

Book Reviews

too extreme? Certainly it will be for those whose working worldview is essentially materialist. But Kingsnorth argues that if we are to actively resist the Machine, or even just to temper the dehumanizing effect it is having on our lives, an accurate diagnosis is essential. And just as the problem is spiritual, so the solutions must be spiritual as well. I appreciated this perspective a lot—in so many evangelical spaces, we who are scientifically or business trained can easily tend to discount the formative power of cool new technologies. When formation, or “discipleship,” is presented as mainly about learning new information and new skills, rather than about properly ordering our loves, we may pay little attention to the ways we adapt ourselves to these new tech tools. We may also neglect larger questions of stewardship: how might my use of this tool affect the communities I am a part of, the neighbors I am called to serve and love? Indeed, a temptation to avoid agency by not asking these larger questions, perhaps even feeling that it is pointless to ask them because one is powerless, may be one of the most dehumanizing forces of these powerful tools.

Kingsnorth opens *Against the Machine* with the Wendell Berry quote, “It is easy for me to imagine that the next great division of the world will be between people who wish to live as creatures and people who wish to live as machines” (p. vii). His book is a call for those of us with ears to hear, to choose the former—to start a resistance movement. And yet, Kingsnorth’s vision for what effective resistance might look like seems underdeveloped, and his personal parochial path for resistance seems impractical for most people, and highly resistant to scaling in our urban world. Without a doubt, this is the greatest weakness of a book filled with deep insights and powerful turns of phrase.

Even so, as Kingsnorth continues to sink his roots into the Orthodox tradition, I would not be surprised to see suggestions for deeper and richer avenues of resistance emerging as fruit in future years. But, in any case, the task of stewarding embodied human flourishing, which he likens to spiritual warfare, should not be divorced from the vocation of the global catholic church. All of us who confess Jesus as Lord have a calling and therefore sacred duty to join in pondering these types of questions: How does our shared legacy of Nicene theology tangibly speak to our dehumanizing modern moment? How might, for instance, Reformed teaching on human vocation and creation develop these doctrines? And ultimately, in the most organic incarnation of Kingsnorth’s vision: What might the embodied, parochial “thick” communities of Christ’s global church have to offer our increasingly rootless world?

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WORKING FOR BETTER: A New Approach to Faith at Work by Elaine Howard Ecklund and Denise Daniels. IVP Academic, 2025. 218 pages. Paperback; \$25.99. ISBN: 9781514011263.

Questions about calling, the integration of faith in the workplace, and vocational stewardship persist among Christians. *Working for Better* generously offers a contribution to the ongoing faith-and-work conversation by shifting typical questions such as “What is my role as a Christian in a secular job?” (p. 2) to a more complex set of questions and embodied approaches.

The authors, Elaine Howard Ecklund (Herbert S. Autrey Chair in Social Sciences, professor of sociology and director of the Boniuk Institute at Rice University) and Denise Daniels (Hudson T. Harrison Professor of Entrepreneurship at Wheaton College) offer rich data from two mixed-method studies, the “Faith at Work Study” and “Faith at Work Supplement Study,” conducted over a five-year period and funded by the Lilly Endowment. Ecklund and Daniels’s research includes synthesizing findings from focus groups in three major US cities (Houston, New York, and Seattle), a survey of over 15,000 workers, and in-depth follow-up interviews with 287 people. A more in-depth discussion of their research, aimed at a secular audience, is available in their book, *Religion in a Changing Workplace* (Oxford University Press, 2024), authored along with Christopher P. Scheitle.

The authors’ angle, deemed the “radical-embrace perspective,” argues that “the exclusive claims of Christianity actually *demand* an embrace of others in the workplace, regardless of their faith commitment, beliefs, or world-views,” and includes the “call on Christians to bring their faith to the workplace” (p. 8). This alters the conversation

from an emphasis on talking about our [i.e., Christian] beliefs and defending our own rights to empathizing with those who are religiously different, with a particular emphasis on the *imago Dei*—the idea that every person we encounter is worthy of dignity and respect because every person is made in the image of God. (p. 8)

In addition to the *imago Dei* as a foundation, Ecklund and Daniels encourage an intrinsic and extrinsic understanding of the value of work. An intrinsic understanding includes viewing it as “furthering the work of creation” (pp. 46–47), “mitigating the effects of the fall” (p. 48), and “transforming toil” (pp. 49–50), while an “extrinsic value of work” involves “recognizing others as image bearers” (pp. 52–54) and the ways “toil shapes our soul” (pp. 54–55). These key ideas, in combination with their extensive research and practical considerations, move the faith-and-work conversation toward a more expansive understanding.

Pairing chapters together, the authors discuss in each coupling a place of tension, such as in chapter 2, the limits of deeming all work outside of the church as “Secular

Work.” In the complementary chapter, “Sacred Work,” they provide imagination for a renewed approach, in this case, a framework for understanding work as calling (chap. 3). This framework, demonstrated as a foursquare matrix, visibly denotes the extensive ways workers view calling: the x-axis delineates the meaning of work as *intrinsic* versus *extrinsic* to the work itself, while the y-axis distinguishes the locale of those the work serves as *beyond the workplace* or *within the workplace* (see fig. 3.1, p. 34, emphasis added). The authors offer each quadrant in the matrix as one way to understand calling. For example, if workers see labor as *intrinsically* meaningful *beyond* the workplace, they might articulate calling as serving the common good (e.g., an engineer providing safe water for a city). But if they see work as holding *extrinsic* meaning *within* the workplace, they would view calling primarily as serving others within the particular work context (e.g., a maintenance manager who hires formerly incarcerated individuals). Given that one’s work might fit within multiple quadrants, this matrix demonstrates a dynamic understanding of calling as articulated by participants and also lays the groundwork for considering the findings highlighted in the remainder of the chapter pairings.

These chapter pairings include movements from a common perspective of faith-and-work to a renewed approach including the movement from “Protecting Ourselves” to “Protecting Others” (chaps. 4 and 5); from “Focusing [only] on Individual Responsibility” to “Focusing on Systems Thinking” (chaps. 6 and 7); from “Restricted Roles for Women” to “Men and Women Flourishing Together” (chaps. 8 and 9); and from “Talking About Christian Faith” to “Living Principled Pluralism” (chaps. 10 and 11). The arc and flow of the book calls Christians out of a place of status-quo engagement between work and faith, and into a radical-embrace perspective, inviting Christians to consider the *imago Dei* and a hospitable posture toward colleagues, clients, supervisors, or employees regardless of their religious background, gender, race, or ethnicity. This reframes the conversation from how I might protect my rights as a Christian in the workplace to how I might protect my non-Christian colleague, or how I might work toward more just and equitable systems that cultivate flourishing for each person within the system.

In most chapters, the findings are discussed through charts, graphs, and in-depth interviews. Such data-rich evidence is welcomed since it gives voice to the variety of participants interviewed in their study—engineers, grocery store clerks, asset managers, librarians, credit union CFOs, corrections officers, nurses, paramedics, physicians, lawyers, teachers, social services workers, and more—while also encouraging the reader, regardless of his or her profession, to consider questions of calling and faith engagement in the workplace. The reflection questions and suggestions for church pastors and leaders underline the authors’ desire that each chapter serve as a

catalyst for deeper consideration, whether personally or from the pulpit.

For Christians who have considered the conversation about faith and work from an individual perspective rather than from a systems-thinking perspective, chapter 7 is a needed corrective. The research offered in chapter 8 regarding ways women have encountered restrictions in their work provides important insight and a voice for women who have experienced marginalization. However, at times the discussion of practical implications based on the research findings is limited in scope. For example, the chapter on “Protecting Others” could be improved by adding a discussion on the ways nonreligious workers or those from other religious backgrounds have experienced welcome or hospitality from Christian coworkers.

Who should consider reading *Working for Better*? This book is for people who carry questions about faith in the workplace and want to think deeply about how to live as faithful Christians in their work environment. But it is also for people who want to empathize with the experiences of nonreligious coworkers or colleagues from other faith backgrounds, and consider how others might experience Christians in the workplace. This book is for pastors or other leaders who want to shepherd their congregations to connect faith and work in meaningful ways. It is also for college students, graduate students, or adults in the early career stage and for those who mentor them, providing a catalyst for deeper reflection and conversation. As the culminating stand-alone chapter, entitled “Rest,” indicates, it is also for those who long to incorporate rhythms of Sabbath rest into their workdays. The Epilogue summarizes the authors’ intent well: “We want to see our scholarship and Christian thinking used to bring true changes to how Christians live out their faith at work” (p. 211). May it be so.

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HISTORY OF SCIENCE

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RELIGIOUS BELIEF AND SCIENCE: A Reference Handbook by Glenn H. Utter. Bloomsbury, 2025. 264 pages. Hardcover; \$75.00. ISBN: 9781440881060.

Author and editor Glenn Utter offers a penetrating examination of the contours of the historical relationship between science and religion in the United States, including how that relationship continues to play out in the present day. As professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at Lamar University, he demonstrates his aptitude for political and legal studies throughout the book, looking at religious groups and individuals who