

FAITH IN THE WORKPLACE  
Follow Christ  
Tatranske Matliare, 4th November 2017

καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς [ἰδίαις] χερσὶν ὑμῶν, καθὼς ὑμῖν παρηγγείλαμεν, <sup>12</sup> ἵνα περιπατῆτε εὐσχημόνως πρὸς τοὺς ἔξω καὶ μηδενὸς χρεῖαν ἔχητε

**1Thes 4:11-12** to work with your hands, as we instructed you, <sup>12</sup> so that you may live properly before outsiders and be dependent on no one

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## 0. INTRODUCTION: WORK AND ANTHROPOLOGY

- **work** The concept is ambiguous and contested, connoting different activities in different societies and historical contexts. In its broadest sense, work is purposeful human endeavor, and involves the transformation of nature through the expenditure of mental and physical capacities. Such an interpretation is at odds, however, with the more limited meaning and experience of work in present-day capitalist societies. For millions of people work is synonymous with paid employment, and many activities which would qualify as work on the broader definition are described and experienced as nonwork leisure pursuits. Private DOMESTIC LABOUR is a prime example. Although essential to the survival, health and perpetuation of the human population, domestic labor (cooking, cleaning, childcare, and so on) has low social status, is overwhelmingly undertaken by women and remains unpaid.<sup>1</sup>
- CALVIN, J. *Institutes III, 10, 6*. (Finally, this point is to be noted: the Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to his calling. For he knows with what great restlessness human nature flames, with what fickleness it is borne hither and thither, how its ambition longs to embrace

<sup>1</sup> *The Blackwell Dictionary of Modern Social Thought*,

various things at once. Therefore, lest through our stupidity and rashness everything be turned topsy-turvy, he has appointed duties for every man in his particular way of life [*officia ordinavit*]. And that no one may thoughtlessly transgress his limits, he has named these various kinds of living "callings." [*vocationes*])

- → work is purposeful human activity *in line with God's purposes* in His created order for the preservation and development of meaningful human life

Labor as a **Bonum Arduum**: I know of no other human good whose evaluation by major thinkers ranges from the merely instrumental to the summum bonum. Why is a balanced appraisal of work so rarely achieved? I suspect it is because work, paradoxically, is an arduous good, a good that is often experienced as an evil. Every European language has two words for this good, work and labor; and each language uses one of them to convey toil, pain, exertion: πόνος, labor, Arbeit, travailler. Don't say to a woman in the pangs of child—birth that labor is a good. Work at its worst ranks among the most inhuman of the cruelties and exploitations known to man: the deliberate destruction of body and spirit through slave labor, forced labor, child labor—achieving apotheosis in the Nazi obscenity, "Arbeit macht frei"<sup>2</sup>

### 0.1. DIMENSIONS/AIMS OF WORK IN THE BIBLE

- **2Thes 3:10** If anyone is not willing to work (ἐργάζεσθαι), let him not eat. **Pro 19:15** Slothfulness (עצלָה) casts into a deep sleep (תַּרְדֵּמָה תְּהִי־לָהּ), and an idle person (נַפֵּשׁ רַמְיָהּ) will suffer hunger → survival
- **Eph 4:28** Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor (κοπιᾶτω ἐργαζόμενος), doing honest work with his own hands (ταῖς [ἰδίας] χερσὶν τὸ ἀγαθόν), so that he may have something to share (μεταδίδοναι) with anyone in need. → service
- **Hag 2:4** Be strong, all you people of the land, declares the LORD. Work, (עֲשֵׂה) for I am with you, declares the LORD of hosts, → creativity
- **Ecc 8:17** I saw all the work of God (מְעֵשֶׂה הָאֱלֹהִים), that man cannot find out (לֹא יוּכַל הָאָדָם לְמַצּוֹא) the work that is done under the sun. However much man may toil in seeking (יַעֲמֹל הָאָדָם לְבַקֵּשׁ), he will not find it out (וְלֹא יִמָּצֵא). Even though a wise man claims to know, he cannot find it out. → thinking
- **Mt 11:28** **Come** to me, all who labor and are heavy laden (οἱ κοπιῶντες καὶ πεφορτισμένοι), and I will **give you rest**.

### 0.2. TO WORK AND TO BE HUMAN

- John WHITE *Education and the End of Work*,
  - ...work, namely that it is a form of activity designed to bring about some end-product outside itself. This end product might, for instance, be an actual (1) physical object - a sofa or a microchip; a (2) service - helping others to learn or cutting their hair; or the (3) solution of some theoretical or practical or artistic problem.
- Hannah Arendt *The Human Condition*, p. 80

...the Greek language distinguishes between **ponein** and **ergazesthai**, the Latin between **laborare** and **facere** or **fabricari**, which have the same etymological root, the French between **travailler** and **ouvrer**, the German between **arbeiten** and **werken**. In all these cases, only the equivalents for "labor" have an unequivocal connotation of pain and trouble. The German Arbeit applied originally only to farm labor executed by serfs and not to the work of the craftsman, which was called Werk. The French travailler replaced the older labourer and is derived from tripalium, a kind of torture. See Grimm, *Worterbuch*, -pp. 1854 ff., and Lucien Febre, "Travail; evolution d'un mot et d'une idee," *Journal de psychologie normale et pathologique*, Vol. XLI, No. 1 (1948).

### 0.3. CARICATURES OF WORK

- overstressed *creativity, meaning* → workaholism (**Lk 17:10** ...when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.)
- overstressed *service* → servitude (**1Cor 7:23** ...You were bought with a price; do not become

<sup>2</sup> MURPHY J B *The Quest for a Balanced Appraisal of Work in Catholic Social Thought*,



struggle of the worker in this ephemeral, transitory world (Psa 90:10).

## 1. DOMINION (GN 1)

### 1.1. IMAGO DEI

- **John 5:17** "My Father is working until now, and I am working." (ὁ πατήρ μου ἔως ἄρτι ἐργάζεται καὶ γὼ ἐργάζομαι)
- **Gn 1:26-27** Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness (בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ). And let them have dominion (יְרִידָה) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." <sup>27</sup> So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
- **Gn 1:1** God created (בָּרָא) the heavens and the earth.
- **Gn 1:4** God separated (בָּדַל)
- **Gn 1:5, 10...** God called (קָרָא)
- **Gn 2:2** God finished his work that he had done (מִכָּל-מְלַאכְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה)

### 1.2. DOMINION

- **Gn 1:28** "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it (מְלֹאוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשׁוּהָ) and have dominion (יְרִידָה) over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth."
- → success; prominence; (together with the woman!)

### 1.3. SABBATH

- **Gn 2:2-3** <sup>2</sup> And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. <sup>3</sup> So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation.
- → balanced by the WORSHIP of the HIGHEST AUTHORITY

## 2. SERVANTHOOD (GN 2)

- not "the second story of creation"

### 2.1. THE DUST OF EARTH

- **Gn 2:7** then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground (עָפָר מִן-הָאֲדָמָה) and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature (נִפְשׁ חַיָּה)

### 2.2. SERVICE

- **Gn 2:15** The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. (לְעִבְדָּהּ וּלְשָׁמְרָהּ)
- **Gn 2:20** But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. (לֹא-מִצָּא עֹזֵר כְּגֹנְדוֹ)
- → ministry; position; relationship; hierarchy...

### 2.3. MARRIAGE

- **Gn 2:23-24** Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.
- → balanced by intimate personal relationship/identification with

## 3. DRUDGERY (GN 3)

### 3.1. MORTAL SINNER

- **Gn 3:19** ...you are dust, and to dust you shall return. (עָפָר אַתָּה וְאֶל-עָפָר תָּשׁוּב)
- **Ecc 2:24** There is nothing better for a man, than that he should eat and drink, and that he should

make his soul enjoy good in his labour. (הִרְאָה אֶת־נַפְשׁוֹ טוֹב בְּעַמְלֹו) **Ecc 3:12** I perceived that there is nothing better for them than to be joyful and to do good (לְשִׂמּוֹחַ וְלַעֲשׂוֹת טוֹב) as long as they live

### 3.2. SURVIVAL

- **Gn 3:19** By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread (בְּזַעַת אַפִּיךָ תֹאכַל לֶחֶם),
- **Dt 26:7** Then we cried to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. (וַיִּרְא אֶת־עַנְיֵנוּ וְאֶת־עַמְלָנוּ וְאֶת־לְחַצְנוּ)

### 3.3. LIFE BEYOND DEATH

- **Gn 3:21-24** And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever-" <sup>23</sup> therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.
- → relief in hope **1Cor 15:58** Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain (ὅτι ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ)

## 4. TO REMEMBER

- Our view of work reflects our view of human beings.
- To live according to the will of God, we need to know what are his purposes for work in human life.
- To avoid caricatures of work (human existence) we have to pay attention to the balancing activities described in the Scriptures.