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**Trinity and Work: A critique
of the view of the daily work in
other Religions and in Marxism**



Pro mundis

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Trinity and Work: A critique of the view of daily work in other Religions and in Marxism¹

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We want to discuss a biblical theology of work to show the importance of the dogma of the triune God for our ethics and for the reconstruction of society.

All employee morals, every work ethic, is an echo of the god of a society and its workers. I want to give some examples how the nature of the triune God of the Old and New Testament is reflected in the biblical Laws concerning the work of man. Each time we will also ask what we lose if another god or another religion or world view takes the place of the Creator revealed in the Bible.

Most times I will use the word triune instead of Trinity. The German word „Dreieinigkeit“ (threeneness, triunity) shows very well that Trinity has two enemies: the „one“ stands against polytheism, the „three“ against monistic monotheism. Polytheism will vitiate biblical faith as much as nontrinitarian monotheism. The English term Trinity does not emphasize this while „triune“ does. „Triunity“ would be a good alternative for Trinity.

The Significance of Work Ethics²

Wealth cannot be defined merely as a matter of possession in terms of money or other material values. In that sense of the word, Saudi Arabia is immensely wealthy. In terms of the individual's capacity for work, productivity, innovation or prospects for the future once the oil wells have failed, Saudi Arabia is still extremely poor³. George Gilder points to a similar example in European history: 17th century Spain was as wealthy as modern Saudi Arabia. Silver from the Bolivian Potosi mines provided immense riches, but, unable to transform its resources into true wealth, the country soon reverted to its former state of poverty, while seemingly poorer European countries blossomed with industry.⁴

No, wealth is closely related to work and with its profits. For this reason, the morals of labour are an essential element of any economic ethical system or of any economic condition. Behind all labour is an ethical system, and labour is always the outcome of an ethical conviction.

The significance of ethics in labour morality can be seen in a few principles of biblical work ethics, which we will investigate more closely later. In the Bible, labour possesses a dignity founded in the fact that Man was created in the image of God. Increased responsibility results in increased work. At the same time, work is always shared according to the talents involved, for we work for each other. Work is also diverse, for each person has multiple talents.

The proposition of this article can be summarised in the words written by Karl Bernhard Hundeshagen 1853:

„The immeasurable cultural significance of the Christian dogma of the Divine Trinity lies in the fact that this idea provides the prerequisites for the consummation of the idea of humanity.“⁴⁵

God is a God who works

1. The triune God is a God who works. In the Bible, man's work has a high value, because it reflects a God who is working Himself. The triune God had been working prior to men's existence in Creation. Because He is triune, He even worked in eternity before Creation came into existence. The Persons of the Trinity worked with and for each other.

In the Bible everything good comes from the Trinity. Because the members of the Trinity speak to each other and Jesus is the Word, we can talk to each other. Because the Persons of the Trinity do not live for themselves, but live for each other, men can be told to do the same. Because

the Persons of the Trinity discuss with each other, not to decide things totally alone is a biblical principle. In the Trinity, obedience exists without anybody being forced to do something: love and Law are identical. Communication, love, honouring each other and working to a goal outside of ourselves come from the Trinity. But the Trinity existed before the world was created. So loving, talking, helping, listening and obedience exist eternally. God does not need men to exist or to be good.

For many other adherents of monotheistic religions like the Muslims or those Jews who do not accept that the Trinity is rooted in the Old Testament (I am talking about Jewish theology, not about a biblical view of the Jewish people) this is different. Of course God existed before the world was created. But he can only love Creation. There was nobody to love before he created someone. Both religions can only speak about how God deals with Creation. Christians have the revelation about how God deals with Himself because He is triune.

Man's work has a dignity in the truest sense of the word. In the Ten Commandments work is commanded by God for the following reason: „You shall labour six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. ... For in six days the LORD made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day“ (Ex 20,9–11). In fact the Creation Account states that God „rested from all His work“ (or „from all His labour“) (Gen 2,2) on the seventh day of

Creation. The Bible often speaks about the work and labour of God. So David prays for „the works of your hands“ (Ps 138,8), Solomon calls God a wise „craftsman“ (Prov 8,30, similarly Ps 104,24) and the psalmist says: „the one watching over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep“ (Ps 121,4).

Work and labour are a major part of the image of God. If man and woman were created in the image and likeness (Gen 1,26) of a working God they must be working themselves.

If a god or the highest authority of a society's law does not work himself, there is no dignity of labour. Buddhism is the best example. The Buddhistic ethic of work is inspired by a god who is demonstrating by his very image as a fat, sitting idol, that the goal of everything is not to work but to „slumber and sleep“, and nevertheless to be rich and well-fed. Buddhism even does not have a word for „work“ and work is no topic in Buddhist ethics⁶. Buddhism and Socialism have a lot in common when it comes to work and economy, as several Buddhist authors have clearly stated⁷.

Two quotations from antiquity will show that the god of a society is the source of its evaluation of labour:

„In Greek society labour was viewed as an inescapable fate imposed by the gods. To be like the gods meant to live free from labour. In the world of the ancient Orient, labour was viewed as a burden, as slave labor for the gods, who therefore were free from labour. The goal was to withdraw from this service, from this

labour as far as possible. Labour was a burden without dignity.“⁸

„Classical antiquity assigned the task of labour to the unfree, outlawed classes. It viewed the emancipation from the necessity to work for wages alone being worthy of a human. Thus it dishonoured labour connected with bodily strain.“⁹

This view later heavily influenced Christian theology as another quotation will show:

„Thomas Aquinas held the view that only necessity forced people to work. It is no wonder that the Middle Ages saw the use of work in overcoming laziness, in taming the body and in earning one's living. Beside this there is a tendency to be seen to take over the Greek (mainly Aristotelian) view to emphasize contemplative life and to disregard an active life. Thus it was legitimate that the members of the classes of knights and priests were free from bodily labour.“¹⁰

In spite of this heathen influence, we have to agree with Hermann Cremer who adds to his evaluation of the Greek and Roman view of work:

„It was only Christendom respectively the religion of revelation, the world has to thank for another view of the nature and value of labour.“¹¹

Alan Richardson showed how the Reformation revived the biblical view of work:

„The Reformers, Luther and Calvin, were the first to use the terms calling and vocation for the daily tasks and positions in life of men. It is important to note that they did this in protest against the use of language in the Middle Ages which was restricted to the call to a monastic life. They wanted to destroy the double standard of ethics and to show that God can be glorified in the world of workdays also.“⁴²

Christian missions exported this Protestant work ethos to all continents. Gustav Warneck, the German father of Protestant missiology, wrote:

„... Christian world missions showed, through word and example, that labour (which through slavery carried the stigma of infamy), was based on a commandment of God ...“⁴³.

God is the hardest worker because He is the highest authority

2. The triune God works more than anybody else. Therefore, the more responsibility one carries the more work he has.

The example of Buddhism or the Greek and Roman view made clear the goal of these societies to become like their gods, which is to become free of labour. If the one on the very top is not working at all, hard work will be found at the bottom only. The higher you rise, the more people will live by the work of others. Exploitation is unavoidable in such a society.

In the Bible it is just the other way round. We already saw that God „neither slumbers nor sleeps“ (Ps 121,4). Because the triune God has done and does more than anybody else, He is the example that responsibility means work. Was it not Paul the apostle who wrote twice „I laboured more than all the others“ (1Cor 15,10; 2Cor 11,23)? This was no boasting but the natural result of his high responsibility as an apostle. Being an apostle did not mean more leisure time, many servants or greater wealth, but more tears and labour and less sleep. This was the reason why Martin Luther, in the beginning of the Reformation, when he still believed in the possibility of changing Papalism, wrote a letter to the Pope rebuking him that he should work more towards the well-being of the Church than any monk or priest including Luther himself. He asked the Pope how he could sleep in peace in view of the responsibility of a worldwide church in turmoil. In spite of his responsibility, the Pope spent much time for pleasure and feasts.

If you lose the triune God, the Christian attitude that more responsibility brings more work will change into the humanistic and tyrannical attitude that people in low positions work for people in high positions so that they do not need to work themselves.¹⁴

Marxism blames society for the exploitation of the lower classes, so it seems to have a negative view of people in high positions who let others work but do not work themselves. But Marxism has no other definition of work. Work is always the exploited work of the lower class. As

Marxism only has „matter“ and „history“ as its gods there is no way to overcome exploitation. No wonder Socialist governments and societies are the best examples for the Humanistic principle that the higher you climb, the less hard work you have. No wonder that Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels never were workers but lazy employers. Marx himself really earned money only once for a very short time – as the owner of a Marxist newspaper. Later on he lived on the money of Engels who was rich because he inherited factories from his father. There is not the slightest hint that Marx or Engels ever had a guilty conscience using the money they had won from the hard work of workers, or that Marx was sad about his life which was as unproductive as possible, if you do not take into account some thick books which never got ready in time. Konrad Löw states:

„According to their own theory, Marx and Engels always lived by money they did not deserve.“⁴⁵

That in Communist states the production and the quality of the products continually decline the time is not only the result of Statism and wrong State management. A major reason is the employee morals as the ethic of work is an echo of the atheistic religion. If hard work is seen as exploitation how will Marxism explain workers that this is different if the employer is a Marxist State?

„Atheistic Capitalism“ – as I call a Capitalism which denies God’s Laws and

becomes a religion of Mammon – soon reaches the same situation as Marxism, Buddhism and other religions. Many people in Western society have the goal of being rich in the sense of being free of work. If the results of this growing attitude cannot be seen at once, the reason is that the biblical Protestant ethic of work is still functioning in many areas, although the foundation of it has been lost. A President, Chancellor or Prime Minister is still expected to work harder than a normal citizen. He would not get many votes if he would act like the kings of Absolutism and the Enlightenment who most of the time engaged in feasting and pleasure. (One French king only received diplomats while on the toilet!)

That more power leads to more labour, is a unique Christian principle because every authority comes from God, who is the infallible example to everyone in authority, that authority means to work for the good of others. Parents have authority over their children. Does this save work? No, it causes them labour and costs them much sleep. Woe to parents who want authority without labour. Woe to anyone who wants the rights of authority but not its duties! God only delegates authority together with the duty to work!

This is also true of work in general. The duty of men to subdue the earth (Gen 1,26–30) was the command to work. The garden of Eden was no land of Cockaigne, no fool’s paradise, as the paradise of Marxism or Islam is. In Islam man did not work in Paradise, his work did not come under a curse and he will not be serving in Heaven¹⁶. „The LORD God took the

man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and to take care of it“ (Gen 2,15). (God here names the two sides of every work, which is change and continuity, shape and preserve. Humanism always emphasizes one or the other, the Bible keeps them together.) Before the Fall, we see a variety of work Adam and Eve had to perform. They had to water and grow the plants (Gen 2,5), had to get gold and precious stones (Gen 2,10–13), had to provide their food (Gen 2,9) and had to give a name to every animal (Gen 2,19–20). Adam was the first scientific biologist. It is incredible that the Creation Account states that God gave Adam the right to name the animals and God was to use Adam’s names: „and whatever the man called each living creature that was its name“ (Gen 2,19). Listen to a summary of the Old Testament and Jewish view of work.

Work „is not the result or the punishment of sin - according to the unanimous view of Jewish exegetes of Gen 3,17–19 it is only the hardness and the repeated failure which stand in opposition to the ease and freedom from care in Paradise. Bodily labour in general is not despised among the Jews as it was among the Greeks and Romans.“¹⁷

Wilhelm Lütgert similarly writes:

„Not work itself but the disproportion of work and returns or result and pain and toil which stand in no proportion to the output, are the results of sin.“¹⁸

By the way: According to Isaiah in the Millennium (see Is 65,17–25) work and labour will no longer be in vain: „They will build houses and dwell in them, they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. ... my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain ...“ (Is 65,21–23).

Our heavenly, eternal fellowship with God will be spent in no idle Land of Cockaigne, but will be filled with praise and service for our Creator, unlike Islam’s Paradise, in which the believers lie in beds, eat and drink, attended by beautiful virgins. The Islamic paradise has no labouring Adam, no curse of work and no service in Heaven.¹⁹

God’s work will receive its wages

In the Bible, work has dignity and worth as such whether it is paid or not. But the Law quoted frequently and often referred to: „The worker deserves his wages“ (1Tim 5,20; Lk 10,7) is the result of this. Work is not worth something only if it is paid but work is paid because it is worth something.

How seriously the Bible takes the commandment to pay any work is seen in Jer 22,13: „woe to him who builds his palace by unrighteousness, his upper rooms by injustice, making his countrymen work for nothing, not paying them for their labour“.

Therefore all work is worth a reward, but this reward need not be money. Every person can decide which reward he wants or renounce earthly rewards. Take, for example, the praise of the good wife in Prov 31. Work payed for and work not payed for directly stand side by side. The work of this housewife is of full value.

God's command to work six days, as we find it in the Ten Commandments, is a general command for men and women. People should not sit around, but work, except on Sunday. Work is not merely a natural law and a natural necessity, just because otherwise we would starve, but a created order. Therefore „one of the most severe charges of the prophets is against rich people (e. g. Amos 6,3–6)²⁰. You may be rich but you may not be lazy. It is the will of God and He has given us Creation for this purpose.

Ecclesiastes 5,9–19 contrasts love of money with joy in labour: „He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt. As he came forth of his mother's womb, naked shall he return to go as he came, and shall take nothing of his labour, which he may carry away in his hand. And this also is a sore evil, that in all points as he came, so

shall he go: and what profit hath he that hath laboured for the wind? All his days also he eateth in darkness, and he hath much sorrow and wrath with his sickness. Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God. For he shall not much remember the days of his life; because God answereth him in the joy of his heart.“

Wealth can indeed be a good thing to be enjoyed, but not when it becomes the highest value of life or destroys the goodness of labour.

What can an unemployed worker do? Work, of course! Although we do not want to play down the problem of unemployment the unemployed man can do many jobs without wage. He can help his family, the needy or his church. Lethargy or blaming others is no solution to unemployment.

Excursus on Marxism

What has Marxism to say concerning just wages? Nothing! For Marx in Capitalism all wages are unjust but none has the right to change this. The difference between a Christian social reformation and a Marxist revolution becomes especially clear in Marx' paper „Critique of

the Declaration of Gotha“ („Kritik des Gothaer Programms“) written when he was an old man and commenting on the party platform of the Social Democratic Party of Germany. The demand of this Socialist Party „that the whole product of work has to belong according to equal right to everybody according to his need while everybody has the duty to work“²¹ – in itself full of contradictions – is totally denied by Marx, because it is still based on some concept of law and justice. Marx writes: „It is the right of inequality concerning its content as all right is“²². He goes on: „The equal right here is still, in principle, the bourgeois right ...“²³. This cannot be accepted because it still „silently accepts a difference of individual gifts and therefore of different efficiency of workers as natural privileges“²⁴.

Marx studied law at the university of Bonn and so he knew what he was talking about. He did not want to change any legal positions but wait for his prophecies to become true. His prophecies conclude that the Communist society will not bring immediate results:

*„But these grievances are unavoidable in the first phase of the Communist society as it has come out of the capitalistic society after long labour pains.“*²⁵

(In German Marx is here speaking in prophetic perfect, as the prophets of the Old Testament often did!) Engels states it even more directly:

„We give up any attempt to make clear to the stubborn jurist, that Marx never

*demanded the „right to the full yield of work“ and that he never articulates any legal demand of any kind in any of his theoretical writings.“*²⁶

He goes on:

*„Marx realizes the historical unavoidability, which is the right of the ancient slave-master, the feudal lord of the Middle Ages etc., as a lever of human development for a certain historical period. He acknowledges the right of exploitation for some time ...“*²⁷.

No one who thinks that Marx was fighting for the rights of the workers, has read Marx or Engels. According to both the worker must submit to the historical necessity and wait until the war of the classes comes to its next stage. Justice cannot be sued for. Marxism blames Christianity for consoling people with a heavenly hope, because he does not understand that this hope is the base for changes in this world and for any justice. But Marx himself consoles people with his prophetic vision. But Paradise will come only after the Marxists of today have died. No Marxist has ever gotten anything for his hope, either on earth or in Heaven!

For example, Marx fought against the British and German laws against the slave-like work of children. He said laws like this were „reactionary“²⁸, because they are incompatible with Capitalism and large industries – he was proved wrong by history – and because it slowed down the development of the last phase of Capitalism. Marx did not want to help the weak

but to see his prophecies come true. Marx did not say any word about the exploited children themselves, but saw only the problem that Marxists would lose a major force for revolution if children were to grow up under good conditions²⁹.

The boundless disregard of the rights of workers and every act towards a just relationship between employers and employees can be proven by many quotations from Marx and Engels³⁰. Marx wrote about the German Parliament:

„Because you may use the parliament only as a means of agitation, you never may agitate in it for something reasonable or something being of direct interest for the workers.“³¹

Marxism has the same problem as atheistic Capitalism. Both call for just labour, but have no law governing this justice. While Marx does not accept any justice put into laws, his capitalistic friends try to put their views into laws. But the religion of Mammon can only realize justice in the form of money. Justice always means getting more money for working less. They forget that justice only can be justice, if it regulates every area of life, not just money matters.

God's work is work for God

If the triune God did not work for us, we could not work at all. Although man was created to work and not to be lazy, the command to work is only part of the command to serve God. In the Bible,

human work is always limited. In spite of its dignity, work is never the first task but always the second. Work is never an end in itself! It is a unique Christian view to combine the highest praise of work as nothing less than working in the image of God, with the limitation of work, so that man is never totally swallowed by work, but keeps work under his and God's dominion. Only if you see both sides at the same time can you understand the effective results of a biblical work ethic.

This is the meaning of the Sabbath. The Sabbath reminds man, that he can only work on „the six workdays“ (Ez 46,1), because his Creator works for him and has given him Creation for his use. God also knows that to work day and night without exception is not good for man.

Although Man was created to work,³² the biblical concept of labour always implies limited work. The individual is not to overwork or to drown in his endeavors. We could also say, „The Bible does not preach work for its own sake. Labour is always secondary to God and to His righteousness,“ (Matt. 6,33).

This is the reason for the day of rest. Man is to remember that he can only work for six days (Eze. 46:1), because the Creator made him and put the rest of Creation at his disposal.

Helmut Thielicke notes that the biblical concept of work lies somewhere „... between the ancient Grecian contempt of work, and its modern idealisation.“³³ Work is to fill our lives, but is not the highest or most decisive value.

We already discussed religions with a low view of hard work. But there are

also religions with a high view of labour which miss the correction of work ethics by a whole day without labour. A Japanese lawyer's association states that in Japan 10.000 people die every year through overwork³⁴. „Death through overwork“ is accepted by the Japanese Minister of Labour as official cause of death. There is an special word for death through overwork in the Japanese language, „karoshi“. Death through overwork is said to be the result of too much overtime work and missing recreation. Often „the home is becoming a mere sleeping-place“³⁵.

The seventh day without work reminds men that without God they could not work at all. „Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labour in vain. Unless the LORD watches over the city, the watchmen stand guard in vain. In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat, for He grants sleep to those He loves“ (Ps 127,1–2). Prov 10,22 says it even shorter: „The blessing of the LORD brings wealth, and no trouble does add anything to it“ (see also Mt 6,24–34). And Jesus tells His disciples: „for without me you can do nothing“ (John 15,5).

Pietistic and liberal exegets alike see verses like this as referring to religious duties, some spiritual blessing or some symbolical house. The Pietist believes that he cannot evangelize without Jesus or cannot grow His Church without Jesus. Of course this is true, but the quoted texts concern all work, everything men do and of course his daily job! According to Ex 31,2–6 and 35,31 the artists could build the beautiful tabernacle, because God had given them His Spirit with the gifts of their crafts.

Therefore to be thankful is a necessary part of every work. „Is 28,23–29 says that the outcome of the farmers ploughing, sowing, planting, riping, threshing, mowing and baking bread go back to God's teaching“³⁶: „His God instructs him and teaches him the right way“ (Is 28,26)³⁷.

There are several other instituted ways of expressing the truth that work is not everything, and that man needs to thank God for the ability to work. The tithe comes exactly from what a man earns. The tithe is not just a portion of the income but it is the firstfruit of our work to demonstrate that God and thanksgiving comes first before we use the results of our work. The same is true of the sacrifices. Gustav Friedrich Oehler has pointed out that all the plants and animals for sacrifice were „the ordinary food the people would win through their normal work“³⁸. This can be seen in the first recorded sacrifice in history by Abel and Cain who both offered the firstfruits of their profession. This again shows the close relationship between daily work, service and thanksgiving to God.

No work is done for oneself or one's family or one's employer but in the last analysis for the supreme Employer³⁹, God Himself. Thus Paul says: „And whatever you do whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him“ (Col 3,17). Again this may not be narrowed down in a Pietistic sense. This is proved by one of the following verses written to the slaves, but valid for everybody: „Whatever you do, work at it with all your

heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Jesus you are serving“ (Col 3,23-24).

„The nobility of work no longer flows from what you do but from why you do it. Because of the commission to service by God and the service character of work to one’s neighbour, the least technical work has the same value as „intellectual“ work.“⁴⁰

Many people blame the New Testament because it commands the slaves to be good workers (e. g. Tit 2,9–11; Eph 6,5–9; Col 3,22–4,1; 1Tim 6,1–2; 1Pet 2,18–25; 1Cor 7,21–24). We already heard the reason for it. The slave works for God, not for his employer. This is real freedom! „Slaves, obey your masters in all things not with eyeservice or as menpleasers, but with a sincere heart and reverence for the Lord“ (Col 3,22). There is no dirty or bad work in the Bible, except those works and professions which are directly forbidden by God like prostitution. The human employer is not the real giver of wages, but the great Employer of Creation. Only because God, the general Employer, gives a just wage, must human employers do the same.

The same Paul that tells the slaves to be good workers, writes to them: „Each one should remain in the calling wherein he was called. Were you called being a slave, do not let it trouble you. But if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is

the Lord’s freedman; likewise he who was a free man when he was called is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price, do not become slaves of men“ (1Cor 7,20–23). In the letter to Philemon Paul works toward the release of a slave. Is this a contradiction? No, because Paul says: „But if you can gain your freedom, do it“. But the slave does not need to wait a life long until he can live a fruitful life. He is called by God, called to His Heavenly kingdom, but also called to His work. Not the slave’s work for men makes his life worth living but his being called by his Creator and redeemer.

The penetrating power of the Christian faith in history is based on this fact. The Christian can serve God as a slave without any change of the outward circumstances, and he can obtain freedom, and work for release and change the circumstances. He has life in the fullest sense in every situation. Because he has everything already, he can change everything.

In Col 3,25–4,1 we find strict admonitions for the lords of the slaves. They are reminded of their lawful duties because God does not have regard for the person. The Christian slave does not however need to wait until his lord becomes righteous. He can live according to God’s will here and now! He does not need to wait until the world has changed totally, as thought in Hinduism, Buddhism, Marxism and other religions!

For the Marxist, man and work are actually identical. He cannot imagine work apart from man, as he denies a God who could be working also; and he cannot imagine man apart from work which

makes something like the Sabbath, recreation or a Sunday service impossible. Friedrich Engels writes:

„Work is the source of all wealth, the political economists tell us. Yes, it is, besides nature which offers the material which work changes to wealth. But work is infinitely more than this. It is the first fundamental condition of human life and this in such a measure that we must say in a certain sense: work has created man himself.“⁶¹

That work created men is only another way of saying that man created himself as the following quotation from Karl Marx proves:

„Because for Socialist man the whole of so-called world history is nothing else than the begetting of men through human labour, this is the rising of nature through men, he has the vivid and irresistible evidence of his birth through himself, of his own process of origin.“⁶²

If man and work are identical and work is the highest value of society, this work will not be a positive value approved by all, but a tyrannical value hated by all but a few. Because work is not under God's dominion and under the responsibility of man, it becomes a terrible tyranny. Marxism tries to fight without really offering any way to escape. If work and man are identical, how can man escape the tyranny of work without losing himself?

The toil of work

Work is always work for God. And one cannot talk about work without talking about God. That is the only reason why the curse for the sin of Man in the Fall was a curse of Man's work (Gen 3,17–19; 5,29). Man thought he could have the authority of dominion and work without the One making both possible, namely God. Because of the curse, Man is reminded day by day what it means to despise the Creator. Whoever wants labour without problems denies the Fall and denies that only God can be the source of work which leads to full results and to true rest. Without the sacrifice of the second Person of the Trinity there could be no hope that this situation would ever change. Meanwhile Christians take even the stress and toil of work out of the hand of God. „What does the worker gain from his toil? I have seen the burden God has given to men“ (Eccl 3,9–10). The toil is given by God. Solomon does not come to the conclusion that it is better not to work at all but that we are happy about the results of our work as a gift from God: „I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That every man may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil, this is a gift from God“ (Eccl 3,12–13).

The Bible commands us to take the toil upon ourselves and not to put the burden on others. A thief only puts the burden on others as does the State using taxes to redistribute wealth from one to the other. Paul's admonitions do not need long explanations: „We urge you, brothers and

sisters⁴³, ... make it your ambition to live quietly, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, so that you walk honestly toward those who are outside and so that you will not be dependent on anybody“ (1Thess 4,10–12). „We hear that some among you walk disorderly, working not at all. They are busybodies. Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quietness and to eat their own bread“ (2Thess 3,11–12). What Paul taught others he and his co-workers did himself: „For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not disorderly when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked day and night, labouring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you“ (2Thess 3,7–9)

This does not mean, of course, that one may never assist an unemployed person. On the contrary, Paul commands a thief, who has been living at the cost of others, to help others: „Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth,“ (Eph. 4:28). The fact that the former thief is to provide for himself is assumed, not even explicitly mentioned. The main thing is that he now also works for others’ sakes.

Basilius the Great⁴⁴ (ca. 329–379 A. D.) discusses Christian work ethics by referring to II Thessalonians and emphasized that everyone should work, that work is intended to provide for the poor, and that it is only possible to work, when

our final hope is not in work but in God, who makes labour possible.

Again, God is the best example. He took the whole sorrow, toil and pain of the work of redemption on Himself. God gave his only Son to redeem us from the Fall. He did not put His burden on us but carried our burden to the Cross. If theology loses the triune God, it loses God, who carried the burdens of His chosen people. Neither Islam nor Marxism, neither Buddhism nor Statism have anything to offer instead.

Laziness and Industry in the Book of Proverbs

Prov 6:6-11: „Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.“

Prov 10:4: „He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.“

Prov 10:26: „As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.“

Prov 11:16: „The slothful come to want: but the diligent support themselves with wealth.“

Prov 12:24: „The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.“

Prov 12:27: „he slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.“

Prov 13:4: „The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.“

Prov 15:19: „The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns: but the way of the righteous is made plain.“

Prov 18:9: „He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.“

Prov 19:15: „Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.“

Prov 19:24: „A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.“

Prov 20:4: „he sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.“

Prov 20:13: „Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty; open thine eyes, and thou shalt be satisfied with bread!“

Prov 21:5: „The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.“

Prov 21:25: „The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour.“

Prov 22:13: „The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets. (He is not willing to take a risk and seeks for excuses to avoid work: See also:)

Prov 26:13: „The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.“

Prov 24:27: „Prepare thy work without, and make it fit for thyself in the field; and afterwards build thine house.“

Pro 24:30-34: „I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down. Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction. Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.“

Prov 24:14-16: „So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul: when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward, and thy expectation shall not be cut off. Lay not wait, O wicked man, against the dwelling of the righteous; spoil not his resting place: For a just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.“

Prov 31:13+18+27: (The virtuous woman) „She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands.

She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.“

Further Texts about Work in Proverbs

Prov 12:11: „He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread: but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding.“

Prov 12:14: „man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth: and the recompence of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him.“

Prov 14:4: „Where no oxen are, the crib is clean: but much increase is by the strength of the ox.“

Prov 14:23: „In all labour there is profit: but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury.“

Prov 16:26: „He that laboureth laboureth for himself; for his mouth craveth it of him.“

Solomon's proverbs often consider the value of labour and the danger and degradation of laziness.

„Accordingly, the essential characteristics of indolence are: weak, dishonest excuses (see 22:13), excessive sleep (6:9ff; 19:15; 24:33), laziness even at meals (19:24), overconfidence in one's own abilities. The tendency to surrender to momentary impulses leads to his fall (Prov. 21:25)⁴⁵.

God's work is divided labour

3. The work of the triune God is divided work. The Persons of the triune God divide their labour and do not all have the same task and job, as 1Cor 12,4–6 clearly shows. Because their work is different, yet directed to one goal, the Trinity demonstrates what true fellowship in love and help, word and discussion, plan and fulfillment means, even prior to Creation. This is the infallible diversity in unity. Only if you have diversity in unity and unity in diversity, only if you believe in the biblical God of the universe (unity in diversity), work can be a way to serve each other. God wants men to serve each other, as the Persons of the Trinity serve each other. We depend on each other because we have different callings, different abilities, different gifts, and different tasks. The emphasis on the gifts of the Spirit for the Church proves this beyond doubt. God does not want everybody to do the same – except keeping His commands – but wants a diversity of tasks, deeds, and actions, in the Church and elsewhere.

The family is an excellent example of the centrality of divided work in life. In the family, people learn the difference of the genders – or they do not learn it at all. In the family people learn the different work of parents and children, of old and young people – or they do not learn it at all. In the family people learn how different people are under one common God – or they do not learn to accept that men are different. In the family, people learn that life and work means to serve one another – or they never learn it.

It is interesting that Marx saw the division of labour as the Fall of mankind with the immediate result of marriage and private ownership. Man was created through his labour, but the alienation of man from work took place through the division of labour. Exploitation comes through divided work, through marriage and through private ownership. (By the way: Marx talks about the introduction of divided labour, marriage and private ownership as the „economic fall“ using the German technical term („Sündenfall“) for the Fall of man recorded in Gen 3. He consciously put his „fall“ in place of the biblical Fall which would be evidence enough that he founded a revival religion, not just an economic theory. It takes as much faith to believe in the biblical Fall as it does to believe in the Marxist fall.)

Marx was right in seeing that there is no marriage and no private ownership without the division of labour. But because he calls sin what the Bible declares to be the good Creation of God, he cannot offer any help to overcome exploitation. His only help is his prophecy that one day the division of labour will end. He wrote:

„In a higher phase of the Communist society, after the enslaving submission of individuals under the division of labour and with it the contrast between intellectual and bodily work have disappeared; after work is no longer a means to live but has become itself the first condition of life; after all springs of collective wealth flow fuller through the development of the individuals and his powers of producti-

ivity; only then can the narrow bourgeois horizon of justice be crossed and the society can write on its banner: Everyone according to his abilities, everyone according to his needs!‘‘⁴⁶

Marx never explained how this will be possible without the division of labour. He never answered the question whether the end of divided labour means that everybody has to do the same. He never answered how a society will function without divided labour. He just prophesied his unitarian hope because he hated the triune God, the source of all true diversity.

God's work is service to one another

In the Trinity the Persons work for each other. In and after Creation, God works for Creation. Work is never only work for the benefit of the one working. It is always at the same time work for oneself and for others. It is the triune God who makes it possible that work for oneself and work for others do not stand in opposition to each other but always go hand in hand. As God's work towards His own glory is always at the same time work for another Person of the Trinity and/or for His Creation, so man's work is designed to help himself and to help others.

Work is service. Our languages have taken over this concept under Christian influence. We use the Latin word for servant, „minister“, to name the pastor as well as a politician in high position. How can the worker in a position of authority

get the honorary title „servant“? Because the highest authority, Jesu Christ Himself, is a servant. We talk about „civil service“, about military service, about „length of service“ and „years of service“ instead of years of work.

Therefore the wages are never used for the worker only.

„The New Testament does not underestimate the fact that work serves to provide one's own costs of living (Eph 4,28; 1Thess 4,11; 2Thess 3,8, 12). But on the other side, the wages are not only intended for the one doing the work.“⁴⁷

A fixed part of the income, the tithe, belongs to God. The community and the State may lawfully take taxes (even though surely not as much as today). Whoever does not pay for the living of his family, including his parents, is worse than the heathen (1Tim 5,8; Mk 7,9–13). There are other social duties.

The best example is Paul's admonition to former thieves: „He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need“ (Eph 4,28). Paul even does not mention that the former thief lives on his income, although this is implied. Paul only talks about the possibility to help others if you work.

Divine Providence determines whether man enjoys the fruit of his labour or not. Christians are grateful when they can use part of their products for their own enjoyment, for they know that: „It is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and

to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion,“ (Ecc. 5,18).

We must recognise two sides of the picture: On the one hand, we are to work in order to provide for ourselves. On the other, our labour is to serve others, either because our efforts are directly for their sakes (for example, the work of a bus driver), because the product serves some purpose (a baby buggy, for example), or because the labourer gives part of his wages to others (to support his family, for example). John Stott calls this „the biblical principle of reciprocity“⁴⁸ (clt? English?). These two aspects cannot be played off against each other, as a secular scientist, who seems to have understood biblical principles better than some Christians, once wrote:

„The belief that others' happiness contributes to one's own wellbeing does not appeal to the human heart. Yet, it is the Golden Rule of the Economy, the key to peace and wealth and the requisite for progress.“⁴⁹

Annotations

¹ Reprinted from „Trinity and Work: A Critique of the View of Daily Work in Other Religions and in Marxism“. *Christianity and Society* 6 (1996) 2: 14–20.

² See: Alfred de Quervain. *Ruhe und Arbeit, Lohn und Eigentum*. Ethik II Vol. 3. Evangelischer Verlag: Zollikon (Switzerland), 1956. pp. 17–112+149–165; Miroslav Volf. „Arbeit, Geist und Schöpfung“. pp. 32–60 in: Hermann Sautter, Miroslav Volf. *Gerechtigkeit, Geist und Schöpfung: Die Oxford-Erklärung zur Frage von Glaube und Wirtschaft*. Brockhaus: Wuppertal, 1992 and the excellent summary in Derek Prime. *Biblische Lebenshilfen im Grundriß*. Verlag der Francke-Buchhandlung: Marburg, 1990. pp. 42–43, as well as the somewhat critical but important studies in: Walther Bienert. *Die Arbeit nach der Lehre der Bibel*. Evangelisches Verlagswerk: Stuttgart, 1954 (pp. 414–428 extensive bibliography); Alan Richardson. *Die biblische Lehre von der Arbeit*. Anker-Verlag: Frankfurt, 1953; Udo Krolzik. *Umweltkrise: Folge des Christentums?* Kreuz Verlag: Stuttgart, 1979. pp. 61–70. The study closest to my results is Doug Sherman; William Hendricks. *Your Work Matters to God*. NavPress: Colorado Springs (Colorado), 1990Pb; John Stott. *Christsein in den Brennpunkten unserer Zeit ... 3 ... im sozialen Bereich*. Francke: Marburg, 1988 [Engl. 1984]. p. 11–64; Michael A. Zigarelli. *Christianity 9 to 5: Living Your Faith at Work*. Beacon Hill Press: Kansas City (Mich.), 1998; „Arbeit“. pp. 189–204 in: *Lexikon der Bio-ethik*. 3 Vols., Vol. 1. Gütersloher Verlagshaus: Gütersloh, 1998; Walter Künneth. *Moderne Wirtschaft – Christliche Existenz*. Claudius: München, 1959. pp. 6–8, Abschnitt „Arbeit als Stiftung Gottes“.

³ See: George Gilder. *Reichtum und Armut*. dtv: München, 1983. pp. 64–65.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵ Karl Bernhard Hundeshagen. *Ueber die Natur und geschichtliche Entwicklung der Humanitätsidee in ihrem Verhältnis zu Kirche und Staat*. Verlag von Wiegen und Grieben: Berlin, 1853. p. 29 (sic); vgl. die Würdigung des Zitats in Theodor Christlieb. „Carl Bernhard Hundeshagen: Eine Lebensskizze“. *Deutsche Blätter* 1873: 673–700, here p. 698.

⁶ See Peter Gerlitz. „Buddhismus“. pp. 100–118 in: Michael Klöcker, Udo Tworuschka (ed.). *Ethik der Religionen – Lehre und Leben*: vol. 2: *Arbeit*. Kösel: Munich, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht: Göttingen, 1985, p. 101.

⁷ See *ibid.* pp. 112–115.

⁸ Heiner Ruschhaupt. „Bauen und Bewahren“. *Der Navigator* Nr. 13 (Mai/Juni 1987): 2–3.

⁹ Hermann Cremer. *Arbeit und Eigentum in christlicher Sicht*. Brunnen Verlag: Giessen, 1984. p. 8.

¹⁰ Friedrich Trzaskalik. „Katholizismus“. pp. 24–41 in: Michael Klöcker, Udo Tworuschka (ed.). *Ethik der Religionen – Lehre und Leben*: vol. 2: *Arbeit*. op. cit. p. 33.

¹¹ Hermann Cremer. *Arbeit und Eigentum in christlicher Sicht*. Brunnen Verlag: Giessen, 1984. p. 8.

¹² Alan Richardson. *Die biblische Lehre von der Arbeit*. Anker-Verlag: Frankfurt, 1953. p. 27.

¹³ Gustav Warneck. *Die Stellung der evangelischen Mission zur Sklavenfrage*. C. Bertelsmann: Gütersloh, 1889. p. 67.

¹⁴ See the chapter on the ethics of work in my book *Marxismus – Opium für das Volk?* Schwengeler Verlag: Berneck, 1990.

¹⁵ Quoted from Konrad Löw. *Marxismus Quellenlexikon*. Kölner Universitätsverlag: Köln, 1985. p. 321.

¹⁶ See Monika Tworuschka. „Islam“. pp. 64–84 in: Michael Klöcker, Udo Tworuschka (ed.).

Ethik der Religionen – Lehre und Leben: vol. 2: Arbeit. op. cit., pp. 67+69.

¹⁷ Johannes Wachten. „Judentum“. pp. 9–23 in: *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁸ Hermann Cremer. Arbeit und Eigentum in christlicher Sicht. op. cit. p. 9.

¹⁹ Vgl. Monika Tworuschka. „Islam“. pp. 64–84 in: Michael Klöcker, Udo Tworuschka (Ed.). Ethik der Religionen – Lehre und Leben. Vol. 2: Arbeit. op. cit., pp. 67+69.

²⁰ Alan Richardson. Die biblische Lehre von der Arbeit. op. cit. p. 16.

²¹ Ursula Schulz (ed.). Die deutsche Arbeiterbewegung 1848–1919 in Augenzeugenberichten. dtv: Munich, 19813. p. 200.

²² Karl Marx. Friedrich Engels. Werke. 42 vol. Dietz Verlag: Berlin. 1956ff. vol. 19. p. 20.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.* p. 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.* vol. 21. p. 501.

²⁷ *Ibid.*; see the whole page.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 32 („Allgemeines Verbot der Kinderarbeit ist unverträglich mit der Existenz der großen Industrie und daher leerer frommer Wunsch. Durchführung desselben – wenn möglich – wäre reaktionär, da, bei strenger Regelung der Arbeitszeit nach den verschiedenen Altersstufen und sonstigen Vorsichtsmaßregeln zum Schutze der Kinder, frühzeitige Verbindung produktiver Arbeit mit Unterricht eines der mächtigen Umwandlungsmittel der heutigen Gesellschaft ist.“).

²⁹ We just want to show the position of Marx, not to discuss labour of children or the right of the State to regulate it.

³⁰ Konrad Löw. Marxismus Quellenlexikon. Kölner Universitätsverlag: Köln, 1985. pp. 221–222.

³¹ Karl Marx. Friedrich Engels. Werke. op. cit. vol. 32. p. 360.

³² However, the postulated correlation between unemployment and the rate of suicide, which is often used to prove that Man was created to work, seems to have been disproved.

See: „Kein Zusammenhang zwischen Suizid und Arbeitslosigkeit“. Deutsches Ärzteblatt 87 (1990) Nr. 31/32 (6.8.1990): pp. A–2411 as summary of I. K. Crombie. „Trends in Suicide and Unemployment in Scotland 1976–86“. British Medical Journal 298 (1987): pp. 782–784.

³³ Helmut Thielicke. Theologische Ethik. 2nd Vol. 1st Part: Mensch und Welt. J. C. B. Mohr: Tübingen, 19592. pp. 396-397.

³⁴ D. P. „Zu Tode gearbeitet“. Der Kassenarzt No. 12/1991, p. 32.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Alan Richardson. Die biblische Lehre von der Arbeit. op. cit. p. 15.

³⁷ See the details in the context.

³⁸ Gustav Friedrich Oehler. Theologie des Alten Testaments. J. F. Steinkopf: Stuttgart, 18913. p. 437.

³⁹ In German „employer“ [„Arbeitgeber“] has the meaning of „the workgiver“, „the one giving work“. In German we can say that God is the great „Arbeitgeber“, the supreme One giving work to men.

⁴⁰ Emil Brunner. Das Gebot und die Ordnungen. Zwingli Verlag: Zürich, 19394. p. 373.

⁴¹ Karl Marx. Friedrich Engels. Werke. op. cit. vol. 20. p. 444.

⁴² *Ibid.* vol. 40. p. 546.

⁴³ In many languages the plural of „brother“ or of „sister“ is used to group together all male and female children of the same parents. In German the old plural of „sister“, „Geschwister“ is the name for brothers and sisters. Often the Greek plural of „adelphos“ („brother“), „adelphoi“ („brothers“ or „brothers and sisters“) is used to speak of brothers and sisters at the same time. There is no other word to mark brothers and sisters together. (The plural of sister „adelphai“ is only used for sisters.).

⁴⁴ Basilius der Große. „Ausführliche Regeln“ 41, 1–2, in Alfons Heilmann (Ed.). Texte der Kirchenväter. 5 Vols. Vol. 3. Kösel: München, 1964. pp. 228–229; See also: *Ibid.*, pp. 224–240 numerous texts by the Church fathers on the Christian view of labour. For the position

of the Early Church on labour, see: Adolf von Harnack. *Die Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*. VMA-Verlag: Wiesbaden, n.d. (reprint 19244). pp. 197–200.

⁴⁵ Hans Walter Wolff. *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments*. Chr. Kaiser: München, 19773. p. 194; see also pp. 192–197 (texts from Proverbs).

⁴⁶ Ibid. vol. 19. p. 21 (In German the sentence is even more complicated. That is typically for Marx.).

⁴⁷ Hermann Cremer. *Arbeit und Eigentum in christlicher Sicht*. op. cit. p. 11.

⁴⁸ John Stott. *Christsein in den Brennpunkten unserer Zeit ... 3*. op.cit., pp. 38–42.

⁴⁹ George Gilder. *Reichtum und Armut*. op. cit., p. 19.

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