

# *Labora* in Christian Theology: Exploring Its Significance in Relation to Blessings and Salvation

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to explore the meaning of work in Christian theology, particularly in relation to God's plan and providence, forgiveness, and salvation. The method employed in this study is a literature review of Bible verses, theological texts, and scholarly articles on the topic of work ethics in Christianity. The findings of this research indicate that work is not only a blessing and a privilege for humans as God's stewards on Earth but also a part of God's plan for salvation and forgiveness. The Holy Spirit utilizes human work in accordance with the purpose of salvation, thereby making work an essential ritual in life. All humans are created by God and adopted as children in Jesus Christ, and God works for the good of those who love Him. This research contributes to the understanding of the theological significance of work in the lives of Christians and its role in the existential faith as the people of God.

Keywords: blessing, Christian, privilege, providence, salvation, work ethos

## Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi makna kerja dalam teologi Kristen, khususnya dalam hubungannya dengan rencana dan providensi Allah, pengampunan, dan keselamatan. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah tinjauan pustaka terhadap ayat-ayat Alkitab, teks-teks teologis, dan artikel-artikel ilmiah mengenai topik etika kerja dalam Kekristenan. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa kerja bukan hanya merupakan berkat dan privilege manusia sebagai mandataris Allah di bumi, tetapi juga bagian dari rencana Allah untuk keselamatan dan pengampunan. Roh Kudus memakai kerja manusia sesuai dengan tujuan keselamatan, dan ini membuat kerja menjadi ritual penting dalam kehidupan. Semua manusia diciptakan oleh Allah



dan diangkat anak dalam Yesus Kristus, Allah bekerja untuk kebaikan mereka yang mencintai-Nya. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman tentang signifikansi teologis dari kerja dalam kehidupan orang Kristen dan perannya dalam eksistensi iman sebagai umat Allah.

Kata-kata Kunci: berkat, Kristen, keistimewaan, pemeliharaan, keselamatan, ethos kerja

## Introduction

Work stands as an essential prerequisite for human existence, constituting a manifestation of one's very being. Its significance elevates it to the throne of the progenitor of all values, encapsulated in the maxim, "All cultural values can only be produced and maintained through work." Concomitantly, the structure, configuration, and system of human life as laborers dictate the contours and harmony of their culture. A culture tethered solely to hedonism flounders, while one that venerates work thrives. Work, an innate constituent of human nature,<sup>1</sup> intertwines inseparably with human life.

Within the prism of a Christian work ethics, it is imperative to acknowledge the profound import of work in the context of human existence.<sup>2</sup> Christians believe that God created human beings with a purpose and that work is an integral part of that purpose. Through work, individuals can fulfill their God-given potential and contribute to society. Therefore, work should be given a central place in Christian life and viewed as a means of glorifying God.

The Bible teaches that all work is valuable and that individuals should work diligently, with integrity, and with a spirit of excellence. Christian work ethic emphasizes the importance of being responsible, dependable, and trustworthy in one's work.<sup>3</sup> In addition, Christians believe that their work should serve a greater purpose beyond just personal gain. It should also contribute to the betterment of society and be performed with a servant's heart. Furthermore, Christian work ethic recognizes that the organization, form, and system of human life as

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<sup>1</sup> Kasdin Sihotang, *Etika Kerja Unggul* (Yogyakarta: Kanisius, 2020), 27, 63.

<sup>2</sup> Susan Cartwright and Nicola Holmes, "The Meaning of Work: The Challenge of Regaining Employee Engagement and Reducing Cynicism," *Human Resource Management Review*, The New World of Work and Organizations, 16, no. 2 (June 1, 2006): 199–208, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.03.012>

<sup>3</sup> Adrian Furnham, *The Protestant Work Ethic: The Psychology of Work Related Beliefs and Behaviours* (New York: Routledge, 2021), 83.

workers are essential in shaping the culture of a society. Therefore, it is important for Christians to value work as an essential element of human nature and to cultivate a culture that values work. In this way, work can be a means of fulfilling God's plan for individuals and society as a whole.

The question at hand pertains to whether Christianity has a fundamental understanding of 'ethos', which encompasses an individual's character, personal integrity, behavior, and actions in different situations, as well as their beliefs, values, and customs. Another inquiry concerns whether the nature of an individual's ethos is linked to their dynamic presentation and interaction with others in various contexts.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore imperative to examine the extent to which ethos and morality are interconnected, given that a person's decision-making process regarding their behavior and actions in specific situations reflects their moral values. Furthermore, how can Christianity cultivate a robust ethos and moral framework that enables individuals to make appropriate decisions, establish meaningful relationships, and attain their goals? Thus, it is crucial to foster and uphold these attitudes through continuous self-reflection and purposeful action.

Aristotle, the ancient Greek philosopher, initially introduced the concept of ethos in his philosophical works<sup>5</sup> to describe the inherent moral and ethical traits inherent in human nature, denoting both the positive and negative aspects of an individual's character. Based on the aforementioned understanding, ethos has been closely associated with the various religious beliefs held by humanity in its many variations, which universally distinguish between good and bad. Ethos is closely related to morality, though they are not identical; both are acknowledged as absolute attitudes toward something. "Moral attitudes" affirm orientation towards norms as standards that one must follow,<sup>6</sup> while ethos affirms that such an attitude is already established and habitual, something that tangibly influences and determines how an individual or

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<sup>4</sup> Kevin P. Groark, "Social Opacity and the Dynamics of Empathic In-Sight among the Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas, Mexico," *Ethos* 36, no. 4 (December 2008): 427–48, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1548-1352.2008.00025.x>

<sup>5</sup> Claudia Baracchi, *Aristotle's Ethics as First Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> Bart Duriez and Bart Soenens, "Religiosity, Moral Attitudes and Moral Competence: A Critical Investigation of the Religiosity-Morality Relation," *International Journal of Behavioral Development* 30, no. 1 (January 2006): 76–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025406062127>

group approaches and carries out actions. Therefore, the term 'ethos' conveys the "spirit of an individual or group to the extent that it contains moral pressures for certain moral values." Hence, work ethos is something that is possessed or not possessed and cannot be forced.<sup>7</sup>

From the historical development of industrialized nations since the 18th century, it is evident that religious values can inspire work ethic. Conversely, the socio-economic progress over a significant period of time has also been able to reinterpret religious values in a manner that promotes work ethic.<sup>8</sup>

The relationship between work ethic and Christian faith is well-established in the religion of Christianity. This connection is particularly notable in the inner worldly asceticism form of work ethos.<sup>9</sup> The Protestant Ethic emphasizes the importance of hard work, diligence, self-discipline, self-restraint and frugality in one's daily life which has contributed to the development of society welfare.<sup>10</sup>

This article aims to assert that within the Christian tradition, work is not solely a means of financial sustenance, but also a vocation and divine calling. It is considered a mode of serving both God and fellow human beings, providing an occasion to employ one's talents and proficiencies for the betterment of others and the realization of God's purpose. Christians believe that work should be done with excellence, integrity, and with the motivation to honor God. Work is also seen as a way to participate in God's creative activity by using one's skills and abilities to make a positive impact on the world. By doing so, individuals can contribute to the common good and live out their calling as workers.

Thus, this manuscript endeavors to convey the notion that work should be perceived as a vehicle for cultivating one's character and moral principles. It presents an avenue to acquire discipline, responsibility, perseverance, and other virtues that are indispensable for personal maturation and advancement. In this sense, work is not just about

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<sup>7</sup> Franz Magnis-Suseno, *Berfilsafat dari Konteks* (Jakarta: Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 1991), 120.

<sup>8</sup>M. Mukhtasar Syamsuddin, "Pendekatan Fenomenologis dalam Studi Perbandingan Etos Kerja Manusia Bugis-Makassar dan Bangsa Jepang," *Jurnal Filsafat* 20, no. 2 (September 22, 2016): 183–96, <https://doi.org/10.22146/jf.3429>

<sup>9</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Penguin Publishing Group, 2002), 153.

<sup>10</sup> Eka Darmaputera, *Pergulatan Kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia: Teks-teks Terpilih Eka Darmaputera* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 829.

earning a living or achieving success, but it is also about becoming a better person. Christian faith teaches that work is a gift from God, and it should be done with gratitude and humility. By approaching work in this way, individuals can experience the joy and fulfillment that comes from fulfilling their calling as workers.<sup>11</sup> Engaging in meaningful work not only provides individuals with a sense of purpose, accomplishment, and self-worth, but also allows them to make a positive contribution to society and build connections with others. As such, work is not just a means of earning a living, but also plays a vital role in realizing one's full humanity and potential.

## Method

This research adopts an interdisciplinary approach to scrutinize the significance of work within the Christian tradition. Work is contemplated not merely as a means of financial sustenance but as a vocation and divine summons. The study's objective is to illuminate the transformative potential of work in shaping one's character and moral compass. Data will be garnered through a comprehensive analysis of religious texts, theological literature, and scholarly treatises on work ethics. These diverse sources collectively provide a broader context for comprehending the interplay between work and personal development. The analysis will center on identifying virtues associated with work, such as discipline, responsibility, and perseverance, and their pivotal role in fostering personal growth. The culmination of this research will enrich our comprehension of the Christian perspective on work and its profound significance in fulfilling one's calling while contributing to the common good.

## The Distinctive Characteristics of the Christian Work Ethos

The starting point of the Christian understanding of work is rooted in the creation of humanity in the image of God, as articulated in Genesis 1:26-28. Human labor fundamentally emerges as a consequence of our creation in the divine image. God Himself, in the process of creation, is portrayed as a laborer. As the crowning achievement of His

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<sup>11</sup> Magnis-Suseno, *Berfilsafat dari Konteks*, 118.

creation, God fashioned humans and bestowed upon them the role of workers, akin to His own nature. His dominion over the Earth was delegated to humankind, with the directive to employ their creative talents in subduing the Earth. Work, from the very beginning, has been an integral part of the divine order of creation, implicit in God's plan to fashion humanity in His image and likeness. Work, as an inherent element of human existence, is intrinsic and thus inseparable from human life.

In the New Testament, work is assumed as the customary means of livelihood for every individual. None of the Old Testament concepts are discarded; rather, they are reinforced with added emphasis on the attitude of the individual toward their work and employer. Thus, even in the context of grace, one cannot escape their responsibility to labor. Moreover, it is no longer solely about work but about the excellence with which one fulfills their duties. As an element deemed 'ordinary' and 'normal' in life, humans are enjoined to persist in their labor as long as life continues in its usual course (uninterrupted by extraordinary circumstances). The biblical view that humans are fundamentally workers, as a result of God's work, has significant implications for work ethics and work ethos. Humans who understand themselves as workers will practice the true nature of a worker based on their faith.

The distinctive Christian perspective on human labor, rooted in the belief that it emanates from God, becomes evidently distinct when compared to the views on work held by other groups, such as the Hindu religious perspective, which regards work as something illusory or ephemeral due to the belief that Brahma lacks attributes and deeds. Hence, the loftiest objective is to abstain from labor. The philosophical and religious views of ancient Greece suggest that work is something lowly because it is carried out by inferior gods. The Buddhist view holds that work is an illusory perception because true Nirvana is a state in which there is no activity, motionless like a lotus flower that does not move. Additionally, the Taoist perspective states that work is not worthy of recommendation because the noble Tao does not act or work. Therefore, the ethical principle of Taoism is "not to act" (*Wu Wei*).<sup>12</sup>

Unlike those views, in Islam, humans are essentially required to work as long as they are able. In the Islamic perspective, work is

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<sup>12</sup> J. Verkuyl, *Etika Kristen Sosial Ekonomi* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1985), 17.

considered to be of equal value to jihad (cf. Al Muzzani, 120). Islamic history has recorded individuals who highly value the importance of work, and this issue is mentioned in several Islamic sources, including the Quran and the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad, in the form of advice, commands, encouragement (*targhib*), or threats (*tauhid*). For example, the Prophet Muhammad said, “No one has ever eaten food (that is better) even if it is just a little bit, except the food that is obtained from the work of his hands. And indeed, the Prophet of God, David, also ate from the work of his hands.”<sup>13</sup> These views, whether acknowledged or not, have a significant influence on the work ethic of their followers. The beliefs and values of an individual's religion or philosophy shape their attitudes towards work and the importance they attach to it. For instance, if someone believes that work is a lowly activity or that it is not necessary for attaining spiritual enlightenment, it may result in a lack of motivation to work hard or a reluctance to take up certain kinds of work. Conversely, if someone's religious or philosophical beliefs emphasize the significance of work as a means of serving God or as a way of fulfilling one's duty to society, it may instill a strong work ethic and a sense of purpose in their work. Therefore, it is important to be aware of how these views can impact one's work ethic and strive to align one's beliefs with a positive and constructive work ethic.

### Work as a Blessing, Not a Curse

Humans were created as workers, not just workers for themselves, but also as partners with God. In this regard, God planted trees in the garden and humans tended to them. This was the first, close collaboration. At that time, harmony and a proper relationship between creatures and their Creator were presented. However, humans fell into sin. Working for humans became a more tangible characteristic. Humans were expelled from the Garden of Eden to till the ground (Genesis 3:23). What is interesting here is the word worship comes from Hebrew עֲבָדָה which means cultivating the land. Work is part of faith and service to God. Therefore, according to Eka Darmaputera, the essence of work is

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<sup>13</sup> Yusuf Qordawi dan Fahmi Huwaidi, *Waktu Kekuasaan dan Kekayaan sebagai Amanah Allah* (Jakarta: Gema Insani Press, 1995), 182–183.

worship.<sup>14</sup> In fact, work is a special privilege and blessing from Allah for humans. By working, humans can develop their civilization and culture.

The fall of humanity had an impact on the difficulty of work, but its value has always been the same. The idea that work is a consequence of human sin and a curse from God is not supported by the Bible. One convincing argument against this view is that the command to work was given prior to the existence of sin in human life. Work existed even before the curse was spoken. Therefore, work is not a result of the curse (see Genesis 2 and 3). Adam and Eve worked on the Garden of Eden long before they were cursed, which shows that work is not a consequence of their sin. Moreover, if we examine Genesis 3:14-19 closely, we can see that God cursed the serpent and imposed punishment on mankind. However, when it comes to work, God cursed the land rather than the act of cultivating it.<sup>15</sup> The curse that resulted from the fall of man has made work and the work environment more challenging, but it has not diminished the worth and significance of work. Thus, the concept of work cannot be separated from the difficulties, frustrations, and failures that come with it. Work is not inherently evil, nor is it a punishment from God, but rather a divine blessing. If God intended to penalize humanity for their work, He could have prevented them from working altogether, thereby rendering their status as His highest creation meaningless (Gen. 1-3). The toilsome labor of humanity on a cursed earth is what causes the difficulty they face in their work.

Work is an essential aspect of human life, and those who exert effort in their work will experience satisfaction in the fruit of their labor, in other words: the sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether they eat little or much (Ecclesiastes 5:11). There is profit in all hard work (Proverbs 14:23), and there is nothing better for humans than to find joy in their work, for that is what they have been allotted (Ecclesiastes 3:23). In contrast, God strongly condemns laziness and its repercussions, as "Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger" (Proverbs 19:15), and the one who is idle in their work is a companion of the destroyer (Proverbs 18:9). All work should be respected, except for those that involve dishonesty or wrongdoing.

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<sup>14</sup> Phil. Eka Darma Putera, *Etika Sederhana Untuk Semua, Bisnis, Ekonomi dan Penatalayanan* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia 1995), 101.

<sup>15</sup> Dough Sherman dan William Hendriks, *Pekerjaan Anda Penting bagi Allah* (Bandung: Kalam Hidup, 1997), 139.



There are some who hold the belief that secular work is only temporary and that its function and purpose are limited to the duration of human life on this earth, even though work is essential and valuable. They suggest that work that has a spiritual aspect may have eternal significance. This viewpoint is often supported by citing Ecclesiastes 2:11.

However, upon reflection, this passage actually provides an answer to the futility of work outside of God. Indeed, if work is seen under the fleeting sun, then work will also be fleeting, and humans in this context only pass briefly under the sun before experiencing absolute nothingness. Thus, whatever humans do is meaningless, and life is nothing more than absurdity. Conversely, if work is seen as a blessing from God that involves human work in the framework of the preservation and salvation of the world, then work is not temporary and fleeting, but eternal and useful because it transcends the sun. "Always keep busy working for the Lord. You know that everything you do for him is worthwhile."<sup>16</sup>

### The Relationship between Jesus and Human Labor

The life and work of Jesus Christ serve as a model and inspiration for Christians in various aspects of their lives, including their work. Throughout his time on earth, Jesus engaged in secular work, provided service to humanity, and preached the Gospel, all while prioritizing his relationship with God above material needs and worldly concerns. As such, Christians are called to follow in his footsteps and view their work as a means of glorifying God and reflecting his attributes.

In His earthly presence from adolescence to thirty years of age, Jesus engaged in 'secular' work, and then for the following three years, continuously preached the Gospel and carried out humanitarian tasks. Jesus worked to actualize Himself, to provide for His family, to serve humanity, and to serve God. However, along with hard work, Jesus did not desire excessive concern about the results of work, namely the needs of human life (Matt. 6:25-34). The motivation for Christian work is to

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<sup>16</sup> "1 Korintus 15:58 (Versi Paralel) - Tampilan Ayat - Alkitab SABDA," accessed April 18, 2023, <https://alkitab.sabda.org/verse.php?book=1kor&chapter=15&verse=58>.

please God's heart and repay His love with ways that effect God's own nature.<sup>17</sup>

Jesus came to restore the relationship between God and humanity by redeeming humanity's sins. This raises the question, "What is the impact of Christ's redemption on human work?" Jesus brought good news to work. He tirelessly performed the tasks given to Him by God without resisting, with pure motives and pure love. His work of redemption applies to the entire existence of humanity.<sup>18</sup> However, the difficulties of work still exist. Jesus did not reduce the difficulties of human work or give any privileges to His followers. God still "causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous," (Matthew 5:45). But for redeemed humans, hard work is no longer a curse. Those who perform work in their faith will experience work not as a curse, but as a blessing. The greatest blessing in work is that humans are given the opportunity to serve God and others. Christ places humans and work in the right relationship with God. This will have an impact on how we view and approach work.

The significance and value of work are not only contained within God's plan of creation, but also find a place within His plan of reconciliation and salvation. However, this does not mean that human work contributes a certain percentage to God's plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit involves human work in the execution of God's plan of salvation, thus giving meaning and value to it. We are created by God in Christ Jesus to do good works which He has prepared in advance for us to do. For it is God who works in us, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 2:13)

In light of faith, the purpose of human work is to bring glory to God. As stated in I Corinthians 10:31, "Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." This means that work is not just a means of earning a living or achieving personal success, but it is also a means of fulfilling God's purposes and contributing to His kingdom. When we work with this perspective in mind, we are able to find greater satisfaction and meaning in our work, knowing that it is a

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<sup>17</sup> Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ - 20th Anniversary Edition* (Colorado: NavPress, 2021), 208.

<sup>18</sup> Dale Coulter, "Delivered by the Power of God": Toward a Pentecostal Understanding of Salvation," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 10, no. 4 (2008): 447–67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2008.00380.x>

part of our worship and service to God. The three objectives referred to above are as follows:<sup>19</sup>

The first purpose of human work is to glorify God as the Creator. As believers, we recognize that all good things come from God and that our work is a reflection of His creative power. Therefore, we should strive to use our talents and abilities to bring glory to God and to recognize that our work is a means of worship.

The second purpose of human work is to honor Jesus Christ as the Redeemer. As Christians, we believe that Jesus paid the price for our sins and that our salvation comes through Him alone. Therefore, we should seek to live a life that honors Him, including our work. We are called to be a holy people, set apart for God's purposes and to use our work as a means of sharing the good news of Jesus with others. As stated in 1 Peter 2:9, we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and God's special possession, called to declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light.

The third purpose of human work is to benefit oneself and others. In the greatest commandment, Jesus teaches us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind, and the second commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). This implies that human work should not only serve the self-interest of the worker, but also contribute to the well-being of others.

By loving and serving others, human work can become a means of expressing the love of God in the world. As stated in 1 John 4:7-8, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love." Therefore, human work should be grounded in love for God and others, reflecting the nature of God's love in our lives and in the world.

### Christianity Work as A Calling and Sanctification

Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation, had a theological perspective on work as a 'calling.' The term 'calling' or *Beruf* in its original German language, emphasizes that not only priests or monks are

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<sup>19</sup> Jerry Bridges, *I Give You Glory, O God: Honoring His Righteousness in Your Private Worship* (Colorado: Crown Publishing Group, 2011).

called by God and are His servants. Rather, all believers receive a call from God, and their entire lives are geared towards fulfilling that calling. This calling from God is for every believer to carry out their work in this world to the best of their ability, regardless of what that work may be, as it is a form of God's calling.

This concept of a 'calling' has significant theological implications in the understanding of work and vocation in the Christian faith. It underscores the importance of all work, not just 'religious' work, as a means of fulfilling God's purpose in the world. It also highlights the dignity and value of all labor, elevating even the most mundane tasks to a level of divine significance, and encourages believers to view their work as a form of worship and service to God.<sup>20</sup> In accordance with the direct relationship between believers and God, God directly calls His people through their respective professions to proclaim His grace. When a believer performs their work with a deep understanding that they are fulfilling God's calling, they are answering His call. Through their respective work, God grants mankind a mandate for a grand mission within His plan. According to some Luther scholars, the doctrine of calling has brought about fundamental changes but remains static. On the one hand, the positive impact of this teaching is that individuals will sincerely accept their job or position and fulfill it responsibly because it is God's calling on their lives.<sup>21</sup>

However, regardless of scholars' perspectives, Luther laid the foundation for a change in the Protestant work ethic and society in Europe as a whole. The ethics he taught became the ethos of the society, precisely because these ethics were no longer limited to certain individuals, but extended to all believers. When an ethic has become the ethos of a society, it will affect everyone in that society, regardless of whether they believe in or understand the theological foundations behind it.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Sinitiere, Phillip Luke and Lee, Shayne. "4. A New Kind of Christian: Brian McLaren and the Emerging Church," in *Holy Mavericks: Evangelical Innovators and the Spiritual Marketplace*, 77-106. New York, USA: New York University Press, 2009. <https://doi.org/10.18574/nyu/9780814752340.003.0005>

<sup>21</sup> Ted K. Bradshaw, "Theories of Poverty and Anti-Poverty Programs in Community Development," *Community Development* 38, no. 1 (March 2007): 7-25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15575330709490182>

<sup>22</sup> Eka Darmaputera, *Pergulatan Kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia: Teks-teks Terpilih Eka Darmaputera* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 107.

Calvin emphasized the pursuit of a holy life in relation to sanctification and justification, asserting that those who believe must strive for sanctity in their daily lives. Those chosen as saints must demonstrate in their lives that they have been chosen. If they are lazy, they must be encouraged through church discipline.<sup>23</sup> If they refuse to improve themselves, their election must be called into question. This emphasis is particularly evident in the Puritan movement. The main focus is on practical piety, or the expression of faith through one's behavior. For the Puritans, no action is outside of the will of God. Thus, Puritan lifestyles were governed by strict regulations and high levels of self-discipline, with Puritan work ethics being particularly noteworthy and frequently discussed.<sup>24</sup> Their hard work is motivated by the belief that work is a divine calling from God, and that individuals are called to glorify God through their daily work. Therefore, the Puritans strive to fulfill this calling through their diligent work, attention to detail, and honesty.

Poverty is not rejected as a reality of life for many people, but instead it is seen as an opportunity to strive for greater holiness. The term used to describe this effort to live a more righteous life is 'exercise' or 'discipline'. For Christians, life is a continuous exercise in battling sin and living according to the will of God. The term 'exercise' used here is synonymous with 'asceticism', which refers specifically to the monastic life. Believers are called to train for a new way of life in the world. According to Calvin, God commands each person to heed their calling in every action throughout their lives. God has established obligations for each person according to their respective life paths. This is called a calling; with greater willingness, rulers and leaders will perform their duties, heads of households will fulfill their obligations, and each person in their own life path will bear the unpleasant, difficult, and boring burdens, if they believe that every person is given a burden by God.<sup>25</sup> The

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<sup>23</sup> Naomi Sampe, Novita Toding, and Hasrath Dewi Ranteallo, "Luther and Calvin, and The Christian Work Ethics," *Melo: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 1, no. 2 (December 16, 2021): 122–37, <https://doi.org/10.34307/mjsaa.v1i2.16>

<sup>24</sup> Darmaputera, *Pergulatan kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia*.

<sup>25</sup> Rannu Sanderan, "Dilema Kepemimpinan Kristen, Tuhan Atau Atasan? : Unsur-Unsur Fundamental Bagi Pemimpin Kristen Demi Menjawabantahkan Imanya Dalam Profesi Dan Pengabdian," *SOPHIA: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristen* 2, no. 2 (December 2, 2021): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.34307/sophia.v2i2.40>

great pleasure lies in the fact that as long as we are obedient to our calling, no job, no matter how small or humble, will not shine and be valued in the presence of God.<sup>26</sup>

Luther's doctrine of the 'calling' or 'vocation' was a fundamental element in the emergence of capitalist culture. Luther's belief that every individual had a specific calling or purpose in life, whether it be in the church or in the secular world, promoted the idea of a work ethic and the importance of fulfilling one's duties to the best of their ability. This concept of the 'calling' laid the foundation for a new way of thinking about work. On the other side Calvin's doctrine of predestination, which held that God predetermined individuals' fates, encouraged a frugal lifestyle and the accumulation of wealth as a sign of God's favor. The Protestant ethic differed from the Catholic tradition of asceticism, which focused on other-worldly asceticism or the renunciation of worldly pleasures for the sake of spiritual pursuits. In contrast, the Protestant ethic emphasized inner-worldly asceticism, where work was seen as a way of serving God and fulfilling one's calling.

Therefore, Calvinists created a certainty of their salvation, in an effort to eliminate all fears of damnation. Christians must prove their election diligently in their work as worldly human beings. The divine calling for work is a command from God for each individual to work for His glory. The providential purpose of job specialization can be understood from its results. Job specialization allows for increased individual ability. In seeking sustenance, believers must follow their calling by utilizing every opportunity to gain an advantage. Humans can work to become wealthy for God, but not for the flesh and sin.

Max Weber, a German sociologist, argued that the Protestant Reformation played a crucial role in the development of the modern capitalist ethos, as the Reformation instilled a new attitude towards work and wealth accumulation. This attitude was characterized by an inner-worldly asceticism, which emphasized a disciplined, hardworking, and frugal lifestyle. The goal was not only to glorify God but also to achieve success in one's worldly endeavors. In contrast, the Protestant ethic emphasized inner-worldly asceticism, where work was seen as a way of serving God and fulfilling one's calling. According to Weber, the

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<sup>26</sup> Yohanes Calvin, *Institutio [Christianae religionis]: Pengajaran agama Kristen*, trans. Winarsih, Aritonang J.S., and Th. van den End (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008), 162.

Protestant ethic gave rise to a new attitude towards work that emphasized the value of hard work, thrift, and efficiency, which were crucial for success in the new capitalist society.

Overall, the Christian work ethic played a crucial role in shaping the development of modern capitalism. Its emphasis on hard work, frugality, and a disciplined lifestyle helped to create a new ethos of success that became central to capitalist societies. While the Christian work ethic has its roots in the Protestant Reformation, its influence can be seen in various cultural and religious traditions worldwide, where the value of work and self-discipline continues to be highly prized. The Christian work ethic is thus a testament to the enduring influence of religion and spirituality on the development of human societies. In conclusion, the concept of the "Christian Work Ethic" refers to the idea that work is not only a means of earning a living but also a calling from God.

## Conclusion

The Christian view of work, deeply rooted in biblical teachings and theological interpretations, highlights several crucial themes. Foremost, work is regarded as a divine calling, bestowed upon all believers by God. This calling transcends mere religious roles, emphasizing that every occupation, no matter how ordinary, carries a profound divine purpose. This perspective elevates the inherent dignity of labor, infusing it with profound significance.

Contrary to the belief that work is a curse or a consequence of human sin, the Christian perspective deems it a divine blessing, rooted in the act of creation itself. From the earliest days in the garden of Eden to the present, work has remained an integral aspect of human existence, affording individuals the opportunity to partake in God's creative endeavors and contribute to the betterment of the world.

Moreover, the Christian outlook on work underscores the interplay between faith and labor. It calls upon believers to approach their work with diligence, integrity, and a spirit of service, thus reflecting their love for God and their dedication to fulfilling His calling. Work is not perceived as a means to achieve salvation, but rather as an expression of gratitude and obedience to God.

Within the context of blessings, work is seen as a conduit through which individuals can reap the rewards of their efforts and find contentment. The Bible encourages believers to embrace their work and strive for excellence, recognizing that it paves the way to prosperity and well-being.

Furthermore, the concept of salvation is intricately woven into the Christian work ethic. Although salvation is ultimately a divine gift attained through faith in Christ, the way individuals manifest their faith in their daily work serves as tangible evidence of their salvation. Diligence, hard work, and the pursuit of sanctification are regarded as hallmarks of a life transformed by Christ.

The Christian theological perspective on work reveals its multifaceted significance in relation to blessings and salvation. It elevates work to the status of a divine calling, underscores its role as a blessing from God, and emphasizes its inseparable connection to faith and salvation. This viewpoint offers profound insights into the intersection of faith and labor, shaping not only the lives of individuals but also the ethical and moral fabric of societies influenced by Christian values.

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