“…the Christian view of service is distinct from other religions’ and philosophies”: Christians believe that we can show love for others only because God loves us first. Our service to others flows not out of our own innergoodness or loyalty to humanity—for those can be terribly fragile and intermittent— but out of God’s fierce loyalty to humanity. We serve out of obedience, but obedience is gratitude at work” (Rienstra, 138).

“Jesus accompanied his acts of healing with words about the coming kingdom. His disciples wanted him to bring the kingdom of God to Israel right then and there, the whole thing, now. But instead Jesus provided signposts of what the kingdom will look like: people who are blind will be able to see; people who have diseases will be cured; people who are poor will hear good news (Matthew 11:15). All the most unlikely people will be invited to the best parties (Luke 14:15–24). Jesus showed his followers a vision of something much greater even than the prosperity and liberation from Roman authority that Israel desired. He reminded them of the inclusive vision of wholeness and flourishing that the Hebrew prophets had imagined; he reminded them about shalom. He did it through signs and words and then left the rest to his followers: “I’ve pointed you in the right direction—now it’s your turn.” Christians say that Jesus ascended into heaven, which is to say that Jesus’ physical presence is no longer in this world. However, we are; and Jesus’ Spirit empowers our actions in the world. We are the hands and feet of Jesus now, and we have tokeep pointing to the kingdom” (Rienstra 139).

“In some branches of the faith, tradition holds some ways of life as more dedicated to God than oth- ers. In the Roman Catholic tradition, for example, joining a religious order or becoming a priest are ways to give your life more fully to God than, say, being a plumber or selling insurance. In some American evangelical circles, serious Christians signal their dedication by entering full-time Christian service, as a pastor or missionary or director of a Christian agency. But the Reformers, particularly Luther, insisted that everyone in every station of life can serve God equally well. Working as a plumber, a missionary, a teacher, a builder, a lawyer are all equally valid paths for the service of God. Everything we are, everything we have, everything we do, whatever it is: give it to God. Any task, done with integrity and gratitude to God, is service...The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossian church: “And whatever you do, whether in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (3:17). There’s a particularly strong emphasis on this in the Reformed view, but all kinds of Christians would agree” (Rienstra, 139).

“a work-centered view of the Christian life requires living with paradox. One paradox involves the importance of what goes on in this world, in this life, now. Does it matter? If God is planning a new creation, why bother to fix this one? After all, if someone is building you a brand-new house, why would you bother to put new kitchen cabinets in the old one? Why not relax and wait around till the new place is ready? That analogy doesn’t hold, however. This is the creation that awaits liberation. God in the person of Jesus entered this world, so we know that this world matters to God. This is the old house God has begun to renovate. We can either keep making the place worse, stand around and do nothing, or pick up a hammer” (Rienstra, 140).

“We would all love to be worthy of God’s favor; we would love our work to earn points with the Almighty…We like to think of ourselves as competent and deserving, so that grace is harder to accept than fair wages. This is, at heart, the sin of pride. A tendency to work too hard, even for God, can participate in the idolization of work in the culture around us. We might put a label of Christian service on it, but hard work without rest can be a mask for a sense of our own indispensable importance and a desire to look good and earn God’s favor” (Rienstra, 140).

“Leaving the outcome to God frees us from the need to succeed. We’re not planning the entire kingdom operation, and we’re not responsible for its ultimate success. We’re just the agents. We have to do our own part the best we can, with God’s help, and let the Spirit of God move freely in fire and wind. At my college we like to talk about Christians’ role in the world as agents of shalom. We use the word agent in the sense of one who acts in the interest of, but it always make me think of us more like secret agents, sitting at our desk jobs wearing black suits and dark glasses…The truth is that …we are probably less like secret agents and more like the little kid who wants to “help” bake cookies. He spills flour and measures things inexactly and eats a lot of the chocolate chips. Mom has to intervene to clean up the messes if any of the cookies are going to turn out. It’s a terribly inefficient operation. Yet it has value other than efficiency, in teaching the child and in the loving companionship built by a shared task…like a wise mother, God generously welcomes us back again and again into the kitchen” (Rienstra, 141).

“I recently read a hip, funny Christian novel…I ended up peeved at the [stockbroker] protagonist…Once he surrendered to God, he wanted his life to change somehow, to look different. But he never seriously asked what he already had that God might want to use, such as his head for numbers. Fascination with this woman got him onto the plane to Ecuador, and he stayed there vaguely imagining that life is always more spiritual and closer to God in a jungle…I thought the novel would have concluded much more interestingly if our hero had gone back to New York and started figuring out how to be a Christian stockbroker. People often put well-meaning but mistaken limits on how God might use them. They have narrow ideas about what it means to serve God, and God has to invite them to expand their imaginations” (Rienstra, 141).

“God also and perhaps especially cherishes those who, like my own mother, perform the simple, unnoticed deeds of mercy without which this world would quickly turn dark and flat. When I think of all the cards my mother has sent to senior citizens living in the nursing home, all the cakes she has baked for people to comfort them as they grieved and planned a funeral, all the little goody bags of practical supplies she has dropped off on the doorsteps of struggling families, I see a string of tiny lights stretching across her life, so many that together they give off a dazzling brightness” (Rienstra, 142).

“Deciding how to take one’s own basketful of resources and spend them in God’s service is a little bit like emergency first aid: unless you are in immediate moral or mortal peril, the best strategy is to stay where you are and take inventory. What can you do right now with what you have right now? For some people this is obvious. Lawyers can do pro bono work, and doctors can volunteer time in inner-city clinics, for example. Some of us have to hunt harder in our baskets to find a creative way to serve…Probably we all have more in our baskets than we think we do. In one of the more famous gospel stories, Jesus feeds a crowd of people beginning only with some loaves of bread and a few fish, multiply- ing the resources until everyone is fed and there are baskets of leftovers. (Luke 9:10–17 is one of several accounts.) Through the ages this story has been received as a picture of the way God often takes a small gesture offered in trust and grows it into something miraculous” (Rienstra, 143).

“Although I certainly agree that we should all seek those places where our passion and the world’s hungers meet, I’m actually skeptical of the word *vocation*. I have seen how my college students tend to equate vocation or calling with career and then agonize over finding the perfect job…I’ve given up on the word *vocation* altogether. When my college students come in for advising before graduation, I tell them to seek guidance through prayer and through talking with wise people who love them and then take a step—any step…the subtext is: ‘Just do something! The fate of the universe does not hang on this one step! Life is full of twists and turns! Get used to it!’” (Rienstra, 143-144).

“Further, loving God intellectually means taking an interest not only in God, and in the peculiarities of God, but also in the works of God. I’m thinking of creation in all its strength and majesty; creation in all its stupendous variety; creation in all its un-guessable particularity. I’m thinking of humanity itself, in all its multicultural riches. For, of course, God loves not only humankind but also human kinds, and it’s our delight to love what God loves” (Plantinga, 113).

“Intellectual love must lead us out into the lives and habitats of other human beings in order to do them some good. Even that—doing people some good— sounds simpler than it is, of course. It’s another of those second simplicities. Isaiah tells us right away in his first chapter that we have to *learn* to do good, suggesting that good in a fouled-up world is often elusive and ambiguous. The point is that we need to study lest we unwittingly do a half-cooked good, a dangerous good, a ruthless good. We need to study first and do good second” (Plantinga, 113).

“So ‘love the Lord your God with all your mind.’ Let this command defeat every anti-intellectualism…Anti- intellectualism is the sin of lazy people or of fearful people who content themselves with first simplicities and who resist the pain it takes to grow beyond them. ‘Love the Lord your God with all your mind.’ Let this command also defeat every selfish intellectualism, every worldly intellectualism, every idolatrous intellectualism. Let it remind us that the life of the mind has nothing to do with carving a niche for ourselves, or making a name for ourselves, or conquering some field of study as if it were an enemy. The life of the mind is an act of love, an act of reverence. It’s an act in which we get pulled out of our nervous little egoisms and combine together in a kingdom project so much bigger than any of us, so much grander than all of us, that we cannot help getting stretched and ennobled by this move” (Plantinga, 114).

“...a simplicity that lay beyond complexity. We all know this phenomenon. According to a famous story, the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth was once asked to sum up the thousands of pages of his dense theology in one sentence. He paused. Then he said, ‘Jesus loves me; this I know; for the Bible tells me so.’ Well, it’s one thing for a child to recite these words, and quite another for Barth to say them…**Second simplicities** lie beyond complexities and incorporate them” (Plantinga, 111).

“At a minimum, the mind that Calvin has sought to nourish in you is the mind of competence. You know how to use the English language properly, even skillfully, and perhaps another language as well. You are well trained in the skills of your future occupation. People can count on you to do things right and do them well. You know how to check the I.V. and how to correct it when something goes wrong. **But that’s only the minimum.** The person who thinks like a Calvin grad isn’t just good at doing things the way things are done. She asks questions. She asks why things are being done this way. Why is it important that they be done this way? Why is it important that these things be done at all? In doing things this way, what assumptions are being made? Are those assumptions correct? What are the moral implications of doing things this way? How does doing things this way serve God’s cause of justice and shalom? Is there integrity in doing things this way, or do you have to sell your soul to the devil? Can this way of doing things stand the light of day?” (Wolterstorff).

“Some years back…my wife and I had a discussion with an obstetrician on the academic staff of the university hospital. The question arose of how he taught prospective nurses to deal with mothers whose babies were still-born or died shortly after birth. ‘I tell them,’ he said, ‘that when you go into the room, you need two eyes. With one eye you have to check the I.V.; with the other, you must cry. I tell them one eye is not enough. You need two eyes’ (Wolterstorff).

“I hope I have not given you the impression that the eye of the heart is relevant only to such professions as nursing and medicine. It’s not. Every occupation and every profession touches human beings. Every occupation and every profession either advances justice and shalom or hinders it. Some of you will be going into business. For that you need two eyes. With one eye you have to check accounts receivable and accounts payable, overhead and profit margins, payroll and insurance costs. With the other you have to attend to your employees – are they receiving just reward for their labor and can they find fulfillment in their work, and you have to think of your clients – do the products or services that you provide enhance their lives rather than diminishing or debasing them. One eye is not enough…Some of you will be going into teaching. For that you need two eyes. With one you have to make lesson plans and read student papers, keep up with theories of reading and developments in math. With the other you have to discern and feel the tender hearts of the students with whom you are dealing. One eye is not enough…” (Wolterstorff).

“Whatever your walk, you will need knowledge and discernment, critical engagement. And whatever your walk, you will need compassion. You will be touching the lives of human beings, creatures with minds like yours and hearts like yours, minds that seek understanding, hearts that suffer and rejoice -- kinsfolk, creatures whose differences from you fade away before the fact that the creator of the universe and restorer of all that is fallen is mirrored in them and you alike. Do not be so focused on knowledge that you neglect compassion; do not be so overcome by compassion that you neglect knowledge” (Woltertorff).

“The eye of the mind without the eye of the heart is heartless competence. The eye of the heart without the eye of the mind is mindless empathy. You need both eyes, both the eye of the mind and the eye of the heart, both the eye of discernment and the eye of compassion -- one eye to check the I.V., the other to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. One eye is not enough. You need two eyes” (Wolterstorff).

“On the one hand, nothing we do, no matter how noble and self-sacrificial, earns us points with God. There are no points. Salvation comes by grace through faith, “not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:9). However, another strong current in the Bible suggests that our behavior has enduring consequences…Is it all about grace or not? Do our deeds matter or not? This is another example of a useful tension in Scripture…I was taught to resolve the tension by declaring that good works do not earn salvation but are a sign of salvation. Good works grow naturally when God replants us by grace, like sick little trees, in the soil of himself” (Rienstra, 140).