

Religions/Adyan is an annual and bi-lingual (English and Arabic) publication in interfaith studies published by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue with an emphasis on interreligious dialogue and the relations between Islam and other faiths.

In a world of religious misunderstandings, violence, and hijacking of religious faiths by political ideologies, *Religions/Adyan* intends to provide a welcome space of encounter and reflection upon the commonalities and shared goals of the great religions of the world. The title of the journal suggests religious diversity while suggesting the need to explore this diversity in order to develop keys to both a deepening of one's own faith and a meaningful opening to other creeds. The Qur'an suggests a commonality of faith and a striving for the Truth within the context of religious diversity:

"To each among you have we prescribed a law and an open way. If God had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but (His plan is) to test you in what He hath given you: so strive as in a race in all virtues. The goal of you all is to God; it is He that will show you the truth of the matters in which ye dispute." (The Table Spread 5:48, version of Yusuf Ali)

As a refereed international publication published by the Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, *Religions/Adyan* finds its inspiration in the universal message of monotheism broadly understood, while engaging the various religious faiths that share common principles and values within this broadly defined context.

Religions/Adyan encourages comparative studies and interreligious exchanges in a spirit of dialogue and mutual enrichment. Its aim is to promote understanding between religious faithful of various traditions by exploring and studying the rich field of their theological and spiritual common grounds, their mutual and constructive relationships, past, present and potentially future, a better understanding of the causes of their conflicts, and the current challenges of their encounter with atheism, agnosticism and secular societies.

In addition, *Religions/Adyan* wishes to highlight and revive the universal horizon of Islam by fostering studies in the relationships between Islam and other religions and civilizations in history, the arts, and religious studies. This is also a way to revitalize intellectual discourse in Islam, within the context of an interactive and cross-fertilizing engagement with other faiths.

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Editorial

Religious cultures tend to understand work both as a blessing and as a curse; at times a divine gift, at times a chastising toil. Although work is first of all a distant human reflection of the Divine work of creation, it is also, in the Bible, a divine punishment for human disobedience: “By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken;” (Genesis 3:19).

This two-faced reality manifests as well in our contemporary age, one in which global economic exploitation is no less obvious than exponential creativity and activity. What is certain is that work concerns have probably never been as high on the human agenda as they are today. This is so much so that it has sometimes been claimed that work is indeed the new religion of our times, at least in the largely secularized sections of the world. In the absence of a clear focus on transcendence and a consensus on religious values, professional activity has tended to fill a vacuum in giving meaning to one's life, as well as in connecting one to others in a network of collaborative tasks. The tremendous, sometimes indeed vertiginous, commitment, ingenuity and energy that come into play in the ever increasingly complex web of human work throughout the globe, bear witness to this.

Notwithstanding this transfer of quasi-religious fervor onto professional endeavors, there is a sense in which much of contemporary work has lost its immediate intelligibility, when it has not moreover been turned into a source of inequity and exploitation. This is no doubt a result of the mechanization, automatization and, in a sense, depersonalization and informatization of many professional endeavors in the age of globalization. Thus, work may often be equated with a mere economic imperative of survival disconnected from vital and

ethical concerns, or even a tyrannical necessity squarely at odds with moral values and spiritual well-being.

In one way or another, the investment of work with religious meaning has been, throughout human history, the rule rather than the exception. In all pre-modern civilizations the sacralization of work was a common place phenomenon. For *homo religiosus*, work is action or production, doing or making, and it involves, in both cases, a sort of consecration; it has to be performed “in the name of God”, not only formally and perfunctorily, but qualitatively and spiritually. Furthermore, when spiritually integrated, it entails a transformation of one's being, as was amply demonstrated by the deep and widespread connection between crafts and spirituality. This held true for individuals as well as for groups, like guilds, tribes or castes. Work is associated with identity, and a people who does not work, or does not know how to work anymore, or does not bring to work a sense of care, cannot but lose its dignity, and ultimately its true identity. This is not a matter of national pride or mere formal heritage, but one of cultural and indeed religious survival. Gandhi was quite aware of this profound connection between the spiritual identity of a nation and the quality of its work, when he chose the spinning wheel as a symbol of his campaign of cultural restoration.

Even though work may be integrated within religious values, it is rarely considered in and of itself a religious act or a religious production. Religious action lies primarily in rites, prayers and moral behaviour. How do those relate to work? First prayer and meditation is in a sense a type of “work”, since it is in all religions not only an obligation for all, but also a special vocation for some. Even those traditions



which do not accept monasticism recognize this, as testified by the status of the *ahl al-suffa* in early Islam. Those were members of the early Muslim community who spent most of their time in devotional practices. This demonstrates that humanity is diverse, and this diversity manifests in the plurality of vocations (*vocatio* means “calling” in latin). The multiplicity of professional callings, which has been a result of social and family contexts or individual qualifications and interests, is very broad, from farming to the crafts, from contemplative life to social service, from military and administrative functions to teaching and healing.

Secondly, there is something factitious and suspect about the often alleged opposition between contemplation and action. The Quran states that there are “men whom neither trade nor sale diverts them from the remembrance of God” (24:37), thereby rejecting the superficial contemporary view that prayer would be incompatible with work, or that the latter should substitute for the former, or be “counted” as it.

Thirdly, the quality of religious practic-

es, and the religious consciousness they foster or express, is evidently incompatible with professional dishonesty and an unethical way of life. Religion is, in that sense, a school of moral education that informs professional activity as well as other domains of life. By contrast, a lack of consistent connection and integration between religious practice and professional ethics cannot but be the sign of a gravely flawed understanding or treatment of the former. Beyond such foundational considerations, any comprehensive professional ethics would recognize both that work has something “consecrating” about it, and that it is not an absolute. Work ethics takes work as seriously as it deserves to be, as one of the most significant dimensions of our life, but it still subordinates it to higher spiritual and moral principles and values, thereby affirming both its power of self-realization and the limits of its rights and demands. It ensures that work feeds the soul, but does not feed on it.

Patrick Laude

Editor-in-Chief

Conversation with Cardinal Onaiyeken

Adeel: Regarding your own reading of the Gospel in the African context, how do you see the work of God on earth while the serving His ministry?

C. Onaiyeken: Oh yes I can talk about that briefly. The Christian faith has been received by the African population in a very enthusiastic way in the last one hundred, two hundred years. And the one thing is certain that between the basic parameters of the Christian faith and our African traditional religions the difference is not too much. In other ways our people recognise themselves in the Christian faith. The same thing applies for Islam as well. In other words when my father became a Christian, before that he was in the religion of our ancestors he did not change his God because it is the same God. Just like we say Christians and Muslims have the same God, so also in Africa our traditional religions we did not worship animals goats, sheep, rocks and trees, we worship God. Now because of that, we read the Gospel very easily within the African context, many of the present positions of the Gospel that there is God there is good. That He knows what is happening to everybody. That He created us. That we have to give an account of what we are doing in the world to come, in the other world, not just here in the world ... is common to Africa before Christianity was embraced.

Indeed even that helps in Africa in the sense of Christian- Muslim relations because we have a common base.

Adeel: Would you read the life of Jesus on earth as the work of God.

C. Onaiyeken: Of course in Africa. That is the defining point.

If I come back to my father, my father said, I did not take a new God, but the missionaries came and told me that God sent his son Jesus and we read the story of Jesus and he got fascinated with the story of Jesus and he believed in Jesus. And it is that that has made a lot of difference as far as he is concerned.

I will consider the same thing too. When Jesus came, he didn't bring a new God. He speaks of God as his father. But it is the same God of the old testament.

Adeel: Can the actions of Jesus be considered the work of God

C. Onaiyeken: Well you know the Gospel is very straight forward in this matter. The Gospel simply tells us pretty little about Jesus. Apart from the stories about the beginning of his life, now the story we celebrated yesterday, the story of the annunciation where the angels spoke to Mary to deliver a child and so yesterday we celebrated the feast and there is a story about his birth and all that and there is a story of getting lost in the temple at the age of twelve. After that, we didn't hear the story in the script/ gospel of the life of Jesus. Except that he lived in Nazareth he was a carpenter he lived a normal life like everybody else and it was known as the Carpenter's son until almost thirty years of age. But those three years when he moved up and down between Galilee, Sumeria, Judea and where he preached and some of it is preached in the Gospels and when he worked miracles those things are very much same as God's work from our own



point of view.

Yes and once you admit then this is somebody sent by God. And not only sent by God as a prophet but is actually the son of God. It means God is working (or walking) among us. It is God doing those things. But you see with Jesus it is not only a matter of what he did, but more of what he said. The content of his message and even what he did was meant to concretise what he said.

Now from that point of view our people in the African context have no problem with miracles in fact for us that is the job that God does. We often say, God is an expert in miracles. Jesus can make a blind man to see or raise a dead man to life. Okay that is what God does.

Adeel: Continuing with the Christian story then we have the arrival of the monks

and the monastic rules, the Franciscans and others. How does their work guide us about compassion in work.

C. Onaiyeken: Let me put it that in the African context we have not the experience of monasteries these are all European and Middle East affairs. We have monasteries now in Africa, but the average Nigerian would not know what a monastery is. We don't have them around, we have few monasteries, what we see more is the way Christians live their life in union with God. They probably see people like me and female religious figures who have devoted their life to God. As you know the people of religion do not spend all our time praying, we're also working. Teaching or health care. It is also saying we are doing God's work. In fact people tell us, 'Oh Bishop, thank you for all the work you are doing, God bless you, you are doing God's

work.' Then I tell them, 'You, whose work are you doing?'

Adeel: If they are doing their ordinary work is it God's work as well?

C. Onaiyeken: No that's the point, very often when they are doing their ordinary work, when they leave home and go to the office, they think they are doing what their boss give them to do or they think they are working for government or when they are self employed to earn money to keep their family and so on. Now I have to tell them that in all those things, it is only the first part of the story and that it is also working for God.

Adeel: But should they feel guilty, the religious guilt if they are not fulfilling their work responsibility and is there a crossover there between religion and ordinary work?

C. Onaiyeken: Yes there is a basic sense that, for example, it is not good to be lazy. So everyone must do a good days work and above all you cannot expect to reap the product of hard work if you do not work hard. Which is why, when we find people who are cheating, who are avoiding work and yet getting money, they say that it is wrong. When they say it is wrong, it means God doesn't like it. What you are doing is against God's will. This goes out to Politicians, those who are in power and who can get money from our government. Doing nothing or steal public funds. How will they face God? Because they are not only cheating people they also offending God.

Adeel: The next question is also related to work again but it is more of a Global question, about holidays. Perhaps in Africa it does not apply but in most of the world. Holidays are not linked to religious meaning or sentiment anymore.

C. Onaiyeken: That is in Europe but in Africa it is very much so. On Sundays everybody is going to church and in fact they are working in a place where they are not free on Sunday you complain 'They have not allowed me to worship' because they feel badly. And if you are Muslim you must make room for the Friday service. It was like that in Europe, people stop going to church on Sunday and started going to the beach or the football match. And if you are spending your Sunday at the beach, you might as well open your shop as well.

Adeel: Should everyone be employed, or do you think in Europe everyone must have a minimum wage for survival. What do you think is the religious priority?

C. Onaiyeken: Remember in the start we believe everybody should work, that working is part of the puzzle of life. When you have this situation, where the question of unemployment is recent in our part of the African context, or maybe in Europe and America. In the Middle ages you don't get unemployment because everyone works. If your father is a butcher, you become a butcher you join him.

But now that people get employed by government or by industries or by financial institution, like banks and so on. It means that if somebody does not employ you. You are without work and that is a new situation which is very difficult to handle because from our own Christian point of view, work is not only to make money to live. Work is a way to cooperate with God and give meaning to your life. Especially for a young person, who has studied years to get his degree, he wants to be himself, contribute to the society, be able to say, this is what I did. For an Architect, you want to say 'That building I designed it' for an engineer builder 'That building I build it'. Other people what to say 'I did..' When a young person has no job, he has

nothing he can point out not to talk of the fact that he finds it difficult to live to get daily food, shelter and then to set up a family, marry and have children, all this that makes life worthwhile. Now when there is no job, therefore no income, all this is not there, and it becomes a very big injustice, or rather this would be a great duty for the government to arrange such work for those who want to work can work. Let me put this differently, in the Christian Bible in the New Testament St. Paul says 'anybody who does not work, should not eat' It is in the Bible. But that is meant, this is where only lazy people don't work, people who have work to do but prefer to sleep. So okay, if you don't work, you don't eat.

The question you ask now, the young people ask me! What if you want to work, but cannot get work, and because of that you cannot eat. It is a very tragic situation.

Adeel: Relating to the quality of work, given the fading of the traditional crafts and guilds were they important in previous times in the formation of the noble soul?

C. Onaiyeken: I think you are hitting something very important there. In the modern world, the recent development has changed the meaning on good work, what kind of work people do and has even removed value from certain works that used to have nobility and respect. The craftsmen as you mentioned are very important the person whom you call to fix your table, he fixed it very well, he is happy with the work he has done and you are happy with the work he has done. You find those who are carving, maybe chairs and tools and artistic work and they are able to put functionality and art together. You look at products, arts and crafts that is what is happening, you don't just put a chair together to sit, the chair must be

beautiful, now no, you have these plastic chairs produced by the hundreds, therefore there is no more room for craftsmen. And when your plastic chair breaks, throw it away and buy another. Even your wrist watches, you cannot repair wrist watches anymore. When your wrist watch is spoiled you go and look for somebody who can open it and carefully repair it you are told go and throw it away and buy another. We are living in a world where the meaning of labour has changed considerably, and the young suffer the most from this.

Adeel: Can religions give an aesthetic, a beauty for the work environment?

C. Onaiyeken: It is difficult. For example, religion cannot stop this process. The most that religion can do is to preach to those who are in the position to make a difference. That if people are working for you, you must create for them a good working environment. That one is a basic law, that human beings they should never be used as productive elements. They are not machines to produce. They are human beings and that no matter what work you do, you deserve to be treated with dignity. Now that is a major problem in our days. There are jobs that are dignified and there are jobs considered very low. And if you have a big brain about economics, you can help the banks to make plenty of money you get big salary, big house, big car, and you go on holiday to everywhere you like, Working for about five hours a day. If you are unlucky and the only job you can get is sweeping the street. You sweep the street for 12 hours every day. And all you get is one small room in a poor place and you cannot go on holidays. Now this is the kind of gap we have in life and I do believe it is the job of religion to point to that, that this is not the intention of God that human beings mustn't be treated like this.

Adeel: Is there a take home message or something we haven't covered related to work or to anything else you would like to say to our readers?

C. Onaiyeken: I really want to speak about is no matter how progressive our society is, it must make sure that everybody, especially the youth have something they can do and feel fulfilled by. It is a great tragedy to leave them frustrated and feeling that they are useless in the world, that is very bad. Because that creates frustration, that creates anxieties, and those are the peo-

ple who lead into violent reactions.

Adeel: But is not there true satisfaction in the love of God?

C. Onaiyeken: Well that is a part of it too. The other side of it is that people should also know your happiness does not depend on your salary scale. Your happiness depends on at least 60 % of your understanding of yourself. If you have a good understanding of yourself, you can be happy with the minimum and in any case you don't need too much to be happy.



Islamic Work Ethic in a Dynamic World

Abbas J. Ali

The debate on work and life affairs and on work and economic development has been in a state of flux. This demonstrates not only the centrality and changing perception of work but also the vitality of the subject as an anchor for thriving concepts and practices ranging from prosperity and happiness, creativity and involvement, to political stability and social justice. While it is impossible to imagine life without work, it is equally impossible to contemplate technological and economic developments without considering mankind's ingenuity. This creative involvement in various work activities has catapulted human beings into challenging and rewarding endeavors, enabling people to

overcome difficulties and face emerging challenges.

The evolution of the work concept has been linked to the imaginative capacity of human beings and the never ending desire to enhance one's quality of life. But the centrality and perception of work has changed across centuries. Both the stages of economic development and spiritual attachment, among other factors, have contributed to enriching work concepts and strengthening practices. However, the concept and practice of work has raised questions regarding ethical conduct and the role of ethics in safeguarding people's welfare. This issue has not only underscored the role of ethics in the workplace

but also motivated researchers to explore religion as a dominant force that shapes ethics and the view of work (see Ali, 1988; Weber, 1958).

Religions differ in their views on work and, therefore, there have been varying interpretations of the role of work and its necessity in life. In Islamic teachings, the concept of work and its ethics has been articulated since the emergence of Islam in Arabia. This was not accidental, but a planned action that set out to underscore the role of work in society and underline its dimensions and centrality in one's life. For this reason, this paper is designed to explore perspectives on work and ethical economic activities. That is, the paper seeks to highlight work involvement and its relationship to social and economic justice. The latter cannot be achieved when poverty is widespread and when those who are able and who seek work find no opportunities by which to utilize their capabilities. Furthermore, the paper confronts two myths: work ethic as a new concept and the notion that Islamic beliefs do not accentuate either the role of or the necessity for work.

Work Ethic in History

The concept and meaning of work ethics across centuries has evolved in a way that has made progress and economic growth feasible. From the early Greek civilization through to the Industrial Revolution and up to current history, work ethics has evolved and consequently has led to qualitative changes culturally and economically. During the Greek civilization, work was viewed as the curse of the gods and equated with sorrow. The Greek civilization, moreover, did not only disdain physical work but also mental labor (in the mechanical arts) (Tilgher, 1930). The Romans, too, looked with contempt upon work and in fact adopted the Greek beliefs

(See Lipset, 1990). It is also believed that an earlier Jewish belief treated work as a sinful activity: "if man does not find his food like animals and birds but must earn it that is due to sin" (Lipset, 1990, p. 2). However, centuries later, the Jewish view of work witnessed profound change. This was manifested in the espousal of hard work and the notion that work itself is an essential duty in life.

In the early centuries of Christianity, the emphasis was on spiritual and ritual aspects of the religion. Work was disdained. Christians, during that time, were concerned with salvation and the afterlife, which was guaranteed not through hard work but through devotion to worshipping God. The emergence of Protestantism constituted a new era in viewing work and its role in life. Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a pioneer in asserting that people could serve God through their work. However, Lipset (1990, p. 62) documented that Luther "had contempt for trade, commerce, and finance; those endeavors required no real work. Hence, Luther did not directly pave the way for a rational, profit-oriented economic system." The profound qualitative change in viewing work was led by John Calvin (1509-1564) who advocated that work is a calling; a compliance with the will of God.

In his book, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber (1905) argued that Calvin's and Luther's writings were instrumental in advancing the capitalist system and moving away from the Roman Catholic instruction toward work. He coined the term 'Protestant ethic' to underscore the role of religion in facilitating economic growth and sustaining hard work. Indeed, he argued that Protestant ethic was instrumental in creating conditions in the West that were hospitable for the emergence of modern capitalism and facilitating sound development per-

spectives that profoundly changed the balance of power in the world, politically and economically. Weber, however, appeared to overlook two important factors in this stage of economic and social development: familiarity with and the internalization of faith, and persistency in pursuing goals with energy and discipline. A strong sense of being destined to make a difference in life and being in charge of steering the future reinforces discipline and strengthens determination. Nevertheless, Weber, in underscoring the power of the religious message enhancing commitment to work, undeniably contributed to our understanding of the impact of religion on economic development. This understanding further inspired researchers and practitioners to look for ways to improve work conditions and enhance economic growth. Indeed, this understanding facilitated the spread of capitalism and helped shed light on the role of Protestantism in enhancing commitment to work.

Rose (1985) identified four elements of the Protestant ethic: deferment of gratification, diligence, punctuality, and the primacy of the work domain. These elements, collectively, have made it possible for the United States and Britain, for example, to become major economic powers and facilitate wealth accumulation and for the emergence of large business organizations. Furthermore, these elements have motivated business owners and entrepreneurs to engage in activities that are essential for advancing profit making and market expansion.

The passion to work hard, discipline in the workplace, and the desire to reinvest profits in new ventures were the outcome of Calvinistic teachings and religious commitment. Max Weber considered these elements as the most important development in the Christian view of work. He

asserted that societies which espoused Protestantism did much better than countries where Catholicism was prevalent. Samuel Huntington (2004a), a contemporary researcher who underscores the role of Protestantism in bettering economic conditions, states, "Would the United States be the country that it has been and that it largely remains today if it had been settled in the 17th and 18th centuries not by British Protestants but by French, Spanish, or Portuguese Catholics? The answer is clearly no. It would not be the United States; it would be Quebec, Mexico, or Brazil" (p. 31). He argues (2004b) that it is Protestantism that was the primary reason for the United States having a strong economy: "Protestant values . . . have shaped American attitudes toward private and public morality, economic activity, government, and public policy" (p. 10). That is, because of Protestantism, Western thought regarding work has experienced profound transformation; from a disdain for work to commitment and appreciation of the role of work in improving economic conditions and compliance with religiously driven ethics.

Relative to previous civilizations, Islam, from the beginning, as we detail later, placed an emphasis on work and articulated its necessity in life. The Quran articulates the divine responsibility to work wherever opportunities exist, locally or globally. The Quran instructs (45:13), "He [God] has also made subservient to you all that is in the heavens and the earth" and (62:10) "disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of God." The Prophet and early Muslim scholars asserted the role of work in economic and social development and in building a stable state where justice and goodness are the binding qualities among people. The Prophet indicated, "God has guards on earth and in the sky. His guards in the sky are the

angels and His guards on earth are those who work for their sustenance and safeguard the interest of the people” (Quoted in Al-Mawardi, p.218) and “Rise early to make a living and gain your economic needs as dedication represents benefits and success” (Quoted in Al-Pashehi, 2004, p. 418).

Work and Societal Justice

Before we tackle work ethic in Islam, there is an issue that Islam has characteristically linked to work and which thus bestows on work a quality beyond what is common in the discourse on work ethics. This issue is justice. Justice is not considered a byproduct of work involvement but an essential building block for having a functional economy and a morally based society. Al-Shaybani (1986, died 805, p. 29) argued that “making a living is the mainstay of humanity.” This should not be understood independently of ensuring and securing justice in society. Those who work engage in spiritual and economic activities that enable them to have a reasonable living standard in order to benefit those who are dependent on them and to gain social prestige and respect. Al-Shaybani’s assertion too should be viewed in the context of the Prophet’s sayings, especially those that place an emphasis on abolishing sins, achieving success, benefiting others, and that work involvement is a religious duty. The Prophet stated, “Among the sins are sins that cannot be recompensed by prayer and fasting. . . [but are wiped out by] a commitment to earning a livelihood” (quoted in Al-Shaybani, p. 39), “Rise early to make a living, as hard work generates success and reward” (quoted in Al-Pashehi, p. 417), “The best of work is that whose benefit is lasting” (quoted in Al-Pashehi, p. 416), and “making a living is a divine duty” (quoted in Al-Shaybani, p. 18). These sayings, though they assert

the economic necessity of work, take into account social and economic justice. They motivate people to work and work hard to alleviate poverty, reduce societal ills, and spread prosperity. These make it possible for justice to encompass the largest numbers of people and consequently generate opportunities and minimize discontent and instability.

Al-Mawardi (2002, died 1058, p. 216) was concerned with the well-being, during his time, of individuals and the quality of life of the community. He specified six elements that are essential to achieving improvement in life and to organize affairs: internalized faith, a feared and loved ruler, comprehensive justice, prevalent safety, widespread prosperity, and ample possibilities. In the context of this paper, the last four elements are relevant:

Comprehensive Justice. The existence of justice enables individuals and groups to cooperate, eases obedience, speeds development, expands wealth, enhances population growth, and ensures the stability of governments. The fourth caliph, Imam Ali, asserted that justice “is the mainstay of a nation.” In the absence of justice, individuals are subject to threats and oppression and neither economic development nor prosperity are possible. Al-Mawardi (p.226) argued that for justice to take root, one has to avoid greed and fear God. And since justice is an essential pillar for having an orderly and functional life, it must encompass two types: justice for self and for others.

Prevalent Safety. For Al-Mawardi, safety is an essential element for economic growth and prosperity. It serves as an instrument for economic initiatives and entrepreneurial activities. Furthermore, safety is a must for enabling innocent people to feel that their rights are not

violated and that the powerful are constrained from abusing those who are in disadvantageous positions. Al-Mawardi (p. 230) further stated, "Safety is a pleasant living and justice is the most powerful army, because fear hinders people from engaging in their profession and activities, obstructs their behavior and initiatives, and prevents them from obtaining that what is necessary for their living and orderly functioning of the society."

Widespread Prosperity. Al-Mawardi categorized prosperity into two types: that which comes from engaging in earning activities and that which results from the availability of natural resources. He made it clear that prosperity offers the best chance for people to seize opportunities, experience optimism, and take advantage of economic activities, whether or not the people have a large or small share of what is available.

Ample Possibilities. Al-Mawardi provided a clear link between work and consideration of possibilities. When people experience hopefulness and optimism, they are able to obtain what could otherwise be difficult to realize in life and are motivated to establish what could be considered impossible. The Prophet stated, "Without hopefulness, no person will plant trees and no mother feed a baby" (Quoted in Al-Mawardi, 2002, p. 234).

While intended to ease life and ensure progress, the aforementioned elements evidence that work is not detached from social, political, spiritual, and economic conditions. These conditions ease work and productive engagements. Furthermore, the above elements offer an ethical framework for safeguarding the interests of society and the individual. However, in treating justice as the mainstay of any na-

tion, Islamic thinking, in its early years, underscored that morality in the workplace and commitment to work can be sustained as long as justice is applied to all, irrespective of their position and resources. Indeed, no market actor is motivated if the fruit of his/her work is in jeopardy.

Work Ethic in Islam

As was shown in the preceding discussion, the meaning of work ethic, in Western civilization, has evolved from being an activity that is considered sinful and a burden to one that is a productive activity essential for serving God. However, while this represents a qualitative development, as the *Financial Times* reported (see Hill, 2012), the primary purpose of work "remains unchanged: to earn money."

This view, theologically and spiritually, differs from the original message of Islam. From the early years of the Islamic civilization, there has been an emphasis not only on hard work but on all other dimensions of work. Collectively, these dimensions lead to improving the well-being of members of society and the happiness of individuals. Accordingly, Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) is defined as (see Ali, 1988, p. 577):

... an obligatory activity and a virtue in light of the needs of man [person] and a necessity to establish equilibrium in one's individual and social life. Work enables man [person] to be independent and is a source of self-respect, satisfaction, and fulfillment. Success and progress on the job depends on hard work and commitment to one's job. Commitment to work also involves a desire to improve the community and societal welfare. Society would have fewer problems if each person were committed to his work and avoided

unethical methods of wealth accumulation. Creative work and cooperation are not only sources of happiness but are considered noble deeds, as well.

There are several pillars of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE). These are: effort, competition, transparency, and morally responsible conduct. Collectively, these pillars imply that conducting business with a minimum of or no restrictions and in a spirited environment will, essentially, result in higher performance and widespread prosperity. Below is a brief discussion of each pillar:

1. **Effort.** Both physical and mental engagements in work are praised in Islam. Though the latter is given more weight in the teachings, they are treated as instruments for improving productivity and the welfare of society. The Quran declares (53:39), "A person can have nothing but what he strives for" and frowns on procrastination stating, "Nor say of anything, I will do it tomorrow" (18:23). The Second Caliph, Omar, was quoted as saying, "I would prefer dying while struggling for my sustenance and the sustenance of my children, to dying while fighting in the defense of faith" (quoted in Abdul-Rauf, 1984, p. 23). The Prophet encourages hard work asserting, "let each work up to his capacity and if they should tire, they should take break" (quoted in Al-Barai and Abdeen, 1987, p. 143). Efforts, moreover, are linked to the desired output. The Prophet articulates this stating, "The best of work is one that generates benefits." The fourth Caliph, Imam Ali (1989, p. 469) remarked, "Do not be one of those who hope for a better world to come without working for it" and "He, who does not perfect his/her work, will bring confusion to self."
2. **Competition.** Islam focuses on ethical competition in any exchange or interaction (Quran 83:26): "Let competitors compete." In an environment where people compete to do what is good, employees are motivated to put forth their best effort and improve the quality of their work.
3. **Transparency.** This implies sincerity and truthfulness in business dealings, avoidance of manipulation, deception, concealment of truth, and dismissal of good deeds and kindness. The objective is not to give preference to self-interest at the expense of society and human needs. For this very reason, the Prophet's remark, "Those who declare things frankly will not lead to each other's destruction" (quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 204) underlies the significance of transparency in the work environment and the need for cooperation to get jobs done.
4. **Responsible Conduct.** During the early years of the Islamic state, though the market and market activities were simple, there was an understanding that optimal service to individuals and society was an almost impossible task if ethics were corrupted. Al-Jaroud, a Muslim scholar who lived in the seventh century, asserted that "work is corrupted by bad ethics" (Quoted in Ibn `Abd Rabbih Al-Andalusi, died 940, p. 155, 2nd vol.). The fourth Caliph underscored the necessity of ethics in business conduct stating, "He who has fine ethics, his paths will be easy" and "Oh merchants, take and give what is just and right. When you deny what is right, you will spend much more than it in wrongdoing" (Quoted in Al-Maki, p. 519).

The above discussion demonstrates that the essence of work ethic in Islamic tra-

dition has a much broader meaning than simply working hard and earning more money. This necessitates the importance of moving beyond the traditional Western view of work and accentuates the link between economic requirements, personal happiness, and societal interests. Work must not be treated as an end but as a means to serving one's interests and improving the welfare of society. This perspective emphasizes that economic activities must not be driven by self-interest at the expense of society's and stresses the need to meet ever emerging and changing demands of the marketplace.

Dimensions of Islamic Work Ethics

In reviewing the literature on Islamic perspectives of work, numerous statements pertaining to the meaning and centrality of work emerged. These resulted in introducing a scale for Islamic Work Ethics, which was published in 1988. The scale is comprehensive in nature and reflects the most inclusive original treatment of work ethics in religious beliefs. Indeed, the construct of Islamic Work Ethics refutes myths that work ethics is a current development and that Islamic faith does not address ethics in the workplace.

Some American scholars assert that the concept of work ethics is a new development (see Barbash, 1983; Diddams and Whittington, 2003; Ferguson, 2004; Lipset, 1990). But this assertion is simplistic for those who are familiar with the teachings of Islam and the history of the states that were established in the first seven centuries of Islam. During that time, there was not only an understanding of the necessity for and responsibility toward hard work but also an articulation of the profound spiritual, philosophical, psychological, social, and economic dimensions of work. In Islamic teaching, work

is an obligatory activity for those who are capable. The Quran instructs (78:11) that God "made the day as a means of subsistence." The Prophet asserts that "work is a religious duty," "Making a living is a duty for every Muslim" (Quoted in Al-Shaybani, 1986, p. 18, died 805), and "Among the sins are sins that cannot be recompensed by prayer and fasting. . . [but are wiped out by] a commitment to earning a livelihood" (p. 39).

Highlighting the centrality of work in the Islamic tradition is a pressing necessity, due to the need to reeducate a public that has experienced cultural discontinuity since the Mongol invasion and destruction of the Islamic state in 1258. Indeed, rediscovering the traditional views of the Islamic attitude to work has a social and economic significance, as it can help safeguard the general security of the people and the welfare of future generations. The general security of citizens focuses on the purpose of Islamic ethics: benefiting people and minimizing their hardships, be they economic or social. Primarily, this includes poverty reduction and eradication of hunger and starvation. A brief look at the dimensions of Islamic Work Ethics reveals that poverty reduction is not only a possibility but also a duty for those who are in a position of authority. This is illustrated below:

1. **Spiritual Dimension.** This is reflected in the intertwined and dialectic relations between work and faith and between work and the refinement of one's soul from undesirable habits. Imam Abu Omer Al Awzai (died 774) argued, "If God wished evil to people he would grant them endless arguments and direct them away from work" (Quoted in Al-Mawardi, 2002, died 1058, p. 69). Abu Talib Al-Maki (1995; died 996, p. 557) stated, "If the religion of the people is corrupted,

their sustenance is ruined.”

2. **Social Dimension.** There is an emphasis on continuity and the necessity for establishing social relations in a way that facilitates prosperity, eases distress, and strengthens social interaction among people. According to an Arab saying, the work of honorable people is embedded in “permissible earning and spending on dependents.” Imam Ali asserts, “The worth of each person stems from good deeds” (Quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 48). The Prophet underscored the social dimension of work when he stated, “whomsoever it pleases that his sustenance should be made ample or his life should be lengthened, let him be kind to his relatives” (quoted in Muhammad Ali, 1977, p. 376) and “God has guards on earth and in the sky. His guards in the sky are the angels and His guards on earth are those who work for their sustenance and safeguard the interest of the people.”
3. **Philosophical Dimension.** Islam asserts the centrality of work intention in judging the usefulness of work: “The value of work derives from its intention” and the Prophet further asserts that “God does not look upon either your appearance or wealth, rather God examines your intentions and actions.” Islam makes it clear, however, that the outcome of work must serve the interests of society and ease the lives of the people. For this very reason, Islam links work to developments in society that do not distort the social, economic, and psychological balance. According to Al-Pashehi (2004, p. 417), Islamic instruction indicates that “Gaining sustenance leads a soul to serenity.” The jurist Al-Maki (pp. 252-253) wrote that “Islam denies faith without work,” asserting that the betterment of faith is possible only through knowledge and work. Furthermore, when the Prophet was asked, “What will substitute for knowledge?” his answer was “Work” (Quoted in Al-Pashehi, p. 416).
4. **Psychological Dimension.** This dimension takes on a special meaning, as it strengthens the identification of employees with their profession and their role as productive citizens in society. This is because work creates a feeling of economic independence and deepens social contributions, while increasing a person’s confidence in his/ herself and the ability for creativity and renewal. Al-Mawardi (2002, p. 297) stated that “He who works hard gets preeminence and he who multiplies his efforts experiences increasing ascendancy.” The Prophet stated that “God loves a person who has work” and “The truthful, honest merchant is with the prophets and truthful ones and the martyrs”. The Prophet encouraged workers to do their work and added that those who could not work due to illness would nevertheless get a reward in the hereafter: “Any worker who is working but is unable to continue due to illness, God will record him a reward for his work” (quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 163).
5. **Economic Dimension.** Unlike the Western view of work, early Islamic scholars accentuated the link between economic necessity, personal happiness, and societal interests. Work is not an end but a means to serving one’s interests and improving the welfare of society. This perspective emphasizes that economic activities are sanctioned, individuals must not be driven by self-interests irrespective of that of society’s, and the need to continuously meet the ever emerging needs of the marketplace. The Prophet instructed believ-

ers: “Be creative in your work” (quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 159) and “Get up early to make a living and gain your economic needs as dedication represents benefits and success” (quoted in Al-Pashehi, p. 418). Abu Talib Al-Maki (p. 500) indicated, “Through transaction, selling and buying, even in just your capital, you will gain benefits and be blessed.” And, due to the increasing benefits of business to society, the Prophet asserted, “Every work is blessed.” The Prophet, too, highlighted the link between ethics, business, and prosperity stating, “Good ethics and being good to neighbors contributes to the prosperity of cities and increases development” (quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 383). The Quran further instructs (2:275), “God hath permitted trade and forbidden usury.”

The dimensions above articulate coherently that Islamic Work Ethics is not merely linked to working hard. Rather, it underscores the significant of work in enhancing the well-being of individuals and strengthening their self-esteem and social prestige, reducing poverty and engaging in activities that advance the welfare of society and those who are unfortunate. Table 2 presents selected statements of Islamic Work Ethics that underscore the role of the state, groups, and individuals in alleviating economic hardship, enhancing the community well-being, and ensuring productive participation in the economy. The above dimensions differentiate Islamic Work Ethics from Protestant Work Ethic (PWE). They are broader in their scope and include issues that are not considered within the domain of PWE. In particular, Islamic Work Ethics stresses both hard and creative engagement. In addition, Islamic Work Ethics does not separate intention from outcome, though

it highlights intention as a measure of morality. If the intention is bad, it contradicts the principle of the faith and thus outcomes are not sanctioned. In the marketplace, for example, when the intention is to achieve a monopoly or engage in trading in alcohol, the resulting fortune is considered unlawful gain. This is because Islamic Work Ethics is driven by the goal of acquisition of benefits and repulsion of harm to society. Furthermore, in its sanctioning of hard work and commitment to work, Islamic Work Ethics does not seek furthering self-interest at the expense of society; personal benefits and societal ones thrive together. That is, Islamic Work Ethics considers serving others and the community as an integral element that sustains individual well-being and that of society.

Likewise, the ever-existing possibility of deceptive behavior makes it an obligation for those engaged in any transaction to be transparent. In this context, the saying “Buyer beware” is not sanctioned.

Most importantly, there are two additional elements that should be emphasized. First, individuals are encouraged to avoid any work that is doubtful or might facilitate exploitation of others. For example, Abu Talib Al-Maki (1995, p. 503), a tenth century jurist, argued that a person should not be involved in work that enables an oppressor or which harms other people. Furthermore, a person should not engage in work in which the benefits are not clear and there is a doubt of its consequences. The doubted area is any area of transaction that lies between what is legitimate and what is prohibited (Ali, 2014). That is, despite Islamic emphasis on work and the necessity for improving the well-being of individuals socially, psychologically, and economically, work should be carried out within the framework of morally accepted behavior and action. Second, viewing

work as a social obligation demands that both government and business organizations be active in creating job opportunities. This responsibility is an integral part of IWE and it is thought to lead to societal prosperity and social harmony.

Table 2: Islamic Work Ethics Statements Pertaining to Economic Welfare

- One should take community affairs into consideration in his work.
- The state should provide work for every one willing and able to work.
- One should not be denied his full wages.
- One should strive to achieve better results.
- Good work benefits both one's self and others.
- Justice and generosity in the workplace are necessary conditions for society's welfare.
- One must participate in economic activities.
- Work should be done with sufficient effort.
- Producing more than enough to meet one's personal needs contributes to the prosperity of society as a whole.
- Work is an obligatory activity for every capable individual.
- Hard work is a virtue in light of the needs of a person and the necessity to establish equilibrium in one's individual and social life.
- Life has no meaning without work.
- Exploitation in work is not praiseworthy.
- Work gives one the chance to be independent.
- Work is a source of self-respect.
- Carelessness is unhealthy to one's welfare.
- More leisure time is bad for individuals and society.
- A successful person is the one who meets deadlines at work.
- Hard work does not guarantee success.
- One should constantly work hard to meet responsibilities.
- Progress on the job can be obtained through self-reliance.
- Devotion to quality work is a virtue.

ity, and between spirituality and disciplined and ethical conduct. The nobility of work, however, does not stem only from hard work but also from persistently exploring new ways for discovering how to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the community. Those who engage in work are driven by a divine calling to serve people and to do what is good for the rest of the population. For these individuals, serving their interests is not divorced from benefiting others. In fact, it is in the course of avoiding wrong doing and upholding social and economic justice that their interests flourish. In the end, the essence of Islamic Work Ethics is generating benefits that serve self without ignoring the interests of others. The Prophet instructed, "The best of work is that whose benefit is lasting" (Quoted in Al-Pashehi, p. 416). This dialectic relationship between self and others, between possibilities and prosperity, and between generated benefits and poverty reduction are seldom articulated with such clarity as in the early days of Islam. The Prophet stated, "The best of people are those who benefit others" (Quoted in Al-Barai, and A. Abdeen, 1987, p. 144) and that "He, who does not thank people, does not thank God" (quoted in Al-Mawardi, p. 333). Both statements stress that everything on earth is purposefully created to benefit people, reduce their hardships, and generate opportunities for them to explore and take advantage of.

Conclusion

In summary, the dimensions of Islamic Work Ethics, individually and collectively, highlight the linkage between individual and society, between work and prosper-

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Christian identity as primary foundation to workplace ethics

Rev. Dr. Timothy Ewest

Before I begin this conversation, it is important to note I write from a Christian perspective, and with Christian convictions. Moreover, while I have traveled the world, my research has largely focused on religious expression within America, and more specifically within the American workplace. However, I will endeavor to find connections to other world faith traditions when appropriate, but trust what I share will find resonance with those who are devoted to faith traditions other than Christianity, as Frederick Buechner said, “The story of one of us, is in some measure the story of us all”¹.

In this conversation I will focus less on specific Christian ethical behaviors and more on understanding the nature of Christian ethics, giving special consideration of implications for ethical work. My aim is to help all of us understand how Christians should endeavor to be ethical, and then make tacit application to the

workplace. To do this I will discuss some of the recent issues within the American workforce in regards to religion, three specific barriers for religious people who desire to live out their faith openly in the workplace and then conclude by considering the Christian ethic, including workplace ethics, which I believe needs to be understood as primarily a commitment to preserving and forming a Christian identity².

The majority of us spend more time at work than at any single other activity, and while the type of work, fairness of compensation and intensity of labor may vary, work is ubiquitous. Independent of culture, ethnicity, gender or faith tradition, work is a common rhythm to us all, as “common as mud”³.

This commonness is further demonstrated in how each of us use work as a means to achieve personal goals. Work is understood by all as a means to achieve

personal meaning, provide for a community or family, attain wealth or master a skill. Yet, every individual is motivated by different values and beliefs when using work to reach these goals. And, when they arrive at these goals, it becomes apparent that the goals work facilitates have different meaning for each person.

Yet, it is generally accepted, that those who are devoted to others, will act more justly, more equitably, and more charitably than those who are devoted to themselves⁴. This is where religions of the world, all of them, are an asset because they challenge their adherents to include community, transcend the self, and seek unity with God. The importance of ethics within the world's religions is widely accepted.

Take for example the global financial crisis of 2008 which started within the American financial system, but the specific cause was not readily determined. A commission was assigned the task of finding a cause, and determined that one of the significant causes was a "systemic breakdown in accountability and ethics"⁵. The financial crisis was primarily a crisis of ethics, and it made many wonder if there was any ethical foundation within the workplace. The response in American business and the American Academy of Management to look to religion as a possible ethical resource.

Many were right to see the connection between religion and ethical behavior. The World Economic Forum surveyed 130,000 respondents in France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Israel, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey and the United States. 21% listed religion or faith as the primary source of their personal values. Moreover, 60% of these same respondents believe organizations should be more values driven to foster a better world⁶. If these two responses are conflated, it suggests

globally people in the workplace regard religion as important, and potentially an ethical resource for organizations.

Another example comes from a group of religious scholars representing the Abrahamic faith traditions. These scholars gathered to capture what each faith tradition could contribute in creating an ethical and socially responsible workplace. The Caux International Forum, called a special roundtable of 11 scholars to address the moral lapse within the American economy. The result was a document called "The Mountain House Statement" which established common principles, derived from the three faiths of the Abrahamic tradition, to guide the marketplace. These guidelines were established because,

"The Caux Round Table is convinced that common to many religions are certain core principles of humility and responsibility with respect to risk that can be surely relied upon to fashion personal codes of conduct in financial intermediation"⁷.

But even with global evidence of the importance of religion's contribution to creating an ethical work environment, Americans and arguably Europeans, run into multiple obstructions when trying to practice their faith in the workplace, making religion an unlikely resource for organizations.

The preference for technology and secular neutrality

The first obstacle for people of faith is a workplace which has a preference for secular neutrality and technical efficiency. One may not consider these two ideas to be linked philosophically, but historically they have the same common origin, the Industrial Era. The Industrial Era, root-

ed in Modernism, believed only physical matter exists because it alone can be experienced by the senses⁸ and religion does not fit nicely within this philosophy. In America, and most of Europe, the Industrial Era promoted rational economic activity, atomization of work, specialization of worker task, division of labor, activities of workers were governed by rules, an emphasis on technical competence and impartiality in promotion and evaluation. This resulted in managers being largely responsible for the thinking and orchestration of work⁹. During this period workers were asked to avoid anything that may interfere with “taking orders”, including religion, because it interfered with the organization’s operational efficiency. The efficiency was possible because of an emphasis on advanced technology and the worker was expected to become a “part of the machine”¹⁰. The emphasis on rational management, worker obedience and impartiality cultivated an ethos of secular neutrality¹¹, and an elevation of importance to the technical which supported organizational efficiency. Secularization allows for technology to be the highest value in the American organization.

One modern-day community who lives in resistance to these Industrial Era ideals is the Amish. This faith community lives a short 20 minute drive by car from my house. While these Amish identify themselves as a Christian community, sharing many of the very same Christian beliefs I do, they are insistent on avoiding the use of technology. To visit them, a small community of 700 (a total population in America of more than 270,000), is to step back into the 17th century, or so their clothes would suggest. They avoid buttons, men have long hair and beards, and woman are typified with long hair and aprons. These agrarians refuse to use most mod-

ern technology, including tractors, electricity and most modern conveniences. They believe technology will hurt the community.¹² Each year they plow their fields using a team of horses. Avoiding many of the modern conveniences they believe will help keep them “unspotted from the world”¹³. For them, technology engenders a dependence on man, increasing pride and moving them away from dependence on God. This community is seen as a novelty, leaning towards absurdly for most, respected by just a few. Increasingly, American Christians have embraced elevated, and even deified, technology.

Unwittingly, embracing technology, further supports the notion that efficiency is preeminent in organizations and tacitly suggests that anything that interferes with organizational outcomes, must be set aside – including religion. The glorification of technology, is supported by the need for an automated efficient workplace, and even though these two ideas can be exclusive, in the mind of American organizations they are not. While we can have technology and use it in human centered ways, presently technology is primarily used to drive the profit driven machine, and man is asked to exercise himself of anything that will interfere with the work of the organization.

The spiritualizing of religion

A second obstacle comes from an attempt to recapture and integrate faith back into the workplace through the spiritualizing of religion. The intention of this movement is to rid the workplace of religions because some believe that “formal, organized religion has very little, if any, role to play in the workplace”¹⁴. Yet, this movement seeks to capture or retain those humane or prosocial values such as benevolence, charity and empathy, and cut away

the formal beliefs and practices associated with people of faith. The supporters of this movement see “spirituality” as leading to the creation of a “humanistic” work environment, but almost always at the cost of religion¹⁵. This movement mimics the movement within Europe where “Weltanschauung” (worldview) has largely become a surrogate for religion¹⁶.

Specifically in those countries that have replaced religious belief with an adoption of a secular worldview, or have spiritualized religion to offer a boutique for individualized religious preferences, ethical foundations appear to be in question, and religion is disappearing.

Cheslaw Milosz captures the shift that occurred in modern mind:

In my lifetime Heaven and Hell disappeared, the belief in life after death was considerably weakened, the borderline between man and animals, once so clear, ceased to be obvious under the impact of the theory of evolution, the notion of absolute truth lost its supreme position, history directed by providence began to start to look like a field of battle between blind forces. After two thousand years in which a huge edifice of creeds and dogmas has been erected, from Origen and Saint Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and Cardinal Newman, when every work of the human mind of human hands was created within a system of reference, the age of homelessness has dawned.

The result has been that one can be spiritual in the American workplace, but religious practices are often seen as counterproductive, and in many cases hostile – homelessness indeed.

Yet, this continues to ignore the growing presence of religion as a social movement within America, wherein a growing num-

ber of individuals actively integrate their faith into the workplace and are creating systemic organizational change¹⁷. And, it seems to be ignorant of the consistent presence of religion within the American landscape and growing presence of religion globally¹⁸. Ultimately, the interpolation of spirituality as a surrogate for religion, creates an impediment for the use of religion as a resource for ethical behavior in business.

Constraining religious ethics to rationality

A final impediment to the integration of religion, specifically religious ethics, into organizational life is an attempt to align religious ethics with the predominating governing ethical theory, the Normative Ethical approach. The Normative Ethical approach, rooted in Modernism, assumes that individuals are and/or need to be rational agents when engaging in ethical decisions¹⁹. The intent is to distill the rational elements of religious belief, specifically the rules for behavior, and use them in business practices²⁰. Although, research from various fields has suggested that there is a weak correlation between those who “know the good, and will do the good”²¹ Stanley Hauerwas suggests theologians have spent too much time trying to get theological truths to fit within a secular philosophical ethical system²². This presents a problem for most of the religiously devoted, in that, their faith is much more encompassing and cannot be reduced to simple rational rules of behavior. Most consider themselves to be, as mentioned earlier, in a relationship with a community, and using the words of Paul Tillich, the “ground of being”²³.

While there are some historical Christian workplace behavioral practices to be noted, the center of Christian practices in the workplace, and I would argue any

faith tradition, is to preserve and enhance Christian (religious) identity, not follow rational behavioral rules.

Take an example from my own faith tradition, Protestant Christianity. Historically Protestant Christians followed systematic practices within the workplace. My colleague, Dr. David Miller from Princeton Universities Faith and Work Initiative, and I have found five historical practices by Protestant Christians. These five practices include: an emphasis on personal purpose or calling in daily life²⁴, stewardship²⁵, economic justice²⁶, lifestyle modesty within success²⁷, coupled with a spirit of radical generosity and finally expressing of one's faith, often called evangelism²⁸. But even these practices, typically identified with Protestants, have only been consistent for a century or so, and even then many of these practices have changed.

Researchers have traced Christian practices through the five distinct time periods: Early Christianity, the Patristic period, the Dark and Middle Ages, the Reformation and the Enlightenment. And, in each period they examined how specific beliefs or practices remained stable. They included: the purpose of work, ownership of land, amassing wealth, charging interest on loans, conducting trade and making a profit.²⁹ The findings for me (and most religious historians) are not surprising; these five Christian practices while initially regarded as prohibited and immoral, over time became acceptable and in some cases admired. This does not mean there are no normative practices for Christians who seek to live ethical lives in the workplace, instead I suggest the normative practices come from overarching ethical values such as benevolence, charity and empathy, and how specific practices are best manifested depends to some measure on what they mean to the

person's faith identity, These overarching ethics are the same for Christians (and all religiously devoted) and for those who do not adhere to a faith tradition but seek to live a good life³⁰.

The way forward

For Christians, their first and primary ethical concern in or out of the workplace is their identity in Christ. When a Christian preserves and forms their identity, they answer two fundamental questions, "Who am I?" and "Where do I belong?" So, when they consider what actions are ethical in the workplace, they ask themselves these two questions, and behaviors that align with their identity will follow.

I suggest religious ethics are an attempt by believers, to practice their faith in a way that is representative of how they image themselves within the community of believers, as well as providing a sense of what it means for them to be a Christian (religiously devoted follower of Christ). Thus, a Christian's work ethic is not centered on following rules, but on aligning ones behaviors with what is important for themselves and their faith community to do, in order to preserve a Christian identity and thus honor Christ. The apostle Paul captures this idea in the following,

"I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me"³¹

Christian ethics cannot be separated from Christian identity, nor can it be reduced to simple rational principles of ethical behavior, simply be spiritualized, nor be marginalized for the sake of organizational performance.

For those without revelation, which re-

sults in religious devotion, they are left to pursue the good (morality) on their own, but the expectations for them in regards to ethical practices are the same. The Apostle Paul argues in the first chapter of the book of Romans that all are aware of ethical exceptions that come from the creator;

“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse”³².

However, Christians also believe that this is very difficult for those who turn away from God to find the good through their own efforts, since their hearts are turned away from the creator and they are more concerned about “what they have and what they do”³³. But, in contrast, people of faith have the advantage of being guided to truth through divine revelation and when behaviors are consistent with the revealed truth, it reinforces their Christian identity. Then, these Christians know they are “Christians and belong to Christ” – thus answering the two fundamental questions, “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?”.

The challenge before us is to consider if Christianity or for that matter any religion, have norms which we should regard as specifically Christian or religious. Meaning, is it “only” the Christians or those of a faith traditions job to practice justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God?³⁴ Is it only the Christian or those of a faith tradition who are to keep “honest weights and scales”³⁵ – and so forth? Indeed, we are all to be ethical, all of us, without regard to religion, or faith. And, each person acts ethically out of their personal beliefs and narrative that provides meaning for them,

that is give them identity.

Yet, if religious narrative provides meaning for individuals within faith traditions, among the many Christian narratives that can be drawn upon, the main Christian narrative must be the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross, by which Christians understand the nature of God’s love for them. This does not suggest that other religions do not have similar theological narratives from which they can draw to understand love, but for Christians, this narrative is central.

A passage in the New Testament pointing to this truth comes from the Apostle Paul; “For God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”³⁶ This act of Christ’s love demonstrated on the cross, should be the central narrative which confines all Christian actions in and out of the workplaces, being a primary motivation for behavior³⁷. Whatever ethical workplace norms Christians adheres to, they are to be motivated and given meaning by a love for others that is independent and not contingent on reward, praise, or personal cost because this is how Christians were loved by Christ.

As people of faith should be unashamed to include our faith identity (narrative) in conversations about ethical values, even in a secularized workplace. Since, we are all responsible for the same ethical code, and all trying to answer the two fundamental questions. To be certain, there will be differences in ethical understandings and codes of conduct will change, but as people of faith we believe that we have been guided by revelation to understand the will of the God for our lives, and our lives have meaning as we pursue our identity in the Creator.

But, to be certain, our world will experience more ethical crisis and may in fact turn again to religion for an ethical foun

ation. I believe as devout people of faith we should be flattered, and invite the conversation. However, in this next conversation, we need to be clear that ethical expectations are the same for us all, but how each of us answer the two fundamental

questions, “Who am I?” and “Where do I belong?”, will make all the difference. And, maybe our conversation will become less about expectations of the religious community, and focus more on the identity and meaning people are seeking.

Notes

- 1 Fredirck Beuchner, , 1991, *The Sacred Journey*, San Francisco: Harper & Row, p. 112.
- 2 Ann Mealely synthesises the work of Paul Ricoeur in regards to using Christian Identity as a hermeneutic for understanding ethical living. Much of the work depicted herein, is a product of the scholarship form Mealy, Hauerwas and Ricoeur. However, a similar body of research can be found by prosocial psychologists under the theme Moral Identity Thoery. See, Mealey, Ann Marie, 2009, *Identity of Christian Morality*, Abingdon, Oxon, GBR: Ashgate Publishing Ltd. See, Paul Ricoeur, 1984, ‘The Creativity of Language’, in Richard Kearney (Ed.), *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, Manchester, p. 21. Stanley Hauerwas, 2001, ‘On Keeping Theological ethics Theological’, in John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Eds.), *The Hauerwas Reader*, Durham and London, pp. 51– 74.
- 3 Piercy, Marge, 2002, ‘To Be of Use’ in *Good Poems*, Keillor, Garrison. (Ed.), Minneapolis, MN., Viking Adult.
- 4 Prosocial psychologist Shalom Schwartz considers all prosocial actions to contain empathy and benevolence. These two prosocial behaviors are others directed. While not every religions acts are others directed, the majority of religions foster beliefs and practices that are others centered. (1994), Are there universal aspects in the structure and contents of human values? *Journal of Social Issues*, 50(4), pp. 19-45.
- 5 *Financial Crisis Inquiry Report*, 2011, Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission, retrieved from, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-FCIC/pdf/GPO-FCIC.pdf>
- 6 World Economic Forum, (Global Agenda Council on the Role of Faith, Why Care about Faith?, 2014) http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GAC/2014/WEF_GAC_RoleFaith_WhyCareAboutFaith_Report_2014.pdf
- 7 The Caux International Forum, 2011, *The Mountain House Statement*, retrieved from http://www.cauxroundtable.org/view_file.cfm?fileid=165
- 8 Daniels, D., Franz, R. and Wong, K., 2000, ‘A classroom with a world-view: making spiritual assumptions explicit in management education’ *Journal of Management Education*, 24(5), pp. 540-561.
- 9 Ashforth, B.E. & Pratt, M. G., 2010, ‘Institutionalized spirituality: An oxymoron?’ in R.A. Giacalone & C.L. Jurkiewicz (Eds.), *Handbook of workplace spirituality and organizational performance* (2nd ed.), Armonk, NY: ME Sharpe, pp. 44-58.
- 10 Ashley Montagu and Floyd W., 1983, *The Dehumanization of Man* Hardcover – October 1, Matson McGraw-Hill.

- 11 Secularization theory suggests modern society is rational and desires a decline in religiosity, believing it is not necessary in organizations or management. See King, J., 2012, '(Dis)Missing the obvious: Will mainstream research ever take religion seriously?' *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 17(3), pp. 214-224.
- 12 Melton, J. Gordon., 2010, «Amish.» *Religions of the World: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Beliefs and Practices*. Ed. J. Gordon Melton and Martin Baumann. 2nd ed. Vol. 1. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, pp. 97-98. Gale Virtual Reference Library.
- 13 James 1:27
- 14 Mitroff, I., 2003, 'Do not promote religion under the guise of spirituality' *Organization*, 10(2), pp. 375-382
- 15 The management guild seems to be supporting the internal outcomes of a spiritual life, while marginalizing, the actual social and behavioral religions structures, practices and associations on which such spirituality is commonly built. Garica-Zamora (2003) see "spirituality" as leading to the creation of a "humanistic" work environment, a goal once espoused by such stalwarts of organizational theory as Douglas McGregor. Garcia-Zamora, J.C., 2003, 'Workplace spirituality and organizational performance', *Public Administration Review*, 63(3), pp. 355-364.
- 16 The term worldview is a translation from the German word, meaning a way of looking at the world. Our worldview forms the context within which we organize and build our understanding or reality, including our presupposition about the nature of reality, knowledge, life's meaning and purpose Pearcy, N.R., 2004, *Total Truth: Liberating Christianity from its cultural captivity*, Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL.
- 17 Miller D.W. ,2007, *God at work: The history and promise of the faith at work movement*, NewYork: Oxford University Press.
- 18 The growth in religious belief is not localized to America, globally people who presently identify themselves as a member of one the major world religions is at 80%, and by 2050 it is predicted to rise to 85% Johnson, , T., 2010, 'A statistical approach to the world's religions adherents, 2000-2015. CE.' in J.G. Melton & M. Bauman (Eds.), *Religions of The World: A Comprehensive encyclopedia of beliefs and practices* (Vol. 1, pp. lv-lix), Santa Barbara, CA.
- 19 De Cremer, D., Van Dick, R., Tenbrunsel, A., Pillutla, M. & Murnighan, J.K., 2011, 'Understanding ethical behavior and decision making in management: A behavioral business ethics approach' *British Journal of Management*, 22(1), pp. 1-12.
- 20 Prior to the field of business ethics emerging (which was recently) religious moralists preached Christian morality in business, and since then, the field has been taken over by moral ethicists framing the conversation in terms normative philosophical arguments which are independent of theologies, whose theological ethics they have "indirectly denied", De George, R., 1986, 'Theological ethics and business ethics', *Journal of Business Ethics*, pp. 421-432
- 21 However, there is a growing body

of research which shows a weak or moderate association between moral reasoning and moral action or behavior, mean. Hoffman, M.L., 2000, *Empathy and Moral Development: Implications for Caring and Justice*, New York: Cambridge University Press..

- 22 Hauerwas argues since the enlightenment, theologians have devoted too much time trying to translate theological language into terms that are comprehensible and meaningful for secularists. Stanley Hauerwas, 'On Keeping Theological ethics Theological', in John Berkman and Michael Cartwright (Eds.), 2001, *The Hauerwas Reader*, Durham and London, pp. 51– 74.
- 23 Paul Tillich, 1952, *Ground of being, The Courage to Be*, Yale University Press.
- 24 "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10, New International Version).
- 25 "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground'" (Genesis 1:28).
- 26 "All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along" (Galatians 2:10 New International Version).
- 27 "Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back" (Luke 6:30 New International Version)
- 28 "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the

name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:10 New International Version)

- 29 Bay, D.; McKeage, K.; McKeage, J., 2010, 'An historical perspective on the interplay of Christian thought and business ethics.' *Business & Society*, 49(4), pp. 652-676, p. 655.
- 30 Leahy (1986) suggests two orientations within theology, the first being the orthodox model which aligns itself with philosophically with normative ethics. Here the orthodox theologian searches his tradition for moral norms and applies them to business cases. However, Leahy argues that this theological orientation is problematic because the Christian ethic is an "embodied ethic", which he describes as a meaning, a systematic framework, an investment of the person's spirit, an ethos which includes the Physical body. A Christian ethic which concerns itself first with the person of Christ, the waters of baptism, specifically, that the Christian is united with Christ and his life become a means to express this life of faith; from this union behaviors flow, which become norms. Leahy, J., 1986, 'Embodied ethics: Some common concerns of religion and business' *Journal of Business Ethics*. 5, pp. 466-472.
- 31 Galatians 2:20
- 32 Romans 1:20
- 33 I John 2:16
- 34 Micah 6:8
- 35 Leviticus 19:36
- 36 Romans 5:8
- 37 2 Corinthians 5:14



Reliance on God in the history of Early Islamic spirituality

Harith bin Ramli

Sufism is often regarded as an other-worldly mystical tradition within Islam, single-mindedly devoted to the individual's spiritual path to God. This image often works in its favour today, attracting a wide-range of individuals looking for spiritual paths to escape the problems of modern life. However, critics of the Sufi tradition also draw inspiration from this image, seeing the perceived anti-social, elitist, or individualistic tendencies of Sufism as one of the major factors contributing to the contemporary decline and decadence of Muslim society. What both modern apologists and detractors of the Sufi tradition often overlook is the tradition's greater complexity throughout its history. Throughout Islamic history, one

can find numerous instances of Sufis being associated with withdrawal from society, but alongside this, equally numerous cases of Sufis being at the forefront of social regeneration. The most famous example of revivalist Sufism is the contribution of Abū Hāmid al-Ghazālī (d.505 A.H./1111 C.E.), the scholar turned Sufi who wrote one of the greatest classics of the Islamic tradition, *Ihyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* [The Revival of the Religious Sciences], a work aimed at restoring balance not only to the Islamic intellectual sphere, but to the daily life of Muslims and Muslim society as a whole.¹

Less well-known is the *Qut al-qulub* [The Sustenance of the Hearts,] a text which was one of the main inspirations

for Ghazali's *Ihyā'*, arguably forming the template for the latter. The *Qūt* was written more than a century before Ghazālī's work, around the time Sufism was forming as a distinct tradition, uniting various earlier ascetic and mystical trends. However, in contrast with the other major Sufi works that appeared around this period such as al-Kalābādhī's *Ta'arruf*, al-Sarrāj's *al-Luma'*, or al-Qushayrī's *Risāla*, the *Qūt* does not only focus on concerns of Sufis, but appeals to a wider audience interested in questions of ethics and moral living. Like the *Ihyā'*, it is a large work, covering a wide range of topics from daily ritual to Sufi contemplation to social ethics (e.g. marriage, trade). This led Richard Gramlich, who produced an excellent edition and translation of the book into German, to describe it as an "encyclopaedia of Islamic piety".² Its ambitious attempt to go beyond the Sufi sources and draw on a wider range of authorities makes it an excellent starting point for a look at the formation of Sufism and its relationship with the wider world of Islamic learning and piety. By going over the different sources of the *Qūt*, this paper will provide a summary sketch of its treatment of a classic debate that engaged not only the early Sufis, but also scholars of law and tradition who were concerned with understanding the ideal life advocated by the Sharī'a: is it preferable to work to earn a living or to cultivate trust in God (*tawakkul*) for one's daily sustenance?³

The author of the *Qūt*, Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, who died just before the turn of the millennium in 386/996, came from the mountainous western Iranian region of Jibāl, but grew up in the holy city of Mecca, where he received education at the hands of the city's leading scholars and Sufi masters. However, beyond a few anecdotes in the biographical sources, we hardly know much about Makkī's own life. Based on

the Qūt's admiration for Ibn Ḥanbal and mention in the biography about his links with leading Ḥanbalīs of the day, we know that he was involved with this traditionalist movement, which was slowly emerging also as a legal school. However, unlike many early Ḥanbalīs or Sufis, Makkī is not known by any title related to a craft or trade. Hence, we could suppose that he himself practiced the difficult discipline of *tawakkul*, surviving on the bare minimum. The thirteenth century biographer Ibn Khallikān narrates a legend about Makkī's early life, in which, after living only on weeds that grew in the wild, his skin turns green.⁴ While we might question the authenticity of this story, it reflects his association with a particular trend within Sufism that placed great emphasis on maintaining ritual and ethical purity in one's diet and cultivating the spiritual state of reliance on God. Makkī's primary teacher in Sufism, Aḥmad b. Sālim (d. between 350/971 and 360/971), was a leading figure in the Iraqi city of Basra, which was renowned for being one of the centres of Islamic asceticism and spirituality from the first century of the Muslim era. It is likely that Makkī first encountered Ibn Sālim or his followers (known as the Sālimiyya) at Mecca, then later moved to Basra where he became one of this group's leading figures.⁵

The Sālimiyya traced their tradition back to ascetic and mystic Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/895), who had settled in Basra, and ultimately, to the famous early ascetic figure of the city, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110 A.H./728 C.E.). Makkī went so far as to consider Baṣrī the founding figure of all the sciences of Sufism.

"He is our *imām* in this science (*ilm*) which we are speaking about. We follow his traces, obey his path, deriving light from his lamp. By God's permis-

sion, all this is transmitted to us from him, from one *imām* (i.e. of each generation) to the other.”⁶

According to Makkī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was asked, which of the two was better: a man with a profession or another who occupied himself with worship? He answered clearly in favour of the latter.⁷

“Glory be to God! The two cannot be compared. The one who occupies himself with worship is better.”

The *Qut*’s sources are not exclusively Basran, however. Makkī contrasts Baṣrī’s position with the opinion of a contemporary from the neighbouring city of Kufa, Ibrahim al-Nakha’ī (d. 96/715):

Ibrāhīm al-Nakha’ī, may God be merciful with him, said: “A man who crafts things with his own hands is dearer to me than a merchant, and a merchant is dearer to me than the idle.”

When asked whether an honest merchant was dearer to him than the one who occupied himself with worship, he said: “The merchant is dearer to me, as he is in the state of struggle (*jihād*). Satan comes to him through the path of weights and scales, and from the direction of taking and giving, and he struggles with him.”⁸

On this matter, he had a difference of opinion with al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, may God be merciful with him.

The association between earning a living and *jihād* is also repeated in a statement by a Syrian ascetic from the period:

“Other than the booty acquired from raiding the lands of the polytheists, there is no food that fills my belly that preserves the rights of God more

than the food acquired from an honest merchant.” He (also) said: “they (i.e. the first Muslims) used to equate the one who earned a living for his family with the fighter for God’s cause, being higher in virtue than any other kind of person.”⁹

And even more frequently, leading figures of the first generation of Muslims, the closest companions of the Prophet are reported favouring, not only working to earn a living, but specifically, trade.

It was narrated that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb [the second Caliph]: There would not be a dearer place (*mawṭin*) in which death would come to me than the state in which I am trading to support my family, selling and buying on my saddle...A pious predecessor (*salaf*) said: Engage in trading and buying, even if it is with capital. Thereby you will attain blessing which is not given to the farmer.¹⁰

The Prophet created a bond of brotherhood between Sa‘ad b. al-Rabī‘ and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Awf. Sa‘ad then said (to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān): “I will share with you half of my wealth and half of my family.”

‘Abd al-Raḥmān then said: “My God bless you, your family and your wealth. Show me the market!”

He then worked for a day there, acquiring some dried yogurt and butter.¹¹

Commenting on the latter report, Makkī explains that since ‘Abd al-Rahman b. ‘Awf was one of the leading companions of the Prophet, the argument that earning a living necessarily leads to a diminished state of *tawakkul* can be rejected. In fact, the companion’s admirable preference for self-reliance over reliance on others was based on the Prophet’s own identification

of the ideal believer with hardship and the avoidance of luxury. Furthermore, he was also motivated by an altruistic preference for his bond brother's wellbeing.¹² It is difficult to establish to what degree the *Qūt*, written centuries later, is an accurate record of piety in the first two centuries of the Muslim era. But what we seem to have here are different perspectives on work and *tawakkul* that suggest that this was an ongoing debate in Makkī's lifetime, taking place between adherents of different trends of piety that were still slowly becoming consolidated during Makkī's lifetime into the broader tradition known today as Sufism. Even when we focus our attention to the leading figures of the distinct Basran tradition of mysticism Makkī is said to have adhered to, we find different views on this matter. For Sahl al-Tustarī, the different perspectives reflect the diversity of the prophetic tradition (*sunna*):

One of our scholars¹³ said: He who discredits earning has discredited the *sunna*, and he who discredits abstaining from earning has discredited the Oneness of God (*tawhid*)...

The Prophet was sent to all creation in all the different categories you see them in today. Some were merchants, some abstained from work, some begged from other people, others did not beg. He did not tell the merchant: "Abandon your business." Nor did he say to the one who abstained from work: "Go and earn a living, and acquire a craft." Nor did he tell the beggar to cease begging. Instead, he brought (the guidance of) faith and certainty to them in all their states, leaving them to the divine ordering of affairs (*tadbīr*). Each person thus served (God) in accordance with his particular state.¹⁴

However, a generation later, Makkī's teacher, Ibn Sālim seems to take the position that *tawakkul* is superior to earning:

Tawakkul was the state of the Prophet of God, God's blessings and peace be upon him, while earning is his *sunna*. He instituted it (i.e. the *sunna* of earning) due to their weakness, since they fell short of the level of *tawakkul*. Earning a living was made permissible for them, as part of his *sunna*. Otherwise, they would have perished.¹⁵

In addition, notwithstanding Makkī's personal attachment to Ibn Sālim, the *Qūt* does not exclusively cite authorities from the Basran tradition, but draws on a wider range of early Sufi authorities. In particular, we are given the example of Junayd (d. 298/910), the central figure of the Baghdad school. When Junayd was told about a group of Sufi pretenders who were holding a session in a mosque where they were shaming people who "entered markets" (i.e. engaged in craft or trade), he said:

I know a man who enters the market, and his daily ritual of worship is three hundred prayer cycles (*raka'āt*), and thirty thousand chants of divine glorification (*tasbīhāt*).¹⁶

It transpires later that the man in question was Junayd himself. Makkī reports also that Junayd's own master, Abū Ja'far al-Ḥaddād, worked as a blacksmith for twenty years while managing to hide his state of *tawakkul*. He would earn a dinar and ten dirham from his labour each day, but gave it away all his earnings before the evening. He only abandoned his profession when one of his apprentices accidentally discovered his miraculous ability to be untouched by fire.¹⁷

How are we to account for the incredibly diversity of attitudes to work among the authorities cited in the *Qut*? To understand this, we need to return to the broader historical context of the first few centuries of Islamic piety and the third/ninth century rise of Sufism. Makkī's choice of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī as mouthpieces for the two opposing positions on this issue is interesting. We do know that some of the first figures to be known as 'Sufis' were Basran Mu'tazilīs, many of them advocating not only rejection of worldly goods, but any association with the state.¹⁸ In fact, the term 'Mu'tazila' itself comes from '*i'tizal*' - to withdraw, and al-Hasan al-Basri was considered among Mu'tazilis to be a predecessor of their movement. Other, non-Mu'tazilite ascetic trends also continued to exist in Basra into the third/ninth century. A number of groups arising out of the circles of his disciple, 'Abd al-Wāḥid b. Zayd (d. circa 155/750), advocated extreme forms of world renunciation.¹⁹ Kufa, on the other hand, was home to a school of jurisprudence that eventually gave rise to the Ḥanafī school of law. In fact, in a discussion exploring a number of different opinions about the meaning of obligatory knowledge, the 'jurists of Kufa' are singled out for identifying such knowledge with learning the laws of everyday transactions, i.e. commerce and marriage. In other words, for Makkī, they represented a more practical, world-engaged approach to Islamic piety and learning. It is noteworthy that the earliest known work defending the value of work against extreme *tawakkul* seems to have been authored by one of the students of Abū Ḥanīfa, Muḥammad al-Shaybānī (d. 189/805). As Michael Bonner has shown, while Shaybānī's *Kitāb al-kasb* [The Book of Earning] has come down to us in a form much modified and commented upon by

later generations of Ḥanafī jurists, the basic foundations of this text show that jurists such as al-Shaybānī were reacting to the appearance of a popular ascetic movement as the Karrāmiyya. Like the Basran ascetics, the Karrāmiyya - which appeared in eastern Iran early on in the third/ninth century, spread rapidly, attracting followers in places as far as Palestine - called for an extreme form of world renunciation that prioritised *tawakkul* over working to earn a living.²⁰

On the other hand, the association made between the profits of honest trade and booty acquired from holy war on the frontier also reflects a significant shift that took place towards the end of the second/eighth century - from the fortresses at the borders of Islam to its urban centres. A number of historians have demonstrated the links between early Islamic asceticism and the ideal of the holy warrior on the frontiers of the Caliphate.²¹ Many of these ascetics increasingly became to central heroic figures of an emerging group known as the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth* - the Ḥadīth Folk. Over the third/ninth century, the Ḥadīth Folk increasingly became more prominent, not only as pioneers of the science of transmitting prophetic traditions, but also defenders of particular theological stances, such as the uncreated nature of the Quran. A distinct mode of piety also became associated with the Hadith Folk, taking a middle ground between extreme world-renunciation and unrestrained engagement with worldly affairs.²² The Hadith Folk way of life was exemplified by its foremost representative and champion in this century, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (d. 241/855), who, among other things, inspired an entire generation of ḥadīth scholarship and the appearance of the first major 'canonical' collections. The Hadith Folk were impressed by the early ascetics, but more importantly,

sought inspiration in the example of the lifestyle of the Prophet Muhammad and the first generation of Muslims. The hadith collections of this period reflect a consistent picture in line with the balanced approach of Hadith Folk piety. For example, in the first hadith in the *Book of Commerce* in al-Bukhārī's collection, the prophet's companion Abu Hurayra tells us that the reason he ended up narrating more narrations than other, more senior companions was due to the fact that the vast majority of them were occupied with either trade or agriculture.²³ Further on, in the section "A Man's Earning and Working with His Own Hands" (*Kasb al-rajul wa-'amalihi bi-yadihi*), Bukhārī narrates a number of traditions promoting the importance of work and self-reliance. We are told that the companions were so sweaty from hard manual labour that the Prophet had asked them to bath.²⁴ Abū Bakr, upon being appointed Caliph, only agreed to allow his family to be fed from the public treasury after being pressured to do so by the community.²⁵ Self-reliance was also the practice of ancient prophets such as David, who, even though a king, is reported to have only eaten from the fruits of his own labour.²⁶

One of the most widely-quoted tradition on the importance of work and self-reliance is the ḥadīth of 'Ā'isha, the prophet's wife, transmitted in different versions and with different chains of narration. This is the form in which it appears the collection of Ibn Mājah (d. 273/886), right at the beginning of the chapter on earning in the *Book of Trades*:

Abu Bakr b. Abū Shayba, 'Alī b. Muḥammad and Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm b. Ḥabīb reported to us, all saying that Abū Mu'āwiya reported to us, that al-A'mash reported to us, from Ibrāhīm, from al-Aswad, from 'Ā'isha, who said:

"The Prophet said: "The best that a man could eat is that which he earns himself. What his child earns is also his."

It is worth noting that the 'Ibrāhīm' mentioned here is the Kufan Ibrāhīm al-Nakha'ī discussed earlier. The ḥadīth of 'Ā'isha is also the central prophetic report quoted in *Kitāb al-makāsib* [The Book of Earnings], the first known text on this subject associated with the Sufi tradition, written by the Basran scholar and ascetic, al-Ḥārith al-Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857). Based mainly in the Abbasid capital, Baghdad, Muḥāsibī was to some degree associated with the same Ḥadīth Folk circles as his contemporary Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.²⁷ However, by promoting the ideal of self-reliance and work to earn a living, Muḥāsibī's work seems quite in line with the orientation of Hadith Folk piety. The primary target of the book was a group associated with the Central Asian ascetic Shaqīq al-Balkhī (d. 194/810), who, according to Muḥāsibī, rejected any form of activity in search of one's livelihood as falling short of the ideal of *tawakkul*. Muḥāsibī argues that such an extreme position ignores not only the hadith of 'Ā'isha, but also the example of ancient prophets and early Muslims who all worked to earn a living. In other words, to define *tawakkul* as the complete abandonment of work was to go against the Sunna.²⁸

Muḥāsibī's lifetime occurs around the time Sufism emerges as a distinct tradition, particular in the circle of Junayd at Baghdad. Junayd, who counted Muḥāsibī among his teachers, not only played a central role in bringing together various earlier strands of asceticism and early mysticism, but also aligning the emerging Sufi tradition with the traditionalist piety of the Hadith Folk. Around the same time this was taking place in Bagh-

dad, figures such as Sahl al-Tustari and Abū Ḥatim al-ʿAṭṭār (d. 270s/874-884) were also bridging the gap between the early Basran ascetic tradition and the more work-oriented piety of the Hadith Folk.²⁹ Ibn Sālim's pro-*tawakkul* stance a generation later shows that even among members of Tustarī's own circle, there was some resistance to the idea of earning, but by Makkī's time, what seems to be happening is a general gathering together of different positions and modes of piety under the wider umbrella of a common 'Sufi' tradition. A significant aspect of this development was the adoption of a similar culture of consensus that was being practiced in the emerging Sunni traditions of law (*madhāhib*). Like the jurists of different legal schools, or even with a given school of law, Sufis could agree to disagree to more minor aspects of practice, while agreeing on broader principles. In other words, Sufism, to some degree, worked like a *madhhab*.

From the other direction, this communion of various strands of Islamic piety under the broader label of Sufism was also being facilitated by the more flexible definition of prophetic Sunna developed by figures such as Tustarī. This definition took into account the diversity of human types and needs, and also had the potential to explain the apparent contradictions in the ḥadīth about the Prophet's practice. Thus, Makkī argues that the Prophet purposefully behaved differently in different situations in order to institute a variety of practices that accounted differing circumstances of human life. For example, while he once kept a year's worth of provisions for his family, in another instance, he discouraged members of his household from keeping enough food to last more than the day.³⁰ What emerges is an attempt to organised the diverse approaches according to a hierarchy based on the strength of the

individual. Makkī quotes another Sufi Abu Ya'qub al-Susi, who divides *tawakkul* into three levels.

"*Tawakkul* is of three stations: general, the elite of the general, and the elite of the elite. He who enters the way of worldly causes (*asbāb*), utilising his religious knowledge, places trust in God, but has not perfected his certainty - he is among the general. He who abandons worldly causes, trusts in God, and has perfected his certainty - he is among the elite of the general. But the one who leaves worldly causes in the rightful way, due to the presence of certainty, then enters (again) the way of worldly causes, engaging in its for the sake of others, then he is among the elite of the elite."³¹

According to Makkī, the third station of *tawakkul*, in which the individual returns to engage in worldly activity for the sake of others, was the state of the ten foremost companions of the Prophet. A similar three-fold hierarchy is applied elsewhere for the different positions on marriage. While those who are able to abstain from their desires for the worldly pleasures of marriage and raising a family are given due respect for their individual strength and perseverance, those who are able to maintain a state of *tawakkul* while practicing the Sunna of marriage are considered to be on the highest level.³²

By equating the ability to balance worldly and spiritual activities with the highest level of *tawakkul*, Makkī was building on Junayd's teaching that a station of persistence (*baqā'*) exists beyond the station of mystical self-annihilation (*fanā'*), in which the perfected Sufi returns to become not only a guide but a pillar of support for his community. This ideal seems to have been equally inspired by the Ḥadīth Folk's hero-

ic ideal of an individual who can combine the spiritual ideals of detachment from the world while contributing socially by earning a living. At the same time, more extreme forms of world renunciation was still an option for a small minority of practitioners, provided they did not see this as the necessary pathway to the highest spiritual stations. By adopting a more moderate approach to the idea of world renunciation and *tawakkul*, the emerging Sufi tradition represented by texts like the *Qūt al-qulūb* allowed for a wider variety of practitioners to be members of a growing Sufi community, one which was increasingly open to members from a wide variety of social classes. This is the point in which we start to see a growing number of lay members in Sufi communities, working men and women who attended study and training sessions when they could find free time away from work and family. In a sense, Sufism grew in parallel with what the historian S.D. Goitein identified as the emergence of a middle-class or bourgeoisie in early medieval Islamic society.³³ At the same time, by defining the highest state of *tawakkul* as a state of mind or attitude independent of a person's economic status, Sufi masters were able to acquire significant worldly as well as spiritual influence, allowing the Sufi tradition to outlast other, more restrictive traditions of piety. Although dissenting trends such as the Karrāmiyya were to survive for a number of centuries, it was the Sufi masters and Sufi institutions that were to dominate the Muslim societies of the later medieval period.

Finally, it is worth asking some concluding questions about the degree to which the idealism of early Muslim asceticism was lost in this process. It almost goes without saying that by allowing economic and spiritual success to go hand in hand, the Sufi tradition also opened the door to

potential pretenders who could live comfortably while making claims to the attainment of spiritual station. The highly subjective nature of Sufi *tawakkul* in its classical form, therefore, granted flexibility and openness, but also removed at least one barrier to hypocrisy. Another issue was the institutionalisation of professions related to religious learning and practice. Makkī, in the *Qūt*, was adamantly clear about the immoral nature of earning a living through religious activities that should be performed for worldly gain, such as leading prayers or teaching the Quran or religious knowledge.³⁴ The need to strictly separate worldly gain from spiritual gain is illustrated in Makkī's narration of a question posed to Ibn Ḥanbal. Certain forms of spindles employed in the textile industry allowed a worker to spindle while going about his or her daily business. Could an individual who was walking around with a handheld spindle, in the case of rain, enter a cemetery, and continue to work there? Ibn Ḥanbal considered it preferable to cease work in this case, since it did not respect the sanctity of the cemetery as a place connected to the affairs of the Hereafter.³⁵ However, Makkī had also allowed for situations in which an individual could live off grants provided by others³⁶, and by the time Ghazālī was writing the *Iḥyā'*, it had become increasingly commonplace for the profession of religious teaching to be associated with salaries paid through an endowment (*waqf*). The *Iḥyā'* therefore, while still upholding the ideal of the unattached Sufi, maintains a certain degree of pragmatism in its argument that arrangements allowed religious specialists to fulfill their duties without having to worry about earning a living.³⁷ In other words, Sufis could be paid to be Sufis. The danger here, as later critics such as Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328) would point out, was that

this could give rise to a class of “professional Sufis,” freeloaders who deviated both from the early ascetics’ strict idea of *tawakkul* as well as the self-reliant work ethic of the Ḥadīth Folk.³⁸ Finally, there is the question of social hierarchy and stratification. There is a strong egalitarian tinge to the early trends of piety that led to the formation of Sufism. The egalitarianism of the Ḥadīth Folk work ethic is self-evident, and even the more extreme

world-renouncing forms of asceticism, while elitist in spirit, were often motivated a desire to avoid pervasive social injustice. However, by adopting a more inclusive and flexible approach to *tawakkul* that avoided the question of wealth or social status, did classical Sufis inadvertently adopt a mode of piety that more often than not maintained the social status quo?

Notes

- 1 The studies on Ghazālī are too numerous to be listed here. For a brief look, see the paper in an earlier issue of this journal: Tayeb Chouiref, 2012, ‘Social Justice and Education of the Soul: al-Ghazālī’s Approach’, *Religions* 3, pp. 127-136. A recent, more detailed exploration at Ghazālī’s social and political program of reform can be found in Yazeed Said, 2012, *Ghazālī’s Politics in Context*, Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- 2 Richard Gramlich, 1992, *Die Nahrung der Herzen: Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’s Qūt al-qulūb*, Stuttgart: F. Steiner, pp. 1:17. To date, there has not been a full-scale translation of the *Qūt* into English, although a translation of Part 31 (The Book of Knowledge) can be found in John Renard, 2004, *Knowledge of God in Classical Sufism*, New York: Paulist Press, pp. 112-263.
- 3 The two sections in the *Qūt* most relevant to this topic is the lengthy section on *tawakkul* in Part 33, and Part 47, titled “On the legal ruling necessitating earning a living and what a merchant is required to study.” For a survey of the different early Sufi sources on this topic in German, see Benedikt Reinart, 1968, *Die Lehre vom Tawakkul in der klassischen Sufik*, Berlin: de Gruyter.
- 4 Ibn Khallikān, Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, 1994, *Wafayāt al-a’yān wa-abnā’ al-zamān*, (Ed.) Wadād al-Qāḍī and Ibrāhīm Aḥmad Mūsā, Beirut: Dār al-Ṣādir, 4: pp. 303-304.
- 5 For more on the author of the *Qūt* and his intellectual context, see the recent entry ‘Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī’ by Erik S. Ohlander in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Third Edition. Also, Atif Khalil, 2012, ‘Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī & The Nourishment of the Hearts (*Qūt al-qulūb*) in the context of Early Sufism’, *The Muslim World* 102.2: pp. 335-356; Harith Bin Ramli, 2012, ‘The Sālimiyya and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī: the transmission of theological teachings in a Basran circle of mystics’, *Les Maîtres Sufis et leurs disciples, IIIe - Ve siècles de l’hégire (IXe - XIe s.): enseignement, formation et transmission*, Damascus: IFPO; Saeko Yazaki, 2013, *Islamic Mysticism and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī*, London; New York: Routledge.
- 6 Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī, Muḥammad b. ‘Alī, 2001, *Qūt al-qulūb fī mu‘āmalat al-mahbūb wa-waṣf ṭarīq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd*, ed. Maḥmūd al-Raḍwānī, Cairo: Dār al-Turāth, p. 416.
- 7 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 969.
- 8 *Qūt al-qulūb*, pp. 1654-1655.

- 9 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 1655.
- 10 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 1655.
- 11 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 907.
- 12 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 907-908.
- 13 Although Makkī does not specify who this is, from the context, it is clear that Tustarī is the one being referred to here. In addition, a similar statement is attributed to Tustarī in al-Sarrāj's *Kitāb al-Luma'*, ed. R.A. Nicholson, 1914, London/Leiden: Luzac/Brill, p. 195 (Ar.): "He who discredits earning a living has discredited the Sunna; and he who discredits tawakkul has discredited Faith."
- 14 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 903.
- 15 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 903.
- 16 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 1655.
- 17 *Qūt al-qulūb*, p. 905.
- 18 Sarah Stroumsa, 1990, 'The Beginnings of the Mu'tazila Reconsidered', *Jerusalem Studies of Arabic and Islam* 13: pp. 265-293.
- 19 See Josef Van Ess, 2005, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra: eine Geschichte des religiösen im frühen Islam*, Berlin, New York: de Gruyter, 2: pp. 95-119; Christopher Melchert, 2005, 'The Baṣran Origins of Classical Sufism', *Der Islam* 82.2: pp. 221-240.
- 20 Michael Bonner, 2001, 'The Kitāb al-Kasb attributed to al-Shaybānī: Poverty, Surplus and the Circulation of Wealth', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 121.3: pp. 410-427.
- 21 Michael Bonner, 1996, *Aristocratic Violence and Holy War: Studies on the Jihad and the Arab-Byzantine Frontier*, New Haven, Conn.: American Oriental Society; Deborah Tor, 2007, *Violent Order: Religious Warfare, Chivalry and the 'Ayyār Phenomenon in the Medieval Islamic World*, Wütrzburg: Ergon.
- 22 See Nimrod Hurvitz, 2002, *The Formation of Ḥanbalism: Piety into Power*, London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon, which characterises it as "mild asceticism", and more recently, Christopher Melchert, 2006, *Ahmad ibn Hanbal*, Abingdon, Oxon: Oneworld, pp. 103-120.
- 23 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Commerce, Bab 1, Number 2086.
- 24 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Commerce, Bab 15, Number 2110.
- 25 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Commerce, Bab 15, Number 2109.
- 26 *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Book of Commerce, Bab 15, Numbers 2112-2113.
- 27 There are, however, reports that indicate that Ibn Ḥanbal strongly disapproved of Muḥāsibī's dabbling in theology. See the discussion in Christopher Melchert, 2001, 'The Ḥanābila and the Early Sufis', *Arabica* 48.3: pp. 357-367. Also Gavin Picken, 2008, 'Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Muḥāsibī: A Study of Early Conflicting Scholarly Methodologies', *Arabica* 55: pp. 337-361.
- 28 Muḥāsibī, al-Ḥārith b. Asad, *al-Makāsib*, ed. 'Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad 'Aṭā' (Beirut: Mu'assasa al-kutub al-thaqāfiyya, 1987), 48-61.
- 29 Melchert, 'Baṣran Origins', 236-237.
- 30 *Qūt al-qulūb*, 949.
- 31 *Qūt al-qulūb*, 905.
- 32 *Qūt al-qulūb*, end of marriage chapter.
- 33 Shelomo Dov Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 217-254.
- 34 *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1680.
- 35 *Qūt al-qulūb*, 1687.
- 36 *Qūt al-qulūb*, 906.
- 37 al-Ghazālī, Abū Ḥāmid Muḥammad, *Iḥyā' 'ulūm al-dīn* (Cairo: Lajna nashr al-thaqāfa al-islāmiyya), 4:759.
- 38 Th. E. Homerin, 'Ibn Taymiyya's al-Ṣūfiyah wa-l-fuqarā', *Arabica* 32.2 (1985): 219-244.



INDIGENOUS WORK ETHICS AMONG AKAN OF GHANA

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Introduction

Local societies, the world over, engage different occupations meant to provide economic livelihood and nutritional sustenance. Farming, trading, fishing and hunting are pursued on subsistent or commercial levels, for aesthetic or functional reasons. Each work activity has certain stipulated regulations, manners and attitudes, which govern the participants. These ethics of work are often formulated from certain assumed divine directions and/or ideas obtained from the people's religious environments, and experiences and discoveries gathered over the years. This paper examines the phenomenon of work ethics of the indigenous professions of the forest and coastal Akan of Ghana.

It uses ideas from religious studies, history, art and cultural studies, to discuss the ethics of work within the crafts of agriculture and fishing. It explores the spiritual and socio-economic reasons and philosophico-ecological considerations and benefits that shape the ethics. The observance of the work ethics is deemed an act for the engineering and sustaining of a beautiful state of existence –an orderly and agreeable co-existence of humankind with the natural and spirit worlds, whose fruits – health, fertility, longevity, the sense of peace and enjoyment of justice, and pleasure in living – constitute wealth for humankind. It specifically discusses the ethics of the observance of certain days as holy and work free, isolation of

certain land spaces from human work encroachment, celebration of some sacred agrarian and fishing festivals, and protection of various flora and fauna of the forest and marine animals.

The Akan and their Topography

The Akan, which is largest of the major ethnies in Ghana, predominantly occupies two major zones –the tropical rainforest, and the south-bound coastal shrub – in the country. Although the Akan constitutes several ancillary groups, it can be conveniently categorised as forest Akan and coastal Akan. The Asante, Akyem, Shwi, Akwapim and Assin are some of the groups that constitute the forest Akan. The Fante group primarily constitutes the coastal Akan. Although the forest people are into hunting, herbalism and art and craft, agriculture/farming is their main indigenous occupation because of the fertile land and forage that they inhabit. The coast people are mainly into marine fishing. It is these two groups that we intend to explore in terms of the ethics that govern their work as farmers (*akuafoo/ekuafu*) and fishermen (*apoffoo/afarfo*).

Agriculture and Fishing as Professional Terrains of the Akan

Archaeological evidence suggests that from about 10,000 BC late Stone Age hunter-gatherers who established intensive food gathering, fishing (from inland rivers, streams, lakes) and hunting economies occupied the woodland savannah and forests. Remnants of the Neolithic group and some migrants possibly evolved into the Akan, within the forest zone between 500 BC to AD 1000.¹ This forest Akan overtime developed a sedentary culture encased in the Iron Age and mastered the science of agriculture. According to Owusu and Kwarteng, the for-

est, which is known as *kwa* to the Akan had a multi-purpose value because it formed the backbone of their pharmacopoeia as well as food and shelter needs. Products from the forest, which the people domesticated, furnished them with various articles of trade e.g. gold, kola and ivory.²

The coastal Akan, according to oral traditions, migrated from their Akan kith and kin in the forest and settled on the coast and engaged in fishing, especially in the sea, which is their greatest natural asset. This migration predated the arrival of the European explorers and colonists to the Gold Coast.³ The oral account about the anteriority of indigenous fishing among the littoral society before the arrival of the Europeans is corroborated by written historical evidence from early European explorers. Duarte Pacheco Pereira who helped to build the first Portuguese fort in Elmina (also known as Edina), which was started around 1481, and at a point governed it, observed that fish was a mainstay for the coastal Ahanta people. He noted that Elmina had an “abundance of fish upon which the negroes live...”⁴ The local fishermen used the *hembra*, which is a canoe sculptured from a single tree, often obtained from the fringes of the forest bordering the coast. They were propelled by mat sail and wooden paddles. They also used nets made from plant fibre and sisal. Muller, a German priest who stayed in Cape Coast in the 17th century, described two types of coastal Akan local nets (*ebuwa*), namely a small cast net, and a large one of about twenty or more fathoms.⁵ Wicker baskets, hampers, hooks and line, and harpoons were also used to fish. Local blacksmiths made the hooks and harpoons. Pereira further stated that “Twenty leagues beyond Cabo de corso (now the historic town of Cape Coast) is a promontory which we call Cabo des Redes

because of the many nets that we found here when this land was discovered. . . ; midway along there are three fishing settlements, Fante the Greater, Fante the Less and Sabuu (now Moree)".⁶ These historical accounts⁷ point to the long history of fishing as a coastal Akan mainstay. Changes in aspects of this industry and practice have occurred because of the influence of new fishing methods, introduced through contact with Europe, yet vestiges of the indigenous old order linger in the traditional terrain of the coastal Akan. This also applies to farming. While new agricultural methods associated with western "modern" industrial techniques and ideas prevail in the forest Akan zone, remnants of the old indigenous methods and concepts exist. What about the ethics of these occupations?

The work and participants of farming and fishing are governed by knowledge and insight derived from the indigenous worldview of the forest and coastal Akan. Time and again, the work and the worker have on the local terrain have been confronted by new ideas spawned by the dynamics of hybridisation and inculturation initiated by certain endogenous so-called "progressive" religious ideas, and technological, scientific, and economic ways from colonialism and globalisation. Indeed many local ideas and concepts about work have been labelled as primitive and unscientific because they tend to be steeped in the frame of spirituality, which characterises Akan worldview. Mbiti and Parrinder were apt when they identified the indigenous African mind and worldview as "notoriously"⁸ and "incurably"⁹ religious – to connote that religio-spiritual notions pervade and permeate and condition all aspects of life. This is true of Akan outlook concerning science, technology, politics, economics, and general ways of life. However, the incompa-

rable global dominance and hegemony of Western knowledge, epistemic values and social-cultural mores, including Eurocentric Christianity, have largely made indigenous ideas about the conduct of agricultural work and fishing to become secondary. In spite of the onslaught of old and new ideas of colonialism and globalisation respectively on the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (I.K.S.), including work ethics, many resilient vestiges of Indigenous Knowledge continue to feature constructively in the politics, economics and decision making processes of African communities, particularly rural and peri-urban ones.

Indigenous African Cosmivision as Context

We present Indigenous Knowledges as the complex set of knowledges, constituting the mental and spiritual concepts, beliefs and practices, skills, and technologies of indigenous populations and communities, which arose overtime from their deep thoughts (philosophical reflections), experiences and experiments from long term occupancy of a particular area. Such knowledges exist to guide, organise, and regulate their ways of living and to serve as the basis for their livelihood including agriculture, food preparations, educational curriculum, health care, environmental conservation, law, nation building, and political administration.¹⁰ Over time every human society evolved a culture that inculcated an understanding of its place in the cosmos and informed ways of perceiving and relating to the cosmos. The collective knowledge and beliefs of each society make up a "cosmovision". Cosmovision consists of assumed interactions between the human, natural, and spiritual worlds. These interactive worlds give humans physiological and

spiritual insights both about what to do (right thought and action) and what not to do (wrong thought and action), and explanation of phenomena. Moreover, the cosmovision embodies and determines the moral basis for human intervention in nature. It dictates the way humans should behave, relate and use nature's land, water, plants and animals, and how humans should decide, experiment, solve problems, and organise themselves.¹¹

The Akan outlook on work involving the manipulation of land and sea is informed by some main categories of understanding about the composition of the world. There is a self-generating Creator (*Onyame/Nyame*), who is unseen and is the genesis of and ultimate explanation for everything; spirits (*ahonhom*) and spirits of ancestors (*Nananom*); human beings (*Onipa/Nyimpa*); animals (*mmoa/mbowa*) and plants; and minerals without biological life. These live in three worlds of reality – spiritual, human, and natural. The Indigenous Knowledge therefore stipulates that all humans are deeply embedded in and dependent upon the natural and spiritual worlds. Interaction between the three worlds and survival of humankind depends on the harmonisation of these worlds. The holistic connection between the social, spiritual and natural worlds shapes the perfect balance and beautiful state of understanding where answers to all questions reside.

Many of the songs, rituals, prayers, and ceremonies of the Akan are reaffirmations of their dependence on nature and the spiritual world, which provide the space for work and living. All facets and entities of the three worlds contain the divine energy of the Creator (Life Force) and are held together in an adamantine interconnection, where none is to disconnect or exists in isolation. This Life Force manifests movement, rhythm and cycles

in all things, and is itself energised by the activity of all, so “Even lightening, or rain, being lively, they (Akan) would say, has life, i.e., is a being”¹² Hence the sea, wind, fire, thunder, sun, moon, rainbow, stars, rivers, earth, animals and plants are beings of energy, whose activities give verve and sustain the Life Force. The Akan also deem the seasons of the natural world as all enlivened and governed by this spiritual energy, which also animates human life and activities. Consequently, it is believed that seasons, which regulate human activities, correspond with life cycles. For example the season of planting, which is associated with fertility, and harvesting/gathering correspond with birth (fertility), and death respectively. The time of the appearance of green shoots corresponds with human rebirth/regeneration/procreation. If human activities are dependent on a vital energy, which moves in a rhythmic cycle in things, then, according to Akan cosmovision, endeavours like farming and fishing, or even hunting, must be done in a way that will preserve the effect and increase the boons of this Vital Force. It is the quest for this amplification of such energy and harmony between humans and the other worlds that certain ethical injunctions and rituals are observed, for “ritual means can increase it, moral degradation can decrease it and accidents [and violent acts against nature] can diminish it completely”.¹³

Within the frame of the Akan notion of a divine vital force centred interconnectedness of things, humans actions have consequences determined by the world constituted by the Creator (God/Goddess), deities, ancestors and elemental spirits inhabiting natural objects such as the celestial bodies, water bodies, flora and fauna. It is therefore essential for the Akan who work with land and sea to endeavour to behave properly in order to have

harmony with nature and blessings from the spiritual powers. They follow certain dos and don'ts often amplified as taboos that regulate their action in order to avoid throwing existing natural and cosmic balances into chaos, and to ensure a good standing with the Divine Originator and spirits for the averting of natural calamities and dangers and potential wrath and punishment from the spiritual powers. They connect the workers to the dignified beautiful life, whose gift is wealth – good health and longevity, social justice, and a sustained environment and its resources. In the indigenous cosmology of the forest and coastal Akan, both the land, which accommodates the forest, and the marine world are concurrently natural and supernatural spheres. The land known as *Asaase* is governed by a venerable great telluric mother spirit called *Asaase Yaa*, whose birth day and therefore holy day is Thursday (*Yawoada*) hence the name *Yaa*.¹⁴ The veneration of the earth, Daniel Hillel notes, is found in many cultures, and it “long predated agriculture and continued after its advent. The Earth was held sacred as the embodiment of a great spirit, the creative power of the universe, manifest in all phenomena of nature. . . . believed to give shape to the features of the landscape and to regulate the seasons, the cycles of fertility, and the lives of the animals and humans. Rocks, trees, mountains, springs and caves were recognized as the receptacles for this spirit”.¹⁵ Some deities also occupy the fauna, mountains, rocks, and caves, and they assist the Earth goddess to animate the land. Water, on the other hand, constitutes a very powerful spiritual fluid. It is used in ritual ablution and libation to divinities. It symbolises peace, fertility, and growth. Among the Akan the sea known as *Po* is presided over by great marine deity called *Bosom Po*, whose sacred day is Tuesday. Although a

host of auxiliary deities inhabit the ocean and assist *Bosom Po* to control its resources, the sea is actually the physical representation of *Bosom Po*.

Both the sea and land are therefore highly charged symbols in Akan cosmology. In order for the workers of the terrestrial and oceanic spaces to fully reap the bounties in them, they fashion certain work conventions to guide them in maintaining an ideal cordial relationship with the land and sea spaces and the powers therein. These work ethics form an imperative part of the Akan indigenous ecological context and eco-social order. To borrow Akyeampong's definition, eco-social emphasises “the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between a people and their environment”.¹⁶ This orientation is part of the Akan “existence”, or their land and seascape. This land/seascape or “existence” is not just the physical territory and demography of the forest and coastal Akan, but “the culture through which the people work out the possibilities of the land [and sea]”.¹⁷ Meillassoux's understanding of a man-land link is vital for an understanding of such an orientation in the societies of the forest and coastal Akan. “For a peasant nothing comes from the land [earth and so by extension the sea] unless something is given in exchange for it: he invests his labor and seed and draws his subsistence food in return. In this respect, activities which are predatory or merely extractive disturb him: they must be compensated by ‘sacrifice’ which re-establishes equilibrium since extracting resources from nature infringes the principle of advances and returns which dominate the domestic agricultural [and fishing] economy”.¹⁸ Thus, spiritual powers are supplicated and venerated with prayers (*mpaee/mpae*), libations and sacrificial animals and other offerings, and observed taboos (*akyewadie/akyewadze*)

and rituals (*atomuadie/atomadze*) to coax the land and marine realms to favour the Akan farmer (*okuani/okuafo*) and fisherman (*epofoni/farnyi*).

Indigenous Agrarian Ethics

The agrarian communities have tabooed days, which regulate their activities on the land. The holiday for the farmers is Thursday. The day is sacred and observance of it as holy is ethical. Otherwise it is unethical and sinful which will bring disharmony between man and nature and the spiritual world. Farmers do not till the land or tamper with it and its resources on Thursday. They remain at home and rest for general health. They may offer prayers and offering to the land and ask for its guidance. The sacredness and veneration of the land prevents pollution by the people. Furthermore, the agrarian community believes that certain plants and groves are the abode of spirits – deities and ancestors. An example is the *Nyame dua*, (lit. the Creator's/God's tree) which is known in botany as *Alstonia boonei*. It is sacred and not to be destroyed. The agriculturalists are therefore forbidden and/or obliged to observe some rules. They do not cut any 'sacred' flora specie, except a part is approved by a sacerdotal official for medicine. They neither farm or dump refuse in the restricted hallowed spaces of the plants, nor engage in practices that will destroy such sacred flora. It is also unethical to harm fauna inhabiting such sacred spaces. Some of the consecrated groves are called *Nananompow* (Ancestor's Grove) and others are called *Kyiridade* (lit. Abhors metal i.e. farming implements like the machete and hoe). The observance of this is ethical. This however, allows afforestation and preservation of the environment's flora and fauna.

Because the agrarian craft holds the

idea that certain mountains, rocks, hills and geological formations are the home of spirits, it deems it ethical to preserve them. These landforms are left intact as the farmers embark on their farming activities. This helps preserve the natural topography. Before tilling a new land or starting a new planting season, the agrarians perform ritualised planting prayers to the land and spirits on/in it to elicit their protection against harm and support for good harvest. They also offer sacrifices of food to the land and spirits. The latter rite of course has an ecological basis since birds and other fauna will feed on these for sustenance. These observances show dependence on the supernatural but also affirm the agrarians' custodianship of nature. Moreover, the celebration of agrarian festivals is ethical to agrarian livelihood. Such festivals allow them to usher in the harvest season and celebrate the bounty, and worship the Creator and venerate the Earth goddess, deities and ancestors to show appreciation for their blessings and ask for their enduring guidance and protection. Apart from serving as a formal time which compels the farmers to offer sacrifice and offering to the spirits and land goddess to ensure the fertility of the land, the festivals often take the farmers off the land and give them time to eat and drink and enjoy the fruits of their labour in the fields and time to rest which is good for their health. In addition such periods allow and afford the land some time to fallow and rest and regain its nutrients. The community uses such periods to clean their surroundings, which ensures hygiene; the farmers are also freed to engage in other social responsibilities while they wait for the new planting season. The ban on certain practices on the land such as hunting before the festivals also allows the fauna to breed and increase. These injunctions founded on the idea of

taboos, aimed to respect the sanctity of the land and spiritual world, constitute a corpus of ethics that surround the agrarian activities of the forest Akan.

Indigenous Fishing Ethics

The oceanic fishing inclined coastal Akan view the sea as a complete world and hold an interesting view about that realm and its denizens. Oral traditions about fishing in the Gold Coast (Ghana) comment on the prevalence of rites and beliefs associated with fishing or marine deities.¹⁹ Rough seas, accretion of the coast land by erosion, and lean catches are attributed to the anger of the spirits of the sea especially the supreme one, Bosom Po, the protecting deity of fishermen/folks. Offerings are thus made to the sea to calm it and make it operational for humankind's economic and navigational dealings with it, and facilitate its magnanimity of bumper harvest. This includes the sending and throwing of a live cow in deep sea²⁰ or sacrificing a sheep or cow on the beach.²¹ Such an offering meant placing the deity under obligation to do something in return – according to the law of reciprocity – for the giver of the offering. Ritual, as indicated by the maritime ethnological studies of Prins²² and Malinowski²³, is a key part of fishing ethics in many societies. The coastal Akan observance of Tuesday as a holy day for the sea is not only to be used to propitiate the spiritual realm of the sea. It is a time for the fisher folks to rest, leisurely mend their nets, hold meetings to discuss matters affecting them and attend to other familial and social responsibilities. It is a time for the chief fisherman (*Apofofohen*), who heads the fishermen guild, to deal with issues like the settlement of disputes between the fisher folks and fining of offending people. The veneration of the sea compels the

fishers to desist from using bad chemicals to fish, lest they pollute it. Some fishes are not to be fished in certain times of the year and it is considered unethical and therefore sinful to catch fingerlings. Using of nets and methods, which will catch fingerlings is therefore abhorred because the belief is that it will invite the wrath of the marine spirits. Thus, the sustainability of marine biological ecology, which is necessary for the continuation of fishing, is ensured. Interestingly when these restrictions are examined from a physical angle, they reveal ecological friendly scientific mechanisms, which ensure the survival and boost of certain species and the preservation of fish life. Fishing festivals, which the ethics of fishing enjoin the community to partake in, honour the deities and ancestors, and afford the fishing community rest and time for general recuperation and general planning for the next season. It is also a time for the sea to rest and the fishes to breed and replenish the fishing area.

Conclusion

This study has explored indigenous agrarian and fishing ethics and their observation among the Akan of Ghana. These ethics strongly emanate from indigenous spiritual beliefs. In this Akan social space, which accommodate the worldview that there is no dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical, the occupational ethics are conceived and instituted to have both spiritual and intangible purposes, and practical and tangible functions and implications for the communities. The work ethics of the agrarians and fishers have such an orientation because they are based on three assumptions. First, the powers of the land and sea deities transcend human power, second, humans can communicate with these powers,

and third, by observing certain rites and practices, which are considered ethical, it is possible to appease the spiritual powers and by extension exert some physical manipulation of nature/environment to access certain favour and benefits from both the spiritual world and physical environment. The ethics of agriculture and fishing which are shrouded in spiritual-

ity and common sense ensure human and ecosystem well being. They are targeted at maintaining harmony between the forces of life, thereby preserving a state of cosmic beauty out of which wealth – abundance of harvests, increase in biodiversity, health and longevity, and social justice – may flow to the people.

Notes

- 1 James Anquandah, 1982, *Discovering Ghana's Past*, Essex: Longman, p. 53 as cited in M.A.S. Owusu & K.O. Kwarteng, 'The Desparacidos: A Study of Local Knowledge and Forest Culture in the Development Agenda of Ghana', in D.D. Kuupole & De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway (Eds.), 2010, *Polishing the Pearls of Ancient Wisdom: Exploring the Relevance of Endogenous African Knowledge Systems for Sustainable Development in Postcolonial Africa*, Cape Coast, Ghana: Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, and Centre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development, p. 87.
- 2 M.A.S. Owusu and K.O. Kwarteng, *Polishing the Pearls*, p. 87.
- 3 The Gold Coast became Ghana when it attained political independence from British colonialism in 1957.
- 4 Duarte Pacheco Pereira, 1937, *Esmeraldo de Situ Orbis*, trans. and ed. George H.T. Kimble, London: Hukluyt Society, p. 118, as referenced in Irene Odotei, *Artisanal Marine Fishing Industry in Ghana: A Historical Overview*, Legon: Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, p. 6.
- 5 Irene Odotei, *Ibid.* p. 10.
- 6 Duarte Pacheco Pereira, *op.cit.*, p. 122, in Irene Odotei, *Ibid.* p. 6.
- 7 Other key early European accounts about early fishing by the littoral Akan include Willem Bosman, 1967, *A New Accurate and Description of the Coast of Guinea: Divided into Gold, the Slave, and the Ivory Coast*, (4th edn.), London: Frank Cass, [Utrecht 1705]; W. J. Muller, 1983, *Die Afrikanische auf der guineischen Gold-Cust gelegene Landschafft Fetu*, Hamburg, 1673 translated in Adam Jones (Ed.), *German Sources for West African History 1599-1669*, Weisbaden: Franz Steiner, pp. 134-259; E. Tilleman, 1697, *En liden enfolding Beretning om det Landskab Guinea*, Kobenhavn. The interested reader can also see F.R. Irvine, 1947, *The Fishes and Fisheries of the Gold Coast*, London: Crown Agents.
- 8 John S. Mbiti, 1969, *African Religions and Philosophy*, London, Heinemann, p. 1.
- 9 G. Parrinder, 1962, *African Traditional Religion*, New York: Harper and Row, p. 9.
- 10 See 'Introduction' to D.D. Kuupole and De-Valera N.Y.M. Botchway (Eds.), 2010, *Polishing the Pearls of Ancient Wisdom: Exploring the Relevance of Endogenous African Knowledge Systems for Sustainable Development in Postcolonial Africa*, Cape Coast, Ghana: Faculty of Arts, University of Cape Coast, and Cen-

- tre for Indigenous Knowledge and Organizational Development.
- 11 See B. Haverskort and W. Hiemstra (Eds.), 1999, *Food for Thought; Ancient Vision and New Experiments of Rural People*, London: Zed Books / Bangalore: Books for Change.
 - 12 J.B. Danquah, 1944, *The Akan Doctrine of God*, London: Lutterworth Press, p. 134.
 - 13 Henrietta Sarpong, 'The Humanistic Values of The Dance in the Akan Society', M.A. Thesis (African Art), Ghana: University of Science and Technology (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology), p. 31.
 - 14 The fishing oriented Akan on the coast see Friday (*Fida*) as the natal day of the earth spirit. Hence, they call it Asaase Efuwa
 - 15 Daniel Hillel, 1991, *Out of the Earth: Civilisation and the Life of the Soil*, Herts, U.K: Maxwell Macmillan, as quoted in David Suzuki, 2007, *The Sacred Balance*, Vancouver: Greystone Books, p. 115.
 - 16 Emmanuel K. Akyeampong, 2001, *Between the Sea and the Lagoon*, Athens and Oxford: Ohio University Press and James Currey, p. 4.
 - 17 David W. Cohen and E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, 1989, *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*, London and Athens: James Currey and Ohio University Press, p. 9.
 - 18 Claude Meillasoux, 1981, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*, Cambridge, p. 66.
 - 19 See for example A.P. Brown's 1936, 'Report on a survey of the fishing industry in Labadi with some reference to Teshie and Accra', PRO, CO 96/729/12, as mentioned in Emmanuel Akyeampong, op.cit., p. 121.
 - 20 Emmanuel Akyeampong, op.cit., p. 121.
 - 21 Rowena M. Lawson & Eric A Kwei, 1974, *African Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth: A Case Study of the Fishing Industry in Ghana*, Accra: Ghana Universities Press, p. 62.
 - 22 A.H.J. Prins, 1965, *Sailing from Lamu: A Study of Maritime Culture in Islamic East Africa*, Assen: Van Gorcum and Co, p. 254.
 - 23 B. Malinowski, 1948, *Magic, Science and Religion*, New York: Doubleday, p. 31.



Human Labor: Vocation to Share and Celebrate Divine Creativity

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Introduction

Work or labor has been an integral dimension of human existence ever since the beginning of the human story. “Work is one of the characteristics that distinguishes man from the rest of creatures”, Pope John Paul II affirms as he examines the intimate connection between work and human existence. “Only man is capable of work, and only man works, at the same time by work occupying his existence on earth”, he continued, “thus work bears a particular mark of man and of humanity”.¹ The mighty edifices of civilization and progress that humankind has built across the ages and proudly celebrated in hu-

man memory, would not have been possible without the immense human toil, harnessed sometimes in questionable ways by the modern standards, which imagined, fashioned and funded them. The human attitudes and perspectives on the nature and destiny of human labor and what constitutes ‘meaningful/gainful or ethical work’ have varied from age to age, depending on the prevailing categories of human self-understanding of the origin and destiny of the human person him/herself. Religion, religious values and theological visions have not just informed this human self-understanding, but have assumed decisive roles in providing a

framework for it as well as in narrating and interpreting it. Religions sanctioned or censured the means and methods employed to harness human labor as well as those who stewarded it – be it slave labor, bonded, forced or voluntary.

This human self-understanding as well as its perspectives on human or ethical work encounters perplexing new frontiers in the highly connected, interconnected yet deeply disconnected world of today, with its world-wide web, global economy and the e-market with its radically new yet dubious practices that constitute this brave new ‘free exchange’. Not until the 19th century industrial revolution and the cohort of scientific, economic and societal upheaval that accompanied it, had the intimate relationship between labor and the whole process of production as well as the fruits of human labor been ever seriously tested or had the worker/work been alienated from its handiwork. The ensuing human misery and confusion had convinced the societies, especially in the west and led by the Church², to review the prevailing work-ethics and design new rules for engagement. The inevitable result was a radically new understanding of human realities that led to ground-breaking new insights on human labor and bequeathed to us a rich vocabulary of categories that have framed the social justice discussion ever thereafter such as ‘human labor’, ‘human dignity’, ‘family wage’, ‘just wage’, ‘humane working conditions’ and a host of others which are, perhaps, taken for granted now.

Surveying the contemporary scene and the rapid changes that reshape our times, I judge as Pope John Paul II observed as he presented his aforementioned encyclical³, a review of human self-understanding and how humankind views work and the ‘ethics and structures of work and workplace’ is imperative. However, this project

of fashioning a new ethics of work relevant and effective for our interconnected and highly pluralistic post-modern times, will be an exercise in futility if various religious/cultural traditions undertake it in the routine die-hard and skeptical isolationist postures and heavily fortified enclosures of the past, allowing no room for respectful dialogue and critique of visions and values. On the contrary it calls for mining the diverse traditions that enrich the human story as a whole to retrieve perennial values and visions that can enable us to forge a genuine ethics of work that would lead to greater progress and true human flourishing for humanity as a whole. The reflections that follow is an attempt to survey the author’s own Christian/Catholic tradition, especially the rich patrimony of Social Justice Teachings, to discern how the Christian vision and values can positively and critically contribute to this project in dialogue.

Contemporary Times: Reasons for Concern and Hope

“Reading the signs of the times and interpreting them in the light of the Gospel”, the perennial Christian quest in response to the Gospel summons as it is described in Matt 16: 2-3; Luke 12:54-56, and is repeatedly reiterated by the Church, has been the way for her to live the Gospel witness in every age.⁴ The efforts of the Church to engage the world are bound to fail and fall on deaf ears unless she is “aware of and understand the aspirations, the yearnings and the often dramatic features of the world in which we live”.⁵ The quest to fashion an ethics of work for the modern times, ought to, then, commence in discovering the contemporary times, examining the anxiety and the anguish of the human heart today and the confusion that characterizes the labor, market and

economic realities of our times.

In his clinical analysis of the market economy that is spreading its menacing talons and consolidating its grips firmer and wider in the age of globalization, William T. Cavanaugh urges everyone to recognize “the gap between dual perceptions of the market economy”.⁶ One perception highlights the ‘the unparalleled freedom of choice’ and ‘the infinity of opportunities for work and consumption opening up all around us’ as the market barriers crumble. The opposite view, on the other hand, exposes ‘the profound sense of resignation to fate’ that the unbridled process of globalization engenders because all decisions are subject to the ‘impersonal control of market forces’.⁷ A closer study of the ‘free market’, Cavanaugh suggests, reinforces the latter perception, enslaving the human person and his ‘freedom’ to the brute forces of the market. The market is not necessarily free nor is there anything human in the exchanges that fill this market-place. Consumers as well as employees feel besieged, by the ‘enormous transnational corporations’ whose ‘one and only end is profit and aggrandizement of the corporation’. The corporations decide what to produce, who ought to produce and how and where they ought to be produced and sold. In this unabashed pursuit of profit, capital becomes mobile and travels without any borders and goes in search of locations where labor can be purchased at the lowest minimum. The net result is the atrophying of labor power and the ability to bargain and fight for the rights of the worker. Just family wage, human dignity and humane conditions of work are no more categories relevant to the contemporary market discourse.⁸

The products that the consumer buys at the shelves, observes Cavanaugh, are mute to their origins and do not say anything about where they come from and

how they are produced. The human relationships that surrounded the process of buying products are replaced and ‘reduced to the bare encounter at the store or on a computer screen between consumer and thing’.⁹ As a result not only work is dehumanized, but human labor itself is perceived in a very negative light. Work is rarely perceived as meaningful or creative expression of one’s own skills or abilities, but merely as a means to a paycheck, a commodity sold to the best buyer in exchange for the money needed to buy ‘sustenance’. Work has become a chore, deadening to the core.¹⁰ Since it becomes a commodity to be sold like any other in the market, the categories of ‘living wage’, human working conditions, rest and leisure all become strange ‘lingo’, out of sync with ‘development’ and ‘progress’ happening in the world.

John Paul II commences his encyclical *Laborem Exercens* with an insightful yet prophetic scrutiny of the ‘new developments in technological, economic and political conditions’ of the modern times right on the eve of the third millennium, and forewarns how they ‘will influence the world of work and production’ in ways ‘no less than the industrial revolution of the last century’.¹¹ Among the cohort of factors he identifies:

“the widespread introduction of automation into many spheres of production, the increase in the cost of energy and raw materials, the growing realization that the heritage of nature is limited and that it is being intolerably polluted, and the emergence on the political scene of peoples, who after centuries of subjection, are demanding their rightful place among the nations and in international decision-making.”¹²

While these changes may result in 'unemployment or the need for retraining for some', 'reduction of material well-being for those in the more developed countries', they can also offer relief and hope to millions laboring under the yoke of 'shameful and unworthy poverty'. These conditions call for a 'reordering and adjustment of the structures of the modern economy and of the distribution of work' and the encyclical was Pope's attempt "to call attention to the dignity and rights of those who work", expose conditions that violate that dignity and rights and help in fashioning a new ethics of work that can guide the 'above-mentioned changes so as ensure authentic progress by man and society'.¹³

Work in the Christian Perspective of Human Flourishing

Diagnosing the debilitating flaws and pitfalls that plague the current practice of 'free market' Economy, Cavanaugh traces the root of the problem to the heavily negative concept of freedom as a 'freedom from' all the controls and restrictions – providing for a 'free play' of the market forces. Drawing from the rich patrimony of Christian perspectives on 'freedom', he suggests the remedy lies in a balanced understanding of freedom, which involves always a 'freedom for' – freedom for realizing or achieving a goal or *telos*. Some standard or norm of human flourishing and the ends of human life is imperative, Cavanaugh observes, to constantly monitor and critique the human exchanges that occupy the 'market place/space', no matter the methods and paradigms used to organize them – free market, collective, socialist or mixed economy – and channel them to their desired ends.¹⁴ The Christian insights on 'human flourishing' have creatively and decisively contributed to inform and guide the human quest for

'freedom' and fulfillment. Work or labor, no matter its nature, kind or mode, assumes a decisive role and place in this Christian vision of true human flourishing. Work is the way to realize oneself and flourish in the human society.

1. Created in the image and likeness of God

Central to Christian anthropology and the Christian perspective of the human person is its firm belief and conviction that each human person is the fruit of a unique exercise of divine creativity. Created in the 'image and likeness of God' and called into existence as the scriptures proclaim,¹⁵ the human person is endowed with inalienable value, dignity and rights. "Capable of self-knowledge, of self-possession and of freely giving him/(her)self and entering into communion with other persons,¹⁶ he carries not just a 'spark of the divine' within himself, rather he 'participates in God, the source of all being' and is summoned to rally all his energy and resources in his mission to be the 'sacrament of God's presence' in an evolving covenant with God and realize the 'one overriding *telos* of his life, the return to God.'¹⁷ "As the 'image of God' the human being is a person, a subjective being capable of acting in a planned and rational way, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization".¹⁸ As such even as he performs various actions belonging to the work process, he ought to be respected as the 'subject of work' and all the actions he undertakes in the work process must serve to realize his humanity and 'fulfill his calling to be a person that is his by reason of his very humanity'.¹⁹ Hence, all systems and structures that denigrate this innate human nature and vocation and treat him as a mere tool or a cog in the wheel must not only be exposed but must be resisted at all costs.

2. Human person: Ordained to live and flourish in community

In the Christian vision the transcendental dimension of responding to the covenantal invitation of God defines the human person. This relationship between God and man is reflected in the relational and social dimension of human nature. Human person, by nature and divine design, “is a social being, and unless he relates himself to others he can neither live nor develop his potential”.²⁰ The second creation story in Genesis highlights this divine intent in a solemn proclamation, as the narrator describes the creation of the woman, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable partner for him” (Gen 2: 18). The human person realizes his full potential only by discovering God in genuine human communities. He needs human community to truly flourish and blossom and family, the basic unit of human community, is the indispensable milieu in which he learns to relate, dialogue, freely give and receive love.

The Social doctrine of the church is firmly founded on the conviction as the Compendium teaches:

“The human person is essentially a social being because God, who created humanity willed it so. Human nature, in fact, reveals itself as a nature of a being who responds to his own needs. This is based on relational subjectivity, that in the manner of a free and responsible being who recognizes the necessity of integrating himself in cooperation with his fellow human beings, and who is capable of communion with them on the level of knowledge and love”.²¹

The Compendium asserts that it is necessary, therefore, “to stress that community

life is a natural characteristic that distinguishes man from the rest of earthly creatures”. Thus the human person is ‘called from the very beginning to life in society’.²² The Compendium also cautions that ‘the social nature of human beings does not automatically lead to communion among persons, to the gift of self’. Rather sinfulness weakens his resolve and “because of pride and selfishness, man discovers in himself the seeds of asocial behavior, impulses leading him to close himself within his own individuality and to dominate his neighbor”.²³ The social nature of human beings is not uniform but is expressed in diverse and different ways. Each society ought, therefore, to discern and fashion those social components – family, civil community, religious community and other forums for voluntary communion – that would foster relationship of solidarity, communication and cooperation, and would cater to this innate social nature of the human person as well as the common good.²⁴ Work is an integral human activity that requires, reinforces and nourishes this social and communitarian dimension of the human person. The norms and policies that guide and govern how work and workplace are organized ought to, therefore, respect this social and communitarian nature of the human story and create situations that will foster the family and by extension the entire human family or community.²⁵

3. Work: A Fundamental Dimension of human Existence

In the Christian perspective, work is not a mere option which one may choose, but is the fundamental option for him to live his vocation and share the creative activity of the One who has called him into existence. Reflecting on the vocation of the human person, John Paul recalls the original divine intent and reminds:

“Man is made to be in the visible universe an image and likeness of God himself, and he is placed in it in order to subdue the earth. From the beginning therefore he is called to work²⁶... Man’s life is built up every day from work, from work it derives its specific dignity”.²⁷

He continues that the words with which the creator addresses the human person, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it”,²⁸ though do not refer directly and explicitly to work, beyond doubt they indirectly indicate it as an activity for man to undertake in the world. This mandate to ‘subdue the earth’ is not to be despotic or reckless towards the creation, but is a call to “cultivate and care for the earth”.²⁹ In carrying out this mandate, every human being reflects and participates in the very action of the creator of the universe.³⁰ By work the human person not only participates in the ongoing and evolving creative activity of God, but when he puts up with the difficult rigors and toil of work in union with Jesus, he cooperates with the Son of God in his work of redemption. By his work, human person partners with God in the evolving reign of God, transforming the world and the earthly realities with the love and justice of God, working for the realization of the ‘new heavens and new earth’ (2 Pet 3:13) promised by God.³¹

Hence the Church teaches and believes that:

“Through work man must earn his daily bread and contribute to the continual advance of science and technology and above all, to elevating unceasingly the cultural and moral level of the society within which he lives in community with those who belong to

the same family. And work means any activity by man, whether manual or intellectual, whatever its nature or circumstances”.³²

Though it “contains the unceasing measure of human toil and suffering and also of the harm and injustice which penetrate deeply into social life within individual nations and on the international level”... “work is a good thing for man – a good thing for his humanity – because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also achieves fulfillment as a human being and indeed in a sense becomes “more a human being”.

Human work also has an intrinsic social dimension. A person’s work is naturally connected with that of other people as John Paul II described it in his *Centesimus Annus*: “work is work with others and work for others...The fruits of work offer occasions for exchange, relationship and encounter”. Work is hence presented as a moral obligation not only because the Creator commanded it and is necessary for one’s own human flourishing, but also with respect to one’s neighbor, which in the first place is one’s family, but also the society to which one belongs, the nation of which one is son or daughter and to the entire human family. We are heirs of the work of generations and at the same time shapers of the future of all who will live after us.³³ Through his labor the human person contributes to the common good in which he takes part. Hence from the beginning of the Christian tradition, laziness was always condemned as Apostle Paul exhorts the early Christians: “We hear that some are conducting themselves among you in disorderly way, by not keeping busy but minding the business of others. Such people we instruct and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and

to eat their own food" (2 Thes. 3:11-12). Work was thus invested with such noble dignity that in due course work was perceived to be genuine prayer as it is expressed in the traditional Benedictine maxim: *Ora et Labora*.

No matter the various forms the work may assume, analyzed in the objective dimension, work is ultimately an intentional activity, planned and pursued by the human person as a conscious and free subject, capable of deciding about himself and with a tendency to self-realization. Man is the subject of work and this "dimension conditions the very ethical nature of work". Human work has an ethical value of its own because of the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject who aspires to flourish as a person. Work is the ordinary way to this human flourishing. This "Gospel of work" informs and grounds the perennial Christian perspective about human person and human work. The Church therefore believes and teaches that "the basis for determining the value of human work is not primarily the kind of work being done, but the fact that the one who is doing it is a person".³⁴ This Gospel of work and perspective of the human person convinces the Church to critically and decisively intervene whenever the tenuous relationship that exists between capital and labor, the two pillars of human productivity and progress, is deeply lop-sided and skewed in favor of the former, resulting in untold human misery and injustice. The same Gospel vision summons the Christians as a whole to be constantly vigilant in their pilgrim journey as witnesses of the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

The vigilant watchfulness that the Christian pilgrimage and gospel fidelity calls

for has summoned the church down the ages not only to read and critique the varying times, but forcefully speak out, especially when human life, dignity and rights have been devalued and endangered. She has spoken up either to rouse human and societal conscience to recognize and decry the injustice in the society or empower the efforts to fashion new visions and chart new ways, or to show that way itself. The landmark teachings that flowed from this watchfulness at the height of the Industrial era and the human rights discourse that they inspired and guided, yielding the all too familiar charter of human rights, stand in proud testimony to this eternal vigilance and conviction it inspires.

Critiquing the global market place and the free market economy of the modern times, the church has been highlighting the perils and promises that they present and their impact on work, workplace and 'workforce'. She has been highlighting the need to fashion a relevant ethics of work, recalibrating the perennial values of the humankind, so as to redeem the dignity of work and workplace. She has also highlighted that the contemporary pluralistic times call for a concerted strategy that enlists the creative energies of the entire spectrum of human experience in true dialogue and encounter. This reflection has been an effort to highlight the Christian perspective on the dignity and value of human labor and join the dialogue for fashioning an adequate ethics of work that will answer the conundrums of our times. When humankind was able to rally its diverse forces to stand and fight in unison, it has won many a battle for human progress, dignity and justice as has been amply demonstrated by the united efforts at Davos, Doha and other world business forums in the past and right now at the World Climate talks at Lima, Peru. May

these efforts be doubled and reinforced and joined by men and women of good-will to draw up ethical yet creative visions

Notes

- 1 John Paul II, the opening paragraph in *Laborem Exercens*, Encyclical letter on Human Work, (Hereafter cited by its usual Latin title as *Laborem Exercens*). Cf., O'Brien, David & Thomas A. Shannon, 2009, (Eds.), *Catholic Social Thought: The Documentary Heritage*, Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, p. 352.
- 2 *Rerum Novarum*, the landmark encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, chronicles and analyzes this all round confusion and misery that plagued the humankind in the wake of the industrial revolution. Breaking new grounds in the way the Church engaged social realities, it was a trail blazer and is generally credited to have inaugurated a new era of Christian social engagement, giving rise to a new trajectory of Catholic teachings, usually christened now as 'Catholic Social Doctrine/Teaching'. Cf., Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church, compiled and promulgated by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004, Libreria Editrice Vaticana. The translation that informs this reflection is the English version published by USCCB, Washington, DC, 2011.
- 3 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 1
- 4 *Gaudium et Spes*, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, 4 (The Translation used for this reflection is 2007, *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, Austin Flannery, (Ed.), Northport, NY/Dublin, Ireland: Costello Publishing Company/Dominican Publications.
- 5 Ibid.

of work, workplace and the market that foster human dignity and true human progress.

- 6 William T. Cavanaugh, 2008, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire*, Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, p. 1.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed*, pp. 15-24
- 9 Cavanaugh, pp. 43-47
- 10 Cavanaugh, pp. 37-38
- 11 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 1
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Cavanaugh, pp. 7-26
- 15 Gen 1: 27; 2:7
- 16 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, # 108; Catechism of the Catholic Church, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, #355-357 (The English Translation cited is the one approved by USCCB and published by Apostolate for Family Consecration, Bloomington, OH, USA)
- 17 Cavanaugh, pp. 7-9
- 18 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 6
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 *Gaudium et Spes*, p. 12; Compendium of the Social Doctrine, p. 110
- 21 Compendium, p. 149
- 22 Ibid.
- 23 *Gaudium et Spes*, p. 25
- 24 Compendium, pp. 150-151.
- 25 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 10, p. 19
- 26 *Laborem Exercens*, Introduction
- 27 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 1.
- 28 Genesis 2:15
- 29 Compendium, p. 255
- 30 *Laborem Exercens*, p. 4
- 31 Compendium, pp. 52-56, p. 263.
- 32 *Laborem Exercens*, Introductory paragraph.
- 33 *Centesimus Annus*, p. 31; Compendium pp. 273-74
- 34 *Laborem Exercens*



Work ethics from an Islamic Perspective

Mouez Khalfaoui

Since the life and job status' of people nowadays is permanently changing, the question comes to mind how ethical values adapt to these changes and how they develop; of significant importance in this case are those values that support and strengthen the human life, such as religious values. Based upon this question different working cultures will be studied and compared in their stance toward profitable business.

The general view on work and work ethics in Muslim societies, in the eyes of a westerner, is negatively influenced by a lack of information on business in the Islamic culture. Therefore, a study on the Muslim conceptions of gainful occupation becomes unavoidable.

This paper aims to analyze key features of gainful occupations in the Muslim world. The main indicators of profitable work will be studied so as to define the term "gainful occupation" and to outline how business is approached in Muslim culture, how it is framed theologically, and how problems related to business rela-

tions can be solved. In the first part of this paper the debate on business during the formative period of the Muslim culture will be analyzed by studying the approach outlined in the Qur'an and the Sunna (the traditions of the Prophet Muhammad). Through the analysis of legal sources and their comparison to other religions, in the second part, the approach of Muslim scholars will be studied. The third part of this paper will then address the work morale of Muslims.

The Importance of Business in Muslim Culture and its Historical Development

A glance at the debate over business in the monotheistic cultures shows a positive attitude towards working in general. As stated by Postel "*Work[ing] is an activity agreeable to God that illustrates the free will of the human being*" (Postel 2009, 171). In spite of the generally positive view about the meaning of business and its social functions (Bräkelmann 1967, 1ff), differences can be found, for example

over economic thinking. In opposition to the other (monotheistic) religions, work in Muslim culture remains understudied. Based on the limited research at hand, one can figure that there is a general consensus between Muslim clerics over the importance of this matter, with an ongoing debate over its role in the life of the believers. Two main terms are used in Arabic for the terminus business, the first *Ijara* meaning *renting or leasing*, and the second *Kasb/ Iktisab* meaning *acquisition* (Ibn Mandhour, 1994, 716-717) which relates to the profitability of business. Historically, the differences in the theological understanding of the role of human beings on earth and their relation to God has led to an ongoing debate over business. During the formative period of Muslim work ethics, ulama (Muslim scholars) used to concentrate mainly on the two most important Islamic sources the Qur'an and the Hadith. The words *Kasb* and *Iktisab* were derived from these two religious sources, soon becoming a matter of discussion in later epochs. Through these discussions and throughout time more terms occurred for the word "business", as for example *Iktisab*, which was derived from *Kasb*. The term *Iktisab* is used to broach the issue of business making. While *Kasb* is a very theological term and relates to the worldly deeds of people and their compensation in the hereafter (Mattson 2006, 548-551), *Iktisab* is related to the practical issues of business and its financial aspects. (Bravmann 1972, 108).

The Islamic legal debate, in contrast to these theoretical concepts, is dominated by questions of work conditions and the validity of business contracts. Through this difference the debate on business diverts from the term *Kasb* to the term *Ijara*. *Ijara* (with its grammatical form *Fi'ala* in Arabic) points to a job which in form

and content changes the meaning of *renting/ leasing to selling the profit*, which is why the scholars of Medina use the word "selling" instead. Therefore, the outcome of the transaction is named price in the leasing contracts (Al-Kasani 2004, 516). This transformation, obviously, has led to a new definition in which two aspects have to be considered: *Ijara* is used to refer to the renting of real estate, property, and artifacts (*Ijarat al-'A'yān*) for a specific price. This aspect is not a big matter of discussion in this paper; it will only be mentioned if necessary in relation to other relevant subjects.

a) The term *Ijara*, besides its meaning of renting items, also refers to the "renting" of employees. This directly connects to the term "gainful occupation" in the discussion on business in this paper. Hence, gainful occupation as approached by Muslim scholars refers to business making between two parties especially that of employer and employee. The matter of renting in this discussion becomes more apprehensible through the definition of the following termini;

b) As *Mu'ajjir* meaning leaser, one is speaking of the employer, customer, the ordering party, and in general the paying party (Ibn Mandhour 1994, 10-11). As *'Ajir/mustajir* meaning leasee, one is speaking of the employee, contractor, the working party, and in general the paid for party (Ibn Mandhour 1994, 8).

In the Islamic legal literature the two last mentioned termini are often used when speaking of *Ijāra* - a business that is profitable to the employee. Thus, both business parties (employee and employer) are part of the concept of gainful employment. This perception of business has its roots in the way in the two major sources of Islam, Qur'an and Sunna, which will be addressed in more detail in the following sections of this paper.

Business in the Qur'an and Hadith

'Ijāra – leasing – is the term used throughout the Qur'an to refer to business as a gainful occupation. Among the account of the prophets of God, it is especially the story of Moses which is told with an emphasis on work (Qur'an 28:26 - 28). In further accounts of the Qur'an on the matter of business the issue of payment is broached; once again the account of Moses, namely the story of the holy man who promised to teach him the wisdom of life, is brought up (Qur'an 18:77). In another section of the Qur'an, business is addressed from a gender perspective. The story of Moses' mother is told, who is hired to be the nurse of Moses (Qur'an 20:40). This quote suggests that women could hold an occupation. Generally speaking the Qur'an defines a business (a gainful occupation) as an agreement between two parties, the employee is paid for the services done. It is noteworthy that gender does not really play a role in work relations. Also, it is obvious that working for a wage was of importance in previous religions.

The traditions of the Prophet Muhammad often mentions the term 'business'. He clearly emphasized business contracts over business relations. The Prophet commits more thoroughly to the details of a contract and its realms; this emphasis can be understood as a reminder of the forgotten components of a contract. Many records report that the Prophet insisted that the first and foremost condition for the validity of an employment contract is the mentioning of the wage before the beginning of employment and the immediate payment of the wage upon the completion of a contracted assignment (Ibn (Abi Shayba, 11, 303). In addition, the Hadith literature delivers extensive explanations of work circumstances, as well as a list of the best occupations,

and comments on the employer – employee relationship. This in itself reflects the intra-Islamic debates on the question which occupation best fits religious norms. Diverse answers to this question can be found in the Hadith accounts of the Prophet, some of which emphasize trading while others emphasize agricultural occupations (Shaybani 1986, 39 ff).

Summing up, the stance of both the Qur'an and the Hadith is clearly in favor of gainful occupation. Both references offer important argumentations on this matter – which have been of enormous importance for the later epochs of Islamic thinking and shall be treated in the following sections of this paper.

The Legal Debate on Business

Since the early 9th century Muslim scholars have been debating over business as a gainful occupation. In analyzing these debates two aspects must be considered: First, is a strictly legal approach towards business – in which gainful occupations are either allowed or forbidden on the basis of religious evidence. Second is a list of very specific issues, like business contracts, notions of accountability, and the hierarchical importance of different occupations. Both aspects shall be discussed in the following parts.

1. The Legal debate on Business (*'Ijara*)

As mentioned at the beginning of this article a gainful occupation *'Ijara* is seen in all Islamic legal references as a business that is regulated by a contract (Al- Jaziri 2008, 86ff). Muslim scholars are divided over this matter. One group is of the opinion that gainful occupations are entirely forbidden, while the other holds the stance that business is definitely allowed in Islam. Both groups consider business and business making as part of the superior concept of *'Ijara* (Leasing/ Renting) and

differ between two categories of renting; one being the renting of items the other being the renting of working force. Both compare the concept of business with the concept of renting, and rely upon different exegesis of the religious texts to prove their stance. The Hanafite legal scholar Abu Bakr Al-Kāsānī (d. 1191) offers an extensive analysis of the legal debate over business and its religious implications. In his book *Badā'ī' as-Sanā'i* he introduces the different concepts of gainful occupation and offers reasons for the rejections that some scholars bring up against business making.

2. Business: a Monotheistic Religious Heritage

Al-Kasani uses the story of Moses in the Qur'an to prove and explain the validity of *Ijara* contracts, arguing that hiring workers is of importance for all monotheistic religions. Al-Kasani finds further proof for his stance towards gainful occupation in the traditions of the prophet Muhammad. He argues that the Prophet accepts the pre-Islamic employment contracts and applies them. According to al-Kasani, the Prophet's emphasis lied on the exact definition of the assignment and the immediate payment of wage. Another argument of al-Kasani is based on a legal norm of *Ijma*, meaning consensus, and applies to the conformity of all scholars. Al-Kasani believes that the *Umma* (the international Muslim community) should unanimously acknowledge the validity of business (Al-Kasani 2004). Historically speaking, business, although forbidden by some Muslim scholars, in the course of time became a major part of Muslim economic thinking. This is a result of deep socio-economic developments within Muslim societies. It can be assumed that the rejection of gainful employment slowly dissolved by the mid-12th century (during al-Kasani's

time). Analyzing the sources of law shall help to gain a better understanding of the dissolution.

3. Business in Islamic law sources

In most religious sources of Islamic literature *Ijara* is dealt with separately, but is usually part of extensive chapters. As a result, the term is used to indicate selling, leasing and renting of property but also for the renting of animals and the employment of work force (renting laborer). In these sources details of employment contracts such as wage, liabilities, nullification of the contract, etc. are discussed. Remarkably, the two aspects of *Ijara* (the renting of property and the renting of laborers) are discussed in relation to one another. Although there are some differences among the scholars, they all believe that gainful employment can only be allowed by contract. Abd-ar-Rahman al-Jaziri, in his book "Islamic Law according to the Four Islamic Ideologies", offers an extensive and detailed sketch of an employment contract based on the teachings of the four most famous Sunni law traditions (Al-Jaziri 2008, 86 ff.). These four traditions discuss business as detailed as they discuss the renting of property, these details are as following:

3.1. Preconditions of an Employment Contract

The first condition for the validity of an employment contract, as with trade agreements, is the approval of both parties. Yet the approval of the employee is pivotal: "*a requirement for the employment contract is the affirmation and acceptance of the contract. This requirement is indispensable*" (Al-Kasani 2004, 516). Employee and employer have to agree on the duration of the job/contract, cost and effort of the assignment, and the salary. Verbal acceptance of the contract used to

be valid. The sources of the later epochs (12th-17th centuries) deal with details of the business and the connected contracts. In those texts the occupations of nurses, sheppard's, fishermen, and hunters are discussed in detail. So are jobs in the transportation sector and those relating to animals (donkey, mule, and camel), the salary of which is discussed in detail (Shaykh Nizam 1999, 409f). These essays do not only deal with contracts between strangers. In fact, contracts between family members take a major part of the essays, with contracts between married couples being extensively discussed.

The Interreligious Factor: Fatawa Alamgiri as a case study

Religious boundaries have been intensively debated over the last few decades in different fields of research. Within the area of Islamic Studies, this discussion has mostly centered on the relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims, with legal opinions, regarding the doctrine of *dhimma*, being of a particular relevance. Therefore, dominant perceptions of boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims are shaped by an image of rigid inter-religious relations and norms of *dhimma* the transgression of which could be severely punished (Paret, 1987, 344-365). Nevertheless, there are many areas of encounter that offer another perspective on the relation between Muslims and non-Muslims. These cases question the rigidity of interfaith boundaries, whenever it comes to subjects of crucial importance to both Muslims and non-Muslims. The domain of economic transactions is one area of intensive inter-religious encounter in which the debate of religious boundaries has been conceived as transgressive.

In this regard, the subject of work constitutes an area in which religious bounda-

ries between Muslims and non-Muslims were extensively reduced. Parallel to the restrictive cultural, religious, and political relations, intense economic interaction used to take place between Muslims and non-Muslims, as Islamic legal sources regarding work relations between different religious and ethnic groups suggest. In exploring this shift of interfaith boundaries and discourse within the economic sector, I shall take the "Fatawa Alamgiri", a compendium of legal opinions written in the second half of the 17th century in South Asia, as a case study. This compendium of Hanafi legal opinions represents a comprehensive summary of Hanafi legal thought at its time; it still has strong authority throughout the Muslim world (Khalfaoui 2012, 120-122). More importantly, it provides interesting insights into the ways in which Hanafi scholars of Islamic law understood the notion of work in a multi-religious and multi-cultural society. The religious, social, and economic context in the realm of which this Hanafi source was written, bears witness of why and how religious norms can be interpreted and used differently in the context of the life of the Muslim populations.

Reading the section on work in the *Fatawa Alamgiri*, one could remark that the religious factor does not represent the main issue of discussion; it only appears in a few chapters, where the subject of work is directly related to religious subjects like the transport of dead persons to the cemetery of the non Muslims. Indeed, throughout the chapter of these *Fatawa on Ijara*, there are only few sentences referring to religion. Whenever the religious factor is involved, the authors of the *Fatawa* underline that religion should not be considered as a boundary or a difficulty to work. The chapter on wet-nursing acts as a case in point, with the *Fatawa* allowing Muslim women to be employed by non-

Muslims. On the other side, Muslims are also allowed to hire a non-Muslim nurse for their children. In another chapter dedicated to «allowed and forbidden jobs», the authors of the *Fatawa* allow Muslims to work for non-Muslims, even if the work consists of carrying materials, like wine, that are forbidden by Islamic law. Muslim workers are also allowed to transport non-Muslim corpses to the cemetery and to rent their animals to non-Muslims, even if they use them for transporting products that are considered “forbidden” (Nizam, 4: 434-450).

In all those questions dealing with work relations between Muslims and non-Muslims, the opinions of leading Hanafi scholars can broadly be divided into two opposing camps. The first one is attributed to Abu Hanifa, the eponym of the Hanafi school of Law. He allowed Muslim workers to engage in numerous jobs and transactions with non-Muslims, including those mentioned above. On the other hand, the authors of the *Fatawa Alamgiri* present the position defended by two leading disciples of Abu Hanifa, namely Muhammad ash-Shaybani and Abu Yusuf. Both scholars refused many of the transactions between Muslims and non-Muslims mentioned above. The positions of these three Hanafi scholars bear witness of the diversity of opinions inside the Hanafi school and internal (doctrinal) developments. While the permissive position of Abu Hanifa was formulated at a time and place at which Muslims constituted a minority, living among a non-Muslim majority in al-Kufa (the 8th-9th century); the position of his two disciples is mainly based on their experience as lawyers in different courts throughout the Abbasid dynasty. Abu Yusuf’s and ash-Shaybani’s opinions were furthermore impacted by the social and economic changes they have seen under the Abbasids’ rule. Briefly put, the state,

and along with it the Muslim people, gained an unprecedented level of strength and power during the Abbasid Caliphate which is reflected in the opinions of the two pupils of Abu Hanifa.

In selecting leading Hanafi scholars’ legal opinions, like the ones introduced above, the authors of the *Fatawa Alamgiri*, used the method of balancing (*tarjih*). It involves the comparison of opinions of imams within one legal tradition (*madhab*). Over time, the method of balancing, has developed some practical norms and values. In case of an opposition between leading scholars of the *madhab*, it became a common practice to follow the rule of the eponym of the school, Abu Hanifa. Accordingly, the authors of the *Fatawa* included the decisions of Abu Hanifa in their work, allowing work-related transactions between Muslims and non-Muslims. The authors of the *Fatawa* go as far as to allow Muslims to rent houses to non-Muslims, even though they know it might be used for prying, drinking wine or breeding pork (Fatawa, 435).

The norms and rules developed in the chapter of *Fatawa Alamgiri* on *Ijara* aimed to regulate the relation of work do not depend on ethnic or religious factors. This way of dealing with economic subjects seemed to be a characteristic of the spirit of the time. Accordingly, the norms of work developed in the *Fatawa Alamgiri* could be seen as universal norms which go beyond religious boundaries and rules.

Work as a universal subject

By “universal norms of work” I mean those norms that are shared by a majority of the people and transgress the boundaries of religion, ethnicity or politics. These norms are the product of long periods of interaction between different people from various places, religious and cultural backgrounds. These Norms include the

following points:

- a) Work is regulated through a contract between two or more people. This contract begins with the employee's acceptance of wages and the task at hand. The contract between the partners specifies the time, the wage and the subject of work.
- b) The work relation is based on the concept of payment. Thus, the goal of work is payment.
- c) The employer receives his product in return for paying a certain amount of money.
- d) The calculation of wages and the time-frame of specific tasks should be done on the basis of the customs of the region (*'urf/ 'ada*) where the questions are dealt with.
- e) Work-relations are terminated once the work is done. If the work has been completed earlier than said in the contract, the work-relation is ended and the worker should get paid immediately.
- f) The factors of religion and gender do not really impact work-relations. Nevertheless, they could play a role if certain work-relations represent a threat to other social rules and norms, linked to marriage for example.

Employee - Employer Relation

It has already been established that a business is established and gains validity when a contract between the employee and the employer is agreed upon. The upcoming parts of the paper deal with the two contracting parties their relationship. In legal Islamic sources business is mainly treated from the perspective of the employer, the contracting party. Often the phrase "*when he contracts/ employs someone so that ...*" (Kasāni 2004, 540) is repeated which is justified by the concept of *Maslaha* (concept of necessity). According to Muslim scholars the aim of any employment is to help. Ibn Khaldun explains

this in detail, believing that a human being is obliged to attend to his own duties and affairs without another parties help. This is a matter of honor, and seems to be the general stance of scholars. To engage other people in one's own business is only admitted when handling it independently becomes impossible (either because it is too difficult or because of the lack of necessary abilities). Ibn Khaldun justifies his argument based on the concept *al-Hāja* (concept of requirement) and explains that the poor need the money of the rich while the rich need the abilities of the poor (Ibn Khaldun 1978, 381ff).

The relation of the two parties is illustrated more clearly when speaking of liabilities, for those are almost always bound to the employee. In case of doubt he is accountable for any damage (Kasani 2004, 546ff.). Nonetheless, it seems that the scholars knew about the strain and pressure of such liabilities on employees and on business in general, therefore they pointed at the ethical concepts of employment which we shall discuss in the following part.

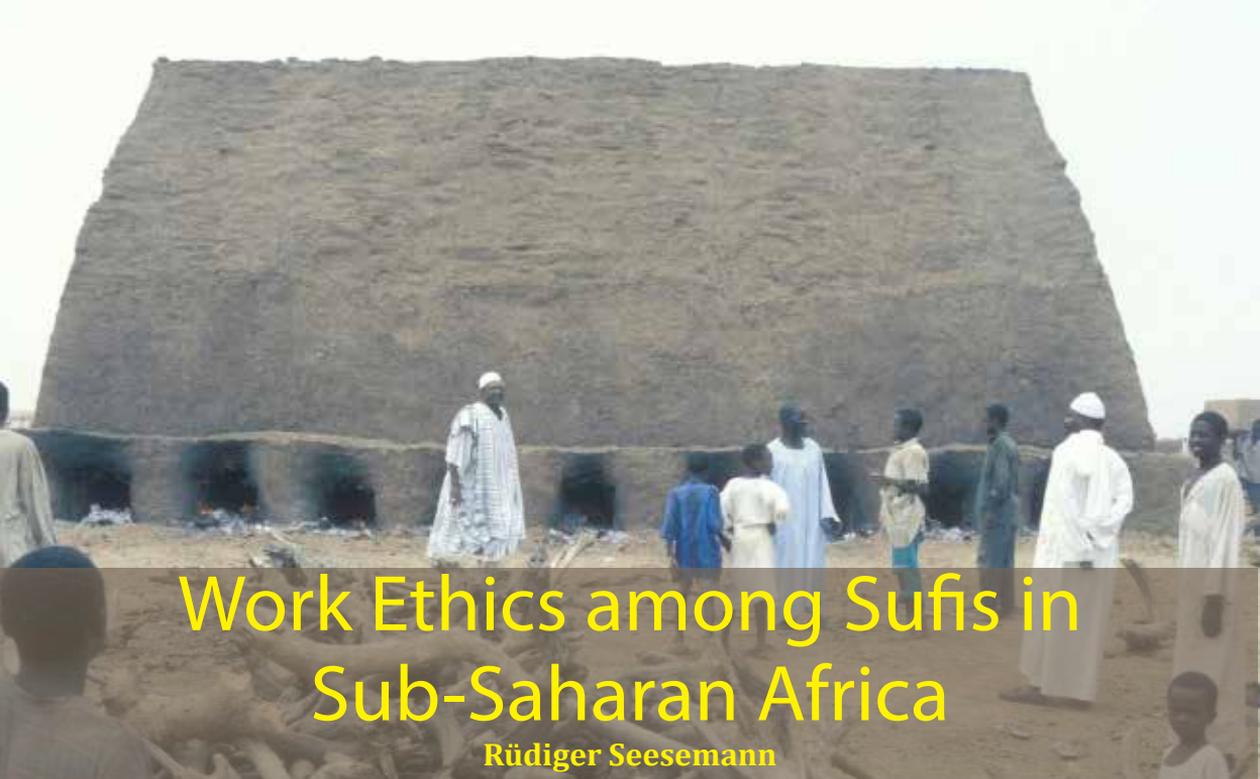
Business Ethics

The last part of this essay illustrates that an employment contract is mostly considered from an employer's perspective, as shown in syntax and vocabulary. This could have affected the relationship between the two parties. Thus, to counter the discrimination and disadvantage of the employee, scholars emphasized the ethical aspect of business. Thereby the employers are called to fear God when they want to contract an employee. This aspect is expressed in different manners. On the one hand, God is seen as a guarantor of the contract which ensures the rights of the employee. On the other hand, fearing God is or should be a reason for smooth work processes and employee-

employer relations. Especially the employer is held accountable for following the rules. It is he who must take care that neither the employee nor the animals that he uses are burdened heavily.

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Work Ethics among Sufis in Sub-Saharan Africa

Rüdiger Seesemann

Studying Work Ethics in Islamic Contexts

At the surface, Islamic injunctions related to work appear to be of a quite general character. Above all, work is depicted as a means to earn a living, and as such it is an integral part of the human experience. Even though the Qur'an and the Hadith occasionally emphasize the importance of work (Arabic, *'amal*), only few of the relevant verses or sayings explicitly refer to work in the sense of labor. Rather, the term *'amal* typically takes the sense of "deeds" or "action", and the believers are exhorted to do good deeds and avoid evil. Apart from this general ethical guideline, there seem to be no specific values that govern the working performance of a good Muslim. Work is undoubtedly considered to be very important, and it is essential for survival, but there is no special religious significance connected with it. Only in the recent past have Muslim scholars started to pay more attention to

work. Authors such as the Shi'ite intellectual and politician Mehdi Bazargan or the Egyptian union activist Gamal al-Banna have published books where they portray work as a part of worship and emphasize that progress and development can only be achieved through hard work.¹ Yet, these writings appear as an attempt to read a "modern" Islamic work ethic into the sources, inspired by the hope that the Islamic world may eventually catch up with the West, if only Muslims showed a greater commitment to hard work. Most statements by Muslim scholars and intellectuals about work ethics seem to fall in the same category.

Judging from the textual sources, there is not much to be said about Islam and work ethics. However, if we turn away from the texts and examine the values and ethical injunctions Muslims attach to their work in a given context, we get a different picture. It is my contention that we need to go beyond the textual level and approach the matter empirically in order to under-

stand how religious norms gain relevance in everyday life.

Through a case study of the Tijaniyya Sufi order (Arabic, *tariqa*) in sub-Saharan Africa, this article explores a particular type of Islamic work ethic that provides an example of how religious norms and values inform the conception and the performance of work in a Muslim community. The study is based on research conducted among the Tijaniyya in Senegal and Sudan, during which I paid particular attention to the ideas related to work, as well as to the ways these ideas are being put into practice.

Work as Service

The Tijaniyya *tariqa* is named after its founder Ahmad al-Tijani, a religious scholar and Sufi leader who was born in the Algerian desert and died in the Moroccan city of Fes in 1815.² In the nineteenth century, under the leadership of al-Hajj ‘Umar Tal (d. 1864), the Tijaniyya gained a large following in present-day Senegal, Mali, Niger and Nigeria.³ Another wave of expansion in sub-Saharan Africa started in the 1930s. Under the direction of the Senegalese *shaykh* Ibrahim Niasse (d. 1975), the Tijaniyya became the most important Sufi order in Africa.⁴

The career of Ibrahim Niasse began in the tiny village of Kosi southwest of the Senegalese town of Kaolack, where he lived together with a small group of followers. In 1929, Niasse claimed for himself the title of the supreme leader of the Tijaniyya at the time. Even though this claim met the resistance of other leading figures within the Tijaniyya, Niasse quickly gained a great reputation for his capacities as a *shaykh* or spiritual master. This reputation was largely due to Niasse’s practice of spiritual training (*tarbiya*), a refined version of earlier Sufi methods of attaining mystical knowledge. The

version of *tarbiya* introduced by Niasse basically consisted of the recitation of a number of specific prayers, and it turned out to be much more effective and to take much less time than previous methods. Attracted by the relatively easy access to mystical knowledge hitherto reserved to a small elite, a large number of new disciples joined the young community. Some of those who completed their spiritual training under the direction of Ibrahim Niasse were given the title of a *muqaddam* (“deputy, superior”) and received permission to train others. Based on this principle, Niasse’s branch of the Tijaniyya quickly spread from Senegal to neighboring countries, and within three decades it was firmly established in most regions between the Atlantic and the Nile.

Kosi was not only the place where Ibrahim Niasse initiated his disciples. It was also the place where the disciples cultivated his fields. During the rainy season, Niasse used to summon his followers to gather on specific days and work on his fields. He regularly sent circulars to the *muqaddams*, who in turn informed the disciples when they were expected to perform their duty. This practice was later copied in other areas where the Tijaniyya spread, and it is still a common occurrence in the region of Kaolack, the heartland of Niasse’s movement, as well as in other countries. In addition to the work they performed on the land owned by Niasse, the members of the community were supposed to designate a field in the vicinity of the villages where they lived as the “Wednesday field”. On Wednesdays, the disciples gathered to work on this field, and after the harvest they submitted the crops to Ibrahim Niasse.⁵

Both oral accounts and letters contain multiple references to occasions where Ibrahim Niasse expounded his conception of work. According to him, physical

labor was a form of “service” (*khidma*). This service is not only incumbent upon every member of the community, it is also intimately connected with every disciple’s spiritual progress. As a concomitant of *mahabba*, i.e., love for the *shaykh* and ultimately for the Prophet Muhammad and God, *khidma* has a profound spiritual dimension, even if it may articulate itself in such profane ways as physical work. It is not a coincidence that the largest field in Kosi was known by the name “Garden of the Cognizants” (*bustan al-‘arifin*). This designation implied that many of those who worked on this field did indeed “know” God. Moreover, and more importantly, it also indicated that working in this field was a way for the disciple to attain mystical knowledge of God (*ma‘rifa*). In some of his letters, Niasse described this peculiar quality of work (in the sense of *khidma*) as “one of the great secrets of *tarbiya*.”⁶ In other words, *khidma* is of direct relevance for attaining the desired mystical knowledge, as it demonstrates the disciple’s complete submission to the authority of his *shaykh*. The more frequent and the more intensive the commitment to work, the less is the disciple likely to follow his worldly desires. This is why *khidma* is a precondition for spiritual progress. In order to emphasize the special value of *khidma*, Ibrahim Niasse used to quote a Sufi aphorism which states, “by putting someone to our service, we make him a *muqaddam*.”⁷

One of the most intriguing documents referring to *khidma* is a letter by Ibrahim Niasse to his master student and confidant ‘Ali Cissé (d. 1982).⁸ Niasse instructed Cissé to inform all members of the community that he expected them to show the utmost devotion to their studies and their work in the fields. Cissé should remind them of their duty to serve their *shaykh* (i.e., Niasse) without reservation. Niasse

explained that his instruction was not at all motivated by the intention to increase his personal wealth—rather, the rationale behind this directive was to increase the spiritual benefit for the disciples. Niasse went so far as to assert that, “there is no greater blessing than to serve me.” Yet, according to Niasse, God had made this a secret in order to grant a special privilege to those who submit to his (i.e., Niasse’s) authority. In the concluding part of the letter Niasse expressed his certainty that he was the supreme saint of his age by stressing the severe consequences of disobedience to his commands: “Those who give me less than I am entitled to are going to regret when it is revealed that everything is in my grip.” He finally added that this was not an utterance made in the state of intoxication or rapture, but rather an advice that he gave with explicit permission (probably a reference to a visionary encounter with the Prophet Muhammad). As compared to the Muridiyya, another West African Sufi order known for its emphasis on work,⁹ the Tijani conception seems to add a further dimension to the religious significance of work. While both Sufi orders share the basic idea that the disciple receives the master’s blessings in exchange for his work or the performance of any task falling into the category of *khidma*, the Tijaniyya, as conceived by Ibrahim Niasse, emphasizes the relevance of work for the disciple’s spiritual progress. Both the blessings and the spiritual achievements will assure the disciple of his salvation:¹⁰ The more he works for his master, the more blessings does he accrue; the higher is the spiritual level he attains; and ultimately, the greater is the certainty that he will win God’s favor and eventually enjoy the eternal bliss. An aphorism ascribed to Ahmad al-Tijani puts the close connection between work and salvation in a nutshell: “Whoever renders

me a service (*khidma*), I will make him enter paradise.”¹¹

So far, my discussion has focused on the relevance of work for the afterlife. However, according to the Tijani understanding, a disciple who serves his master and commits himself to working for the Tijaniyya will already receive a reward in this world. Ibrahim Niasse expressed this idea clearly in some of his Arabic poetry that has played a crucial role in transmitting his doctrine to followers all over West Africa. In a poem titled *Nafahat al-Malik al-Ghani*, Niasse uttered the following statement, which takes up what the founder of the Tijaniyya used to say roughly 150 years earlier: “Verily, those who serve me will surely attain fulfillment of their [spiritual] aspirations, happiness [in the afterlife], and wealth [in this world].”¹²

It is hardly a surprise that many of Niasse’s contemporaries took offence with such bold claims. Nevertheless, this did not affect the millions of followers who were fully convinced that the claims were true. In the course of my encounters with disciples in many sub-Saharan countries, it became obvious that many of them had indeed internalized this particular type of work ethic.

Service as Life Conduct

One of the most outstanding examples for the implementation of this work ethic is the Tijani center (Arabic, *zawiya*) established by the late Shaykh Ibrahim Sidi in the late 1970s in El Fasher, the capital of Northern Darfur State in Sudan.¹³ During my research in El Fasher, I was struck by the degree of the disciples’ commitment to hard physical labor.

At the time, Shaykh Ibrahim Sidi was one of the city’s major manufacturers of bricks. While most of the routine work in the brickyard was done by a handful of hired laborers, there was an annual peak

season that required many more helping hands. The task to be accomplished consisted of lighting a fire under a huge pyramid of bricks and maintaining it over a couple of days with a constant high temperature. On such occasions, Ibrahim Sidi used to call upon his male followers to join the working party, and few if any failed to respond to the *shaykh*’s order. It was indeed amazing to see how the disciples—among them octogenarians and young boys, company managers and government officials, university students and teachers, competed in performing the most difficult and exhausting chores. When I asked one of the teachers why he showed such a degree of enthusiasm in carrying out a manual labor, which he would arguably not consider to be appropriate for a person of his status under normal circumstances, he responded, “I am doing this to serve Ahmad al-Tijani. Only when I work hard he will be satisfied with me. And if he is satisfied, the Prophet Muhammad will be satisfied. And if the Prophet is satisfied, God will be satisfied.”¹⁴ Other participants in the working party gave similar responses to my inquiries. One of them, who worked particularly hard, reacted to my remark that he had deserved a break by saying, “I have to work more and even harder, because the recompense I get from the *shaykh* is far greater than what I can do for him.”

The work at the brickyard is certainly an exceptional event in the days at the *zawiya*. But the disciples exhibit similar attitudes towards work even when they perform less spectacular tasks. Whatever they do in the *zawiya* or in executing a directive given by Ibrahim Sidi, they believe that they themselves are the beneficiaries: Such work amounts to *khidma*, and *khidma* is a form of worship, it guarantees spiritual progress, and those who perform it will ultimately be rewarded. The

great importance attached to work and service is enhanced even further by related ideas of how such tasks are supposed to be performed. When Ibrahim Sidi assigns a job to one of his disciples, he usually adds that the job needs to be done quickly, properly and dutifully. There is almost nothing Ibrahim Sidi detests more than what he calls “raw work,” and if a follower fails to carry out his task in time or in the way he was supposed to, he will certainly rouse the anger of the *shaykh*. More than once I happened to be the witness when the ignited *shaykh* gave a severe lesson of what “perfect” work is, and his tirade often ended with the words, “Whoever does not work as we do does not belong to us.” The Tijani work ethic described thus far appears to offer an example of what can be called a “compartmentalized” version of ethics. The values and rules related to work only seem to apply in a specific context—when the work is done for the *shaykh* or when it assumes the character of a service rendered to the Tijaniyya. The findings thus seem to confirm German sociologist Max Weber’s argument that Sufism fails to build a “bridge to practical agency within the world.”¹⁵ Statements by followers of Ibrahim Sidi also support this view. Several of my respondents pointed out that “the work we do in the *zawiya* is for God, whereas outside the *zawiya*, we work for money,” suggesting that the boundaries of the *zawiya* determine whether a follower works for material or for spiritual profit. Do we therefore have to conclude that the disciple leaves the specific Tijani work ethic behind as soon as he steps out of the *zawiya*¹⁶, only to abide by the rather unspecific rationale of Islamic work ethic (“God requires us to work in order to make our living”) in his daily profession?

The different value ascribed to work inside and outside the *zawiya* notwith-

standing, there is evidence that the two realms are actually interconnected. The link between the two spheres is provided by the idea that hard work and service for the cause of the Tijaniyya already pay out in this world. Certainly, a disciple who performs *khidma* should not do so with second thoughts about possible material benefits: Purity of intention (*ikhlas*) is a precondition for receiving a reward, and this implies that the work needs to be done exclusively for God’s sake (*li-wajh Allah*). But once this condition is fulfilled, the disciples will eventually be granted success in their this-worldly endeavors, in addition to being rewarded in the Hereafter. By committing themselves to *khidma*, the followers become “real” Tijanis, and as “real” Tijanis, they can be assured that God will bestow material favors on them. As early as in the days of Ahmad al-Tijani, the order’s founder, did the Tijaniyya acquire the reputation of being the “*tariqa* of the wealthy”.¹⁷ The same applies to present-day Northern Nigeria, one of the major strongholds of the Tijaniyya, where the *tariqa* counts some of the richest businessmen among its membership. For many followers and even outsiders, being a Tijani is synonymous to being successful. This is not to say that all members of the Tijaniyya are wealthy; in fact, the orders’ membership usually cuts across social classes. Yet, virtually all members I have met over the course of my research shared the idea that the *tariqa* guarantees the wellbeing of every disciple serving its cause.

A closer look at the concept of *khidma* can illustrate this further. While work for the *shaykh* is perhaps the most typical activity belonging to this category, it is not the only one. Service for the Tijaniyya can take many different shapes, such as hosting a visiting *shaykh*, responding to other Muslims who criticize the teachings

and practices of the *tariqa*, or organizing charity events. In addition, *khidma* often consists of making material contributions to the Tijaniyya. Such contributions are known as *hadiyya* (Arabic for “gift”) and are nowadays usually paid to the *shaykh* in cash. Evidently, a disciple’s ability of offering an appropriate gift will depend on his financial capacities, and thus ultimately on his income. It is here that the concept of *khidma* does indeed build a bridge to what a follower is doing outside the *zawiya*. Prominent visiting *shaykhs* require generous gifts, and generous gifts require the follower to generate income in his profession outside the *zawiya*. Serving the Tijaniyya is therefore by no means limited to physical work for the *shaykh*. Rather, *khidma* has the potential to transcend the boundaries of the *zawiya* and to become the framing device of an individual’s life conduct. In one of my conversations in the *zawiya* of Ibrahim Sidi in El Fasher, a follower pointed out, “I am a Tijani at all times; in every situation, I live as a Tijani. Whatever I do, wherever I go, I hope to win the favor of Ahmad al-Tijani.” The key to understanding how the notion of serving the Tijaniyya builds a bridge between the *zawiya* and everyday life lies in the relationship between *khidma* and success. In the perception of the followers, the two are inextricably linked and mutually conditioned. The calculation goes, the more you do in terms of service, the greater the success in your personal and professional life; and in reverse order, the more success you have in your profession, the more you can do for the cause of the Tijaniyya. In other words, in addition to its profound spiritual dimension, *khidma* provides a general set of rules for individual life conduct which goes beyond the master-disciple relationship—at least in cases where the followers internalize the corresponding norms and values, as

in the *zawiya* in El Fasher.

Conclusion

The above analysis of work ethics in the context of the Tijaniyya clearly shows that Murid work ethics is not a unique phenomenon, but part of a larger pattern which can be found in other Sufi orders in sub-Saharan Africa, and probably also in other regions of the Muslim world. The principle upon which this type of work ethics is based cannot simply be reduced to the formula “work for me, and I will pray for you,” as it has often been done in studies of the Muridiyya. At least in the case of the Tijaniyya, working for the *shaykh* is a method to achieve spiritual progress. Work falls into the larger category of *khidma*, which in turn shapes the ways in which followers perceive of their lives both inside and outside the *zawiya*. At the same time, the example of the Tijaniyya also highlights that ethics and practice do not necessarily need to follow the same logic in all spheres of life. My respondents unanimously stated that the spiritual reward only applies to work within the context of the *zawiya* or to services rendered to the *tariqa*. Even when a disciple adopts the principle of *khidma* as the framework for his entire life conduct, he will not claim to yield the same spiritual profit for work he performs outside the *zawiya*. Such work is perceived as belonging to another category framed by a different set of ethical ideas. However, even though the work ethic of the Tijaniyya appears to be “compartmentalized,” the notion of *khidma* does establish a link between the two spaces and, in a wider sense, between the this-worldly and the other-worldly aspirations of the disciples. Rather than escaping from the world, the followers of the Tijaniyya are confident of their success in this world and certain of their salvation in the Hereafter.

On a final note, this case study demonstrates value of employing empirical methods in the study of religious ethics. Limiting the inquiry into religious work ethics to scriptural norms can be seriously misleading, as it will suggest that work is merely a reality of life or, at best, a means to comply with one's religious duties and social responsibilities. A thorough understanding of how ethics "work" requires us to approach the matter empirically.

Notes

- 1 Mehdi Bazargan, 1978, *Work and Islam*, Tehran; Gamal al-Banna, 1982, *al-Khayâr al-sa'b*, Cairo.
- 2 On Tijaniyya and its founder see Jamil M. Abun-Nasr, 1965, *The Tijaniyya. A Sufi Order in the Modern World*, London; Jean-Louis Triaud and David Robinson (Eds.), 2000, *La Tijâniyya. Une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique*, Paris; Zachary V. Wright, 2005, *On the Path of the Prophet: Ahmad al-Tijani and the Tariqa Muhammadiyya*, Atlanta.
- 3 David Robinson, 1985, *The Holy War of Umar Tal: The Western Sudan in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*, Oxford.
- 4 On Niasse and the Tijaniyya see Rüdiger Seesemann, 2011, *The Divine Flood. Ibrahim Niasse and the Roots of a Twentieth-Century Sufi Revival*. New York; Zachary V. Wright, forthcoming, *Living Knowledge in West African Islam: The Sufi Community of Ibrahim Niasse*. Leiden.
- 5 The "Wednesday field" is a typical institution throughout Senegal. See Ibrahim Marone, 1970, 'Le Tidjanisme au Sénégal', in: *Bulletin de l'I.F.A.N.*, série B, 32.
- 6 See for instance Ibrahim Niasse, 1990, *Ziyâdat al-jawâhir min*

yawâqît alfâz wa-durar hikam fî funûn 'ulûm shattâ, Maiduguri, p. 18.

- 7 Ibid.; the Arabic original reads: *man istakhdamnâhu qaddamnâhu*.
- 8 A copy of the letter, which was probably written in 1939, is in my possession. – The forthcoming book by Zachary Wright (*Living Knowledge in West African Islam. The Sufi Community of Ibrahim Niasse*. Leiden) offers an extensive discussion of the relationship between 'Ali Cissé and Niasse.
- 9 See Rüdiger Seesemann, 1993, *Ahmadu Bamba und die Entstehung der Muridiya*, Berlin, pp. 220-224; cf. Kota Kariya, 2012, "The Murid Order and its 'Doctrine of Work,'" *Journal of Religion in Africa* 42, pp. 54-75.
- 10 Here and in the following, I use the term salvation in a generic sense, referring to the expectation of entering paradise in the hereafter. I do not intend to suggest that the Islamic understanding of the afterlife is identical with Christian ideas of redemption.
- 11 Interview with Sidi Allal, a descendant of Ahmad al-Tijani, Khartoum, August 20, 2004.
- 12 Ibrahim Niasse, 1988, *Nafahat al-Malik al-Ghani fî l-siyâha fî ard Bamako wa-Guinee*, Kaolack, p. 10.
- 13 On Ibrahim Sidi, one of the most charismatic Tijani leaders of the post-Niasse era, see Rüdiger Seesemann, 2000, 'The writings of the Sudanese Tijânî shaykh Ibrâhîm Sîdî (1949-1999)', *Sudanic Africa* 11, – In the mid-1990s, I spent about nine months a resident guest in the zawiya and had the opportunity to attend all activities that took place at this center.

- 14 This and the following quotations are taken from field notes collected over the course of field research in El Fasher between September 1995 and September 1996.
- 15 Max Weber, 1920, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Tübingen, vol. 1, pp. 261-262.
- 16 In a study of the working performance of members of the Muridiyya, Jean Copans maintained that Murid work ethic only applied to

- the labor done in the context of the master-disciple relationship. As soon as a Murid cultivates his own field, there is no spiritual value attached to it. See Jean Copans et al., 1972, *Maintenance sociale et changement économique au Sénégal*. Vol. I: *Doctrine économique et pratique du travail chez les Mourides*. Paris, p. 254.
- 17 Abun-Nasr, *The Tijaniyya*, p. 47.

Book Review

Christopher I. Lehrich (Ed.), 2013, *On Teaching Religion: Essays by Jonathan Z. Smith*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Religion continues to play an important role in our contemporary world. In global affairs and politics, religion plays a major part in issues dealing with violence, peace, justice, and reconciliation. Such a significant phenomenon requires the right methodology for understanding its various dimensions, processes, and structures. The study of religion truly has an enduring dimension. The study of religion is intellectually stimulating because it provides a clue to the mystery of the other. It is one of the disciplines that ponders the boundary questions of life and death and of love and violence that constitute an integral part of the human condition.

The work of Jonathan Z. Smith provides pioneering insights into the academic study of religion. His seminal thoughts and reflections on religious pluralism, religious studies, teaching, and transcendence provide a sound theoretical framework for dealing with these issues. This book is divided into thirteen chapters with a concluding essay by Christopher I. Lehrich. The chapters are lucidly written with copious information about teaching, scholarship, and participation in the professional guild. Pedagogical insights about the college classroom, advice about college and graduate education are the focus of the introduction, chapters one, four, five, nine, and ten. To teachers, Smith offered these words of wisdom: “don’t start at the beginning, start rather at the end... I always begin by trying to imagine a final examination. Not so much the particulars I would want the students to know, but the issues I want them to confront” (p.3). This advice serves as the road map for navigating themes and issues in religious studies. The classroom becomes a living laboratory for exploring complex issues and subjects dealing with the transcendence and its implications for self and society. Smith counsels the instructor to create a context that is liberating rather than paralyzing. In chapters five, six, seven, eight, twelve, and thirteen Smith offered relevant information about new horizons in the study of religion. All these chapters add new dimensions to the open-ended conversations about teaching and studying religion. In these chapters, Smith addresses topics such as the dynamic relationship between religious studies and theology, the prospects of religious studies, and new frontiers in liberal arts education. On the future of liberal learning, Smith noted, “Let me be blunt. The situation we find ourselves in and which we look forward to is new, and it is promising” (p.137). These are comforting words from a man of remarkable stature and experience. Events and stories in our contemporary world do require disciplines that can provide objective and critical analysis.

The study of religion is fraught with much misconception and misinformation, hence the need to clarify some of the intellectual conundrums surrounding this enduring endeavor. Smith provides a compelling treatise that uncovers the caveats and challenges associated with the task of understanding religion and its concomitant implications for public policy and enlightenment. With the need to separate the tree from the forest; Smith delves into issues dealing with pedagogy, curriculum development, public engagement, and professional development. By using personal anecdotes, he allows

readers to have a good appreciation of the joys and travails of a teacher-scholar of religion.

For more than three decades, Jonathan Z. Smith has been one of the dominant voices in the academic study of religion. His lectures and writings provide a sound methodological framework for the role of religion in matters of education and public policy. They also offer rich insights into the complex web of religionswissenschaft. For Smith, education should not be treated with benign neglect; rather, it is a phenomenon that should influence public policies and actions. Some of the fundamental issues that should be bore in mind remain: What are the differences between college and high school? What is the correct role of an introductory course? What functions should a department serve in undergraduate and graduate education? How should a major in religion be conceived? What are roles of academic guilds in public discourse on education and religion? What are the connections between scholarship and teaching? How do the two influence each other? These questions remain germane to the academic study of religion in contemporary times.

Smith is concerned about the approach to the study of religion that is educational and comparative in nature. This must be rigorous, comparative, interdisciplinary, and objective. To teach about religion is an educational exercise that strives to introduce students to the rich world of religious traditions and their complex histories, mythologies, and philosophies. It is an intellectual journey that is full of many surprises and discoveries. Smith has done a yeoman's job in identifying the best strategies and practices for being a teacher-scholar of religion. His writing and erudition offer profound insights that can be considered important in the field of religious studies. His advice: "there is nothing that must be taught, there is nothing that cannot be left out" still rings true in the humanities today. This is a sublime reminder for integration and selectivity in course preparation and delivery. These are key factors in what Smith defined as "decisions and operations" in the classroom context.

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