one).⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Similar to the observation made above regarding the use of Genesis 1:26-28 in focused studies, this reflects the importance of Genesis 2:15 for those who are reflecting specifically upon the integration of faith and work.

Having looked at the frequency of its use in theology of work literature, we will now observation *how* Genesis 2:15 is used.

Because we are holding theology of work literature's use of Genesis 2:15 in conversation with Gregory Beale's temple theology, I will evaluate the passage's use with two different categories: *instrumental* work⁹⁸ and *priestly* work. These two categories are used in order to help establish the point that theology of work resources often read more into this particular biblical passage rather than draw from the text itself. The *instrumental* work category is used in reference to resources that interpret Genesis 2:15 in a way that sees work as a designed instrumental function given by God to humanity. Put simply, Adam and Eve were put in the Garden for the instrumental function of working and taking care of it.⁹⁹ In this perspective, work in and of itself is not a result of the fall and is, therefore, an integral function of what it means to be human. Work is therefore instrumental. The *priestly* category is used to describe Beale's interpretation of Genesis 2:15, as described above. The terms *abad* (serve) and *samar* (guard, keep) are functional in nature, but rather than speaking to the general function of work they refer to a particular priestly function given to humanity to exercise in its work. This priestly function affirms that work is indeed a part of God's original intent for humanity, but it specifies the manner in which people are to go about their work in all of life: serving and guarding as a priest would in the temple.

Of the forty-six resources that allude to or directly reference Genesis 2:15, forty-three do so in a way that is fitting of the instrumental category described above. Theology of work literature reveals three primary ways in which work's instrumentality is emphasized. First, in

⁹⁸ Cosden, *A Theology of Work*, 10.

⁹⁹ The NIV translation uses "work it and take care of it" to translate *abad* and *samar*; the ESV translation reads, "to work it and keep it"; the King James translation reads, "to dress it and to keep it"; the Message translation reads, "to work the ground and keep it in order."

some form, each of the forty-three resources that used Genesis 2:15 indicate that work is a reality of life.¹⁰⁰ The second is that God's design for humanity to work came about prior to sin's entrance into the world.¹⁰¹ The third emphasis relates to the nature of humanity's work. Genesis 2:15 is used to describe human work in terms of stewardship,¹⁰² service,¹⁰³ being done in partnership with God,¹⁰⁴ and cultivation.¹⁰⁵

Of the forty-six resources that allude to or directly reference Genesis 2:15, three interpret Genesis 2:15 in a priestly manner. In *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, James Hamilton interprets Genesis 2:15 in light of the rest of the Pentateuch. He observes that Genesis 2:5 informs the reader that there was no one to work the ground and that:

Moses is not directly discussing Man's role, but man's function is clear from the explanatory comment that God had not yet made man, so there was not yet a man to work the ground. This unexplored explanatory comment shows that Moses assumes that his audience will understand what he declares in the near context (e.g., 1:28; 2:15): that man was made to exercise stewardship over God's world by working the land.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁰ For examples see: Paul G. Johnson, *Grace: God's Work Ethic: Making Connections Between the Gospel and Weekday Work* (Valley Forge: Judson, 1985), 55; M. Douglas Meeks, *God the Economist: The Doctrine of God and Political Economy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 137; John C. Haughey, *Converting 9 to 5: A Spirituality of Daily Work* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 33; Christian Overman, *God's Pleasure at Work: Bridging the Sacred-Secular Divide* (Bellevue: Ablaze Publications, 2009), 43; William H. Harrison, "Loving the Creation, Loving the Creator: Dorothy L. Sayers's Theology of Work," *Anglican Theological Review* 86, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 254-5.

¹⁰¹ For examples see: Kenman L. Wong and Scott B. Rae, *Business for the Common Good: A Christian Vision for the Marketplace* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011), 47; Paul Marshall and Lela Gilbert *Heaven is Not My Home: Learning to Live in God's Creation* (Nashville: Word, 1998), 28; Wayne Grudem, *Business for the Glory of God: The Bible's Teaching on the Moral Goodness of Business* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 25; Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1995), 115; David Johnson Rowe, *Faith at Work: A Celebration of All We Do* (Macon: Smyth & Helwys, 1994), 21; Michael Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place on Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 124.

¹⁰² Bolt, *Economic Shalom*, 156.

¹⁰³ Soelle and Cloves, *To Work and to Love*, 85; Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, Zondervan, 2010), 51.

¹⁰⁴ William E. Diehl, *The Monday Connection: On Being an Authentic Christian in a Weekday World* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), p. 27; Norman L. Geisler and Randy Douglass, *Bringing Your Faith to Work: Answers for Break-Room Sceptics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 22.

¹⁰⁵ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 108.

¹⁰⁶ Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, 23.

Hamilton goes on to argue that Moses' audience would have also understood the terms "work" and "guard," which "could also be rendered 'guard and serve,'"¹⁰⁷ in light of the language used throughout the book of Numbers: "subsequent encounters of the use of this language in Genesis 2:15 *cast a priestly hue* over the work that God put Adam in the garden to do."¹⁰⁸ In this way, Hamilton affirms that work is an instrumental function given to humanity prior to the fall, but emphasizes the nature of humanity's work as priestly.

Saucy observes that "work enters the biblical narrative as part of the initial paradisiacal condition to describe human actions commissioned from God to be fulfilled toward the creation."¹⁰⁹ Work is seen as intrinsic to human life. But rather than simply seeing work as an instrumental function of God's design for humanity, Saucy expands on the nature of this work. Specifically, in commenting on Genesis 2:15 he says, "in verse 15, this service (*abad*) is qualified with the broad, and *priestly idea* of 'keeping' (*samar*) the Garden."¹¹⁰ Harrower provides a final example of a priestly interpretation of Genesis 2:15. He states that "human identity is endowed with royal dignity and *priestly purpose* as image-bearers of God."¹¹¹ In the same section of the article, Harrower alludes to Genesis 2:15 by observing, "Humankind is instructed to 'dress' and 'keep' the garden. Dress involves service."¹¹² While Saucy and Harrower may not have as developed an argument as Hamilton's, both apply a priestly interpretation to the nature of humanity's work as depicted in Genesis 1 and 2.¹¹³

¹⁰⁷ Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, 24.

¹⁰⁸ Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, 24 (emphasis added).

¹⁰⁹ Mark Saucy, "Storied Work: The Eschatology Turn and the Meaning of Our Work," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 60, no. 1 (March 2017): 141.

¹¹⁰ Saucy, "Storied Work," 142 (emphasis added).

¹¹¹ Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," 223 (emphasis added).

¹¹² Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," 223.

¹¹³ It should be noted that in "Storied Work," Saucy references Beale's *The Temple and the Church's Mission* and Beale and Kim's *God Dwells among Us: Expanding Eden to the Ends of the Earth* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2014). In *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, Hamilton references *The Temple and the Church's Mission*. This is an indication that faith and work resources are already picking up on the importance of the temple and priest themes

In order to hold theology of work literature’s use of Genesis 1:26-28 and Genesis 2:15 in conversation with Beale’s temple theology, we must consider those resources that interpret these two passages in light of each other and how they do so. Of the eighty-five resources surveyed, twenty-three make a connection of some sort between the two Genesis passages. There are three primary ways in which the relationship of these two passages is described. First, Genesis 2:15 is seen as a *case study* of Genesis 1:26-28. This was the predominant connection made in the literature surveyed. Hamilton describes Genesis 2 as an “interpretive expansion on the Genesis 1 creation narrative.”¹¹⁴ Specifically, the working of the garden in Genesis 2:15 is an elaboration of God’s command for Adam and Eve to subdue the garden in Genesis 1:28.¹¹⁵ Keller and Alsdorf indicate this same sort of connection, describing Genesis 2:15 as “an elaboration of the overarching job description of Genesis 1, verse 28.”¹¹⁶ Nelson connects the “particular task” in Genesis 2:15 with the fact that “we were created with an important stewardship in mind, to cultivate creation and to keep it.”¹¹⁷ Crouch describes Genesis 2 as the depiction of “God *making room* for his image-bearers to begin to grow into the vast cosmic purpose that was disclosed in Genesis 1.”¹¹⁸ Goheen and Bartholomew refer to Genesis 1:28 as humanity’s calling and observe that in Genesis 2:15, “these two words, ‘work’ and ‘care,’ summarize the delightful calling that

found in Scripture, and the role scholarship such as Beale’s can play in further developing these themes in relationship to human work.

¹¹⁴ Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, 23.

¹¹⁵ Hamilton, *Work and Our Labor in the Lord*, 24.

¹¹⁶ Keller and Alsdorf, *Every Good Endeavor*, 44. This job description designation is also used by Darby Kathleen Ray, but attributed specifically to Genesis 2:15 in *Working: Christian Explorations of Daily Living* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 45.

¹¹⁷ Nelson, *Work Matters*, 25.

¹¹⁸ Crouch, *Culture Making*, 109 (emphasis original).

human beings have been given.”¹¹⁹ Volf describes Genesis 2:15 as “a noble expression of human creation in the image of God.”¹²⁰

The second way Genesis 2:15 and Genesis 1:26-28 are connected is through a *complementary* relationship. Two resources communicate this sort of relationship. Wright sees the two verbs in Genesis 1:26-28 (rule and subdue) complementing the two verbs in Genesis 2:15 (serve and keep), “ruling and serving creation is humanity’s first mission on earth.”¹²¹ The Theology of Work Project also seems to indicate a complementary relationship between these two passages by quoting them alongside each other and commenting, “based on these passages we could say that *everyone* is *called* to work, as long as we recognize that in this sense *called* really means ‘commanded.’¹²²

The third way these two passages are connected is in describing Genesis 2:15 as a *clarification* of Genesis 1:26-28. Three resources portray this sort of relationship. Cosden reflects this idea by indicating “theology is fully contained in Genesis chapter 1, [and] the vision becomes even clearer as the drama unfolds from chapter 2.”¹²³ Waldemar Janzen observes that “Both male and female are to reflect God (be his image) by way of representing God’s rule over the rest of creation.”¹²⁴ He then makes it clear that our understanding of this rulership must be understood in light of Genesis 2:15, where humanity is told to serve, watch over, and protect creation.¹²⁵ Harrower also seems to indicate a similar relationship between the two passages by

¹¹⁹ Michael W. Goheen and Craig G. Bartholomew, *Living at the Crossroads: An Introduction to Christian Worldview* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 44.

¹²⁰ Miroslav Volf, *Work in the Spirit: Toward a Theology of Work* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1991), 168.

¹²¹ Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 51-2.

¹²² Theology of Work Project, Inc, “Calling in the Theology of Work,” *Journal of Markets & Morality* 14, no. 1 (Spring 2011): 174 (emphasis original).

¹²³ Cosden, *The Heavenly Good of Earthly Work*, 89.

¹²⁴ Waldemar Janzen, “The Theology of Work from an Old Testament Perspective,” *The Conrad Grebel Review* 10, no. 2 (September 1992): 125.

¹²⁵ Janzen, “The Theology of Work from an Old Testament Perspective,” 125.

emphasizing a benevolence and service as the means by which humanity carries out subduing and ruling creation.¹²⁶ Regardless of the particular manner in which these two passages are connected, the fact that these passages are connected is important in that it shows theology of work literature does find relationship between the first two chapters of the Bible. The majority of connections being instrumental in nature is expected because Genesis 2:15 is primarily interpreted in an instrumental manner.

What these research findings demonstrate is that the methodological direction of faith and work discourse matters as it pertains to the relationship between human ontology and human function.¹²⁷ God's intent for all people who are made in His image, and the manner in which His image bearers should engage all activity in life, applies to all people no matter their work situation. Kilner and Beale do not necessarily have the last word on these topics, but their respective work should give us pause and motivate us within the faith and work conversation to consider how we might further develop a theology of work that works for all people. While some people will have power, authority, and opportunity to "rule," this is not the reality for a significant portion of the human population. The presence of broken people and broken systems has not diminished God's intent, but it has affected many people's ability to live out this intent within their own context. In a world devoid of broken people and systems, every person would realize their God-given potential to rule and subdue creation. That time will not come until we are in the New Heavens and New Earth. For now, starting with human ontology and design and *then* considering human function will help us more faithfully develop a theology of work that speaks into the broader range of human experience in the world today.

¹²⁶ Harrower, "A Trinitarian Doctrine of Christian Vocation," 223.

¹²⁷ Cosden's *A Theology of Work* is a valuable resource to build on in this regard.

Conclusions and Next Steps

Regarding the faith and work movement, David Miller observes, “Given the movement’s scope, scale, and potential social and economic impact, as well as its continuing evolution, the church and the theological academy will be left behind and become mere spectators, unless they seek to understand and engage the issues driving the movement *and* the participants themselves.”¹²⁸ Seeking to understand and engage various cultural issues related to work has not been difficult for the recent faith and work movement. What may be needed, though, and that which may be most important in our particular historical and cultural moment, is to engage the participants themselves affected by and living within these various cultural issues related to work, learning from them and letting them speak into the conversation from their own perspective. I propose this is the next big task of the faith and work movement.

In order to tackle this big task we must consider that simply developing more programs and resources will not necessarily be the most faithful strategy. This does not mean we will not eventually develop more resources, but we must first consider the possibility that some of our most deeply held biblical and theological convictions might need some reexamination and possible readjustment. This is not to say we have thought completely wrong, or have left the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy for the wastelands of heresy. Instead, we must consider that a significant portion of the human population has not had a seat at the faith and work table, and those of us who have led and participated in its various expressions have done so from a particular vantage point. This is reflected in Kilner’s observation that a rulership interpretation of

¹²⁸ David W. Miller, *God at Work: The History and Promise of the Faith at Work Movement* (Oxford: University, 2007), 4 (emphasis added).

the image of God is based upon “more cultural than biblical influence.”¹²⁹ This means we must address our own hermeneutical approach to Scripture, and recognize it is contextualized.

While faith and work discourse’s use of passages such as Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 has brought new insight into the Christian life as it relates to human work, it seems as though these passages are sometimes (and perhaps often) used more as proof-texts to help people find significance and value in their work in ways that were not previously offered by the church.¹³⁰ It is important to find significance in our daily work, but we must be careful not to do so in a way that reads more into the biblical text than draws from what is in the biblical text itself. Regarding contextualized biblical interpretations, Gosnell Yorke observes the following:

The human language; the limitation of the human imagination; the “imprisonments” imposed on us by culture, personality, gender, and upbringing; the particularities of our own socioeconomic and other contexts; and the presence of sin in the life of the believer-theologian, one who is *simul iustus et peccator* – all of these are factors and forces that make what we see and say inevitably perspectival in nature. And that conclusion seems true even when aided in our Christian theological reflections by the Holy Spirit.¹³¹

Yorke is not alone in his contextualized observations. Jeff Haanen, the CEO and Executive Director of the Denver Institute for Faith and Work, asks of those who have been leading and participating in recent faith and work discourse, “Have we been interpreting Scripture through our own professional class bias and failed to ask how working-class Americans think and feel

¹²⁹ Kilner, *Dignity and Destiny*, 205.

¹³⁰ Virkler describes proof-texting as a Bible study method that “interprets verses without paying proper attention to their context,” in Henry A. Virkler, *Hermeneutics: Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, second ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007, 86-7. Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard describe proof-texting as an abuse of the Bible, whereby Christians “use the Bible like a telephone book of texts they cite by chapter and verse to prove their viewpoint,” in William W Klein, Craig L. Blomberg, and Robert. L. Hubbard Jr., *Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, revised ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 19-20.

¹³¹ Gosnell Yorke. “Biblical Hermeneutics: An Afrocentric Perspective.” *Religion and Theology*, 2 no. 2 (1995): 147. The Latin phrase Yorke references in this quote is one Luther coined to describe a Christian who lives as both justified and sinner.

about their work?”¹³² If the answer to this question is in any way affirmative, then humility, curiosity, and imagination are required to faithfully move forward.

So, how do we move forward? Rather than answer Haanen’s question in a binary fashion, we need to ask two additional questions. First, “*How* have we been interpreting Scripture in such a way that, though perhaps inadvertently, reflects professional class bias and fails to ask how working-class Americans think and feel about their work?”¹³³ This was the primary task of this paper. Genesis 1:26-28 and 2:15 are likely not the only passages needing further examination, nor is theological anthropology the only doctrine needing additional consideration. Biblical passages and matters related to brokenness and sin, justice, redemption, the church, and the continuity and discontinuity between now and the New Heavens and New Earth need further reflection.¹³⁴ These reflections should take place with a broader audience at the discussion table, reflective of a wider range of the human experience. Theologians such as James Cone, Dorothy Soelle, and Justo Gonzalez are a small sampling of those who we would benefit from listening to and learning from. This task of listening should not be limited to those who are credentialed for the academy, but should also include professionals and working-class individuals alike, who can all speak from a place of experience and give us opportunity to test our assumptions and conclusions about the intersection between faith and work.

As we move forward, the second question we should consider is, “How can we more faithfully read and interpret Scripture in such a way that reflects the experiences of all people in all places in all work and economic situations?” There are likely a number of faithful answers to

¹³² Jeff Haanen, “God of the Second Shift,” 37.

¹³³ This conversation does not have to be limited to the working-class. It can also apply to unemployment, retirement, stay-at-home parents, volunteer, and any other form of “work” that is not considered professional.

¹³⁴ As an example, see J. Todd Billings, “The New View of Heaven is too Small: Our Recent Emphasis on ‘Kingdom Work’ Misses the Real Hope of the Afterlife,” *Christianity Today*, February (Web-only) 2018 (<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2018/february-web-only/new-view-of-heaven-too-small-resurrection-hope.html>), accessed September 23, 2018.

this question, but I will suggest one. David Clark provides important insights regarding contextualization and a model for contextualized biblical interpretation and theological reflection.¹³⁵ Evangelicals have by-and-large utilized a decode-and-encode model of contextual biblical interpretation, whereby an interpreter within his or her own cultural context decodes the biblical text and explains their understanding in a way that encodes it for another cultural context. This model of interpretation “assumes that transcultural, biblical principles remain constant whether they are clothed in ancient garments or in the apparel of varied contemporary cultures.”¹³⁶ Rather than rely upon a few experts to tell others how they should view their work, Clark observes something pertinent for our current conversation, “contextualized theology happens best when each people group takes responsibility for ‘self-theologizing.’”¹³⁷

In order to accomplish this “self-theologizing” Clark proposes a dialogical model that allows for contextualization and maintains the authority of Scripture. He proposes the following steps to engage in this sort of interpretation and theological reflection.¹³⁸ First, Christians raise questions and issues from within the culture. Second, beginning with what they know of Scripture “Christians offer initial responses to these questions by relating them to themes and texts from the biblical teachings,” utilizing tools of biblical interpretation. Third, they discover new applications of the Scriptures and become increasingly sensitive to the Spirit’s voice. Fourth, Christians should “permit the Bible to judge the cultural viewpoint from which questions arise. They ask whether Scripture deals with the issues, but from different perspectives . . . They ask whether the Bible challenges their questions instead of answering them.” Fifth, particular

¹³⁵ David K. Clark, *To Know and Love God: Method for Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2003), 99-131.

¹³⁶ Clark, *To Know and Love God*, 112.

¹³⁷ Clark, *To Know and Love God*, 113.

¹³⁸ Clark, *To Know and Love God*, 114. The remaining quotations regarding Clark’s dialogical model come from this same location.

themes for a “culturally relevant theology” begin to emerge, which become the building blocks for their theological framework. Sixth, “Christians in one culture discuss their findings with theologians in another culture, either in time or space . . . Theologians from the other side of the world who grapple with similar issues could suggest ways to interpret the Bible more faithfully or resolve the questions more authentically.” And, seventh, Christians continue to return to the Bible with greater clarity and sound hermeneutical tools, allowing the Bible to continue shaping their theological framework. The process is not complete, and perhaps never is completed, but rather continues as Christians seek further clarity and understanding about contextual matters.

This dialogical interpretive model gives us an interactive framework within which different voices from different backgrounds, cultures, industries, economic situations, and faith traditions can speak into and learn from one another about the various and often complicated issues related to work in our culture today. A dialogical approach to interpreting the Bible and reflecting theologically about life will not be easy. Perhaps this task in and of itself, though, will give us opportunity to lean into God’s intent for us as His image bearers, engaging this very task in a priestly manner. As we serve the needs of others, and guard our own theologizing from professional class bias, we might learn something new about what it looks like to intentionally and faithfully reflect that which God intends for His people.