

Research Article

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The philosophical import of Pauline work ethics in the quest for Germane Work Ethics in Nigeria


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Abstract: The importance of work has always been granted throughout human history. This could be seen from creative work of God. Not only did He engage in work himself, He also ordered Adam to earn his bread for himself by his labour. The Bible is replete with God's teachings concerning work. Among these teachings, Pauline work ethics stand out. That is why this study undertook an examination of the philosophical import of Pauline work ethics in the quest for germane work ethics in Nigeria. Pauline work ethics denotes a concept where human work should be viewed as a righteous function that has been commanded by God right from the fall of man and thereafter. The inevitability of work to man consequently places new and tasking demands on workers in modern society. The study employed the qualitative research design. Data was gathered from primary and secondary sources. The data was analysed using the historical and evaluative tools. The study found out among other things that there has been a massive drift away from Biblical work ethics in contemporary Nigeria. The study recommends that Nigerian workers should adequately peruse the scriptures so as to equip themselves with relevant attitudinal dispositions towards enhancing their attitude to work. The study surmises that work is a good thing for man - a noble thing for his humanity - because through work man not only transforms nature, adapting it to his own needs, but he also cooperates with God's creative work, making him a co-worker with God. The Nigerian working environment would greatly be improved if workers imbibe the biblical work ethics.

Keywords – Bible, Implications, Labour, Nigeria, Pauline, Work ethics

1. INTRODUCTION

Work is an activity that is basically predicated of man (Klein, 2009). Just as thought (intellective knowledge), language, freedom, and culture, work is one activity that distinguishes man from lower animals. No other animals, by natural gift, dispose themselves of this capacity. By virtue of work, man creates for himself his own environment (houses, roads, cities, and many more), procures food and clothing for himself, produces means of communication, transportation, diversions, and others. So, while the animals remain always exposed to the caprices of mother nature, man, with work, succeeds in bending nature to his own wishes and objective. What then is work? Work could be defined as "any activity that produces useful results. In other words, it is any activity intended to modify things through the use of the body and instruments for human satisfaction" (Best, 2000: 71).

Work is one of the subjects that Paul discussed frequently. St. Paul held Jewish and Roman citizenship. During his early life, he took active part in persecuting Christians. According to Ruef (1971: 90), "Paul was a Greek-speaking Jew from Asia Minor. His birthplace, Tarsus, was a major city in eastern Cilicia, a region that was made part of the Roman province of Syria by the time of Paul's adulthood". Obviously, there is no accurate record about the date of his birth. However, it is known that "he was active as a missionary in the 40s and 50s of the 1st century CE.... From this it may be surmised that he was born around the same time as Jesus (c. 4 BCE) or a little later" (Segal, 1990: 71). Throughout the period of his childhood and youth, "Paul learned how to work with his own hands" (1 Corinthians 4:12). Murphy-O'Connor (2007: 41) reports that "until about the midpoint of his life, Paul was a member of the Pharisees, a religious party that emerged during the later Second Temple period". The little information furnished about Paul as a Pharisee is an indication of the real character of the entire Pharisaic movement of the time.

He continued his tent-making trade even after he was converted to Christianity. This is a major medium that aids the explanation of basic aspects of his apostleship. All he needed to carry along were a few tools for his leather works tools. It is not very certain whether his family was wealthy or upper-class as some families of the time. But the simple assumption is that since it is reported that he often worked with his own hands, he may not have been a common labourer. McDonald (1983: 88) informs that "his letters are written in Koine, or 'common' Greek, rather than in the elegant literary Greek of his wealthy contemporary the Jewish philosopher Philo Judaeus of Alexandria, and this too argues against the view that Paul was an aristocrat".

The most intriguing fact about Paul's teachings regarding work is his practical nature - he performed what he preached. Interestingly, from the Garden of Paradise, God commanded man to go into labour if he must survive and be an authentic being. However, a critical look at contemporary Nigerian society proves the opposite. Apparently, the common condition of man in Nigeria today, when considered within geographical, cultural and developmental terms, calls for a re-discovery and re-assessment of the proper meaning of human labor. St. Paul's work ethics provides this model in a world where economic activities and labour have been grossly misconstrued. It is against this backdrop that this study sets out to consider the ethical dimension of Paul's teachings on work and its relevance for contemporary Nigerian society.

2. CONTEXTUALIZING WORK IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY: AN EXPOSE

The attitudes of many Nigerian workers are negatively unimaginable. Toryough (2010: 4) decries the situation in stern but true words:

The attitude to work exhibited by workers of the public and private sectors in Nigeria in particular (and in many other African countries) is not commendable. There is gross misconduct, non-commitment, unfaithfulness, dishonesty, stealing of both time and resources and a general apathy on the part of employees. On the part of management or the employers of labour, exploitation of the employees and a great apathy towards the welfare conditions of employees thrive.

What seems to be the usual way of doing government work today is doing it anyhow, because it does not belong to the individual. Stealing public assets is regarded as benefiting from the 'national cake'. Workers no longer take the value of promptness to work and duty as an important responsibility of employees. Ogabo (2020: 11) adds that "most times when employees resume their work, they merely sign the register of attendance and leave their place of work in the pursuit of their private business or political agenda, as is often the case". Employees ought to make what they are employed to do a priority. At other times, "they only report and remain at their duty posts, chatting, sleeping, praying or entertaining themselves or visitors when there is work to be done; some even wait for inducements such as bribes or sex before they do their jobs" (Alan, 1963: 95). Wrong attitudes to work could be displayed by employees in the workplace in a variety of ways. Toryough (2010: 3) identified the following negative attitudes to work:

Someone who doesn't collaborate with others; they may not like working in a team and are very selfish when completing tasks; arrogant about their performance; stubborn, will not take ideas or advice from anyone; laziness; never on time; erratic or aggressive towards other people; gossiping; misusing privileges; constantly on their phone or laptop for personal use when in a meeting or working.

Any careful observer would readily realise that one major reason for this extremely bad state of the Nigerian labour department is the absence or near absence of work ethics. As Toryough (2010: 1) opines, "individuals' notion of work would determine how much time and energy they devote to it". Apparently, it is a culmination of these factors that have led to the ineffectiveness, inefficiency, backwardness and the subsequent poor results being witnessed in various sectors of the Nigerian society. The penalties for this state of affairs include: the dwarfed pace of technological advancement; the inferior quality of consumer goods and services; and the chronic poverty level of Nigerian people, despite the abundance of humano-natural resources.

3. THE RELEVANCE OF WORK FOR MAN IN THE NIGERIAN SOCIETY

The relevance of work depicts those various aspects by which work serves the needs of man. This is because work is made for man and not the other way round. The following are the main areas of relevance of work to the human society:

i. Personal/Social Relevance

Basically, work has a twofold value: personal and social. Alan (1963: 74) observes that "work has personal value, be it inasmuch as it proceeds from the human person, or in that it finds in man its final end". Work is a good of man; it is a mark of man's humanity. Apart from work transforming man's nature by conforming it to his own needs, it also helps him to realize himself as a man with a capacity to fulfill his man-project. As is true with all the other cultural activities, work also has a social value. Here, Balstore (1988: 93) states that "the work that a person does not only goes to the advantage or damage of himself, but also to the advantage or damage of the other members of the group (tribal or national)". This holds particularly for work, which is essentially a transient activity (not simply immanent, as is thought). The social value of work is already vigorously underlined by Pius IX in the *Quadragesimo Anno* (Fortieth Year). This is recalled and otherwise deepened by John Paul II in the encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (The Exercise of work). "Work", writes the Pope, "has as its characteristic that, first of all, it unites men, and in this consists its social force: the force to construct a community. Definitively, in this community, those who work must in some way unite themselves as much as do those who dispose of the means of production, or who are its proprietors" (n.20).

ii. Spiritual Relevance

Man is a spiritual being. Mondin (1991: 84) avers that "there are various instances and phenomena that buttress the spiritual dimension of man". Human work has many spiritual functions. It has been established that in work we have an index of the emergence of man over animals, and also his spiritual dimension. This is because both for the discovering of the tool and for the actual working, man must put into motion all of his most highly placed spiritual activities: intelligence (to discover the tool), freedom, deliberation, and decision, to pass into the field of action and to perform a determined piece of work. A tangible sign of man's spiritual dimension (beyond the corporeal one) is deduced from the fact that "work is done by someone who is by essence an incarnate spirit, and that to realize himself, he must work and collaborate with others" (Reichmann, 1985: 99).

iii. Ethical Relevance.

As an activity of man, work, just like every other activity, also assumes an ethical value, that is, it can be morally good or evil conforming to the good or evil end that he/she who performs the action works for. It is evident, for example, that to produce a medicine is not an automatically good or bad work, on the moral plane (independently

from the quality of the product); it can be good or evil according to whether it is done to cure a patient or to poison a person. Because of the profound ambiguity of the human being, who is just as capable of the basest intentions and actions as he is capable of the noblest ones, every one of his activities, including work, is marked by a level of ambiguity. Mondin (1991: 49) maintains that, "so that work is good on the ethical plane, and so that it effectively contributes to the interior growth of the person who performs it, it is necessary that he be first of all morally healthy in the profoundness of his being". In fact, the ethical value of work, "without indefinite statements, and directly speaking, remains bound to the fact that he who fulfills the task is a person, a cognizant and free subject – that is, a subject who decides from himself" (*Laboren Exercens* n.6).

iv. Religious Relevance

From a pure philosophical anthropology, it is apparent to see the emergent great significance of work, in that it derives from man and is directed to the perfecting of his psycho-physical being. But this significance becomes even greater if man is considered in his structure of the *imago Dei* and in his quality of "child of God" – a religious person (Dunn, 2003: 75). As an *imago Dei*, the *homo faber* becomes the sublime image of the *Deus creator*. This thought is assumed by John Paul II as the primary institution of the Christian concept of work. "The Church", writes the Pope, "is convinced that work constitutes a fundamental dimension of man's existence on the earth. The church finds already in the first pages of the book of Genesis the source of its conviction that work constitutes a fundamental dimension of human existence on the earth" (n.12). The analysis of such texts make humans conscious of the fact that in them – at times with an archaic manner of expressing the thought – was expressed the fundamental truth regarding man, already in the framework of the creation narrative. These are the truths that decide of man from the onset, and that concomitantly trace the great tracks of his existence in the universe, whether in the state of primordial justice, or as it was after the break, determined by sin, of the original alliance made by the Creator with the created, man. When these are made "in the image of God ... masculine and feminine", the wordings are clear: "Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, and subject it" – even if these words do not openly and overtly refer to work – already work was indicated of them outside of every doubt as an activity to fulfill the earth; indeed, this even demonstrates work's own most profound essence, man is created in God's image, among other reasons, by the authorization given by his Creator to subject and to subdue the earth.

From the foregoing, it is observable that work is a unique anthropological character of man. Work is never a totally new act of creation but only a transformation; by this it evidences only partially the creative power of man. According to Mondin (1991: 84), "in work, man expresses himself, communicates something of himself, makes his own reality, and assimilates a part of this world's reality, and partially utilizes the cosmos; and yet, in his profound being, the reality placed in act by human work remains a reality that is not man's, a reality that does not effectively enrich his being". Work manifests the social character of man. This is evident in the industrial era, but we can always find it, in any form of work. Man works not only for himself but also and above all for others. Work puts men in contact with each other, both in the moment of production and in the moment of consuming. Today almost all work is done in community, and rarely does it occur that what is produced is used only by the person who produced it.

4. THE NATURE AND ORIENTATION OF PAUL'S WORK ETHICS

Paul did not merely set an example for the Christian communities and in fact to people generally, to follow in his work orientation, but equally left precise codes on the best approach to work. Paul had a very rich teaching on work. This is seen in the light of his writings concerning work in his various writings. Infact, almost all his major epistles contain one or another of his teachings on work. Joubert (1995: 74) identifies some of Paul's teachings on work to include:

- i. In the 2nd Letter of Paul to Timothy 2:15 where Paul writes, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach and not resentful”.
- ii. In his first letter to the Corinthians 15:58, Paul enjoins believers to apply themselves fully to the Lord’s work, and to “serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men”
- iii. Paul also admonishes Christians of Philippi the following words, “in order to be blameless children of God in a crooked and depraved generation, we must do every work without complaining or arguing” (2:14).
- iv. He enjoins that we “are to obey our employers by working hard and cheerfully, even when they are not looking” (Colossians 3:22-25).
- v. In 2 Thessalonians 3: 6-13, Paul calls those who do not work “busybodies” and warns that “they shall not eat, warning us to stay away from them”.
- vi. In his first letter to Timothy Paul gives principles of teaching about work; he adds provision for one’s relatives as a responsible ethic of work. “If a man does not provide, especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith” (1 Timothy 5:8).
- vii. He also taught that workers should not talk back at those who oversee their affairs, “nor should they steal from them. Instead, employees should show that they can be fully trusted” (Titus 2:9-10). This makes honesty part of the ethic of work.

Paul gave particular attention and focus to people who were not disciplined and who did not work. In his first letter to the Thessalonians 4: 9-12, he writes:

Now on the topic of brotherly love you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another. And indeed, you are practicing it toward all the brothers and sisters in all of Macedonia. But we urge you, brothers and sisters, to do so more and more, to aspire to lead a quiet life, to attend to your own business, and to work with your hands, as we commanded you. In this way you will live a decent life before outsiders and not be in need.

We need to recall that this instruction is given in the context of the believer’s blessing; equally, it has to be understood that Paul’s words as found in 4:1-3ff are not merely suggestive but “apostolic commands”. Apparently as gleaned from the text, the believer is motivated to work hard because of brotherly love. This is borne out of the fact that “it is not loving to let your brother work hard to support you, when you are not working as you should. And so Paul commands the Thessalonians to strive to lead a quiet life and to mind their own business” (Mirels & Garrett, 1971: 119).

Christopher (2016: 88) goes further to explain that “Paul’s emphasis on living quietly was because most labour is not done as well when the worker is carrying on a conversation with others. Indeed, it is hard to hold a job when you are spending too much time talking and too little time working. Excessive talking (or meddling) seems to have been the reason why some folks were not working”. Concerning those people who failed to work but rather became dependent on the labors of others, Paul sternly addressed them. Paul wrote without mincing words:

But we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from any brother who lives an undisciplined life and not according to the tradition they received from us. . . . For even when we were with you, we used to give you this command: “If anyone is not willing to work, neither should he eat.” For we hear that some among you are living an undisciplined life, not doing their own work but meddling in the work of others (2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-11).

From the above, it is apparent that people who were lazy and failed to work were not only distracting others but were living as parasites on others and unnecessarily depleting their resources. Idle Christians constituted a yoke on those that worked actively. To worsen the issue, some of the undisciplined people who did not work to earn themselves incomes, went about doing the wrong sort of things. The “freeloaders” that Paul deals are not necessarily people who defy every nature of work per se. Rather as Rogers (2014: 90) contends, “they are people who avoid one kind of work by becoming too busily engaged in other work.... And to make this even more sinister, they would be inclined to call this other work ministry”. In Paul’s opinion, these freeloaders may be engaged in work, as it were, but “such work is not really productive; it is a pretext for gossiping and causing trouble”.

The philosophy of Pauline work ethics is complex and interwoven. However, this paper contextualizes the basic themes which cut across Paul’s work ethics. The themes include the principle of universalisation, the function of work in eschatology, the idea of justification by faith, and related themes. On the background, “Paul’s apostolic self-conception reveals a universal missionary strategy, which may draw on well-established Old Testament models like Moses” (Rogers, 2014: 93). It is the contention of some thinkers that Paul’s missionary role was both universal and a vital part of the messianic experiences set in motion by Christ Jesus. In this circumstance, “the special, propitious time, or *kairos*, inaugurated by Jesus’ preaching, crucifixion and resurrection, will not come to an end until, at least, Paul’s own mission has been completed” (Ruef, 1971: 171).

Jewish economic idea recognizes the mutual and intertwined relationship between citizens who are both members of the faith as well as citizens of the Nation and the interactions they have with one another. Segal (1990: 89) affirms that “when faith and nationality become separated, as is necessitated by Paul’s universality, new perspectives are required”. Paul places much emphasis on the replacement of the letters of the Laws of the Old Testament with the spirit of the new law - Christ’s law. It is however, noteworthy that much of the Jewish economic ethic is contained in the Old Testament. With such a universalistic consideration, there is no feeling of rejection of Old Testament economic Laws. Rather, it strengthens the belief that Christ and the new laws represent the fulfillment and culmination of the Old Covenant. Thus, the New Covenant, “and especially the universal aspect of the New Covenant, supersedes the details of Judaic ritual, particularly since salvation is now to be granted to believers because of their faith, and not because of their ritualized religious behavior” (Hanson, 1974: 173).

One philosophical inference garnered from this Pauline theological position is that he overturns a good measure of the traditional Jewish avowal of what is ritually clean or unclean. It also overcomes the traditional division of Israel from other nations of the world. Instead, Paul’s universal concept strives to construct a novel identity for a new people. This new identity unifies the previously separated people with the new people, that is, the Jew and the Gentile. This new community does not need to withdraw from the world (in a manner like the Qumran community), but have to make their behaviours conform to God’s fatherhood and rule over all all peoples. In the view of Horrel (2006: 90), “Paul’s universalism, his understanding of the relevance of Christ as the embodiment of the New Covenant moving beyond Judaic theology, and his emphasis on justification by faith all shape his economic ideas, which must also be set in their geo-social and historic locus”.

Paul recommends that people should “stay as they were before God at the time of their call” (1 Cor. 7:24). Differently from the Essenes, for instance, “Paul does not feel it is appropriate to classify some areas of work as theologically appropriate, and others as impure” (Segal, 1990: 64). It is within this ambience that Paul encourages and advises new converts “to remain in whatever form of economic activity they have carried out thus far”. Hengel (2012: 62-63) explains that “believers are conditioned but not claimed by their particular circumstances...As a result, there is no uniform way for believers to lead their lives according to God’s call. Because their gifts and their circumstances are different, so are their opportunities and responsibilities”.

Paul outrightly rejects laws and teachings about specific types of work and ritual. This is because the new converts would continue to be entrenched and engaged in their previous social contexts and economic activities. This is not in any way to undermine their belongingness to the new transcendent community of faith to which they

are called. As it is expected, their integral behaviour (including economic behaviour), ought to possess the tendency of being divinely scrutinized. Deriving lessons from the Stoic tradition, "Paul associates human conscience with primary moral responsibilities in such a way that every believer will have to account for his behaviour in life" (Rom. 2:1-16). Paul warns against believers who think of the "Christian freedom as a means of satisfying worldly desires" (Phil. 3:19). He enjoins believers instead to live free from worries about affairs of economic (Phil. 4:6). Paul's perception was of a new community which was in a process of getting transformed into the heavenly paradigm as its archetype, in the sense of "otherworldliness" (Col. 3:2, 7, 10). Paul stylishly combines this with necessary highlights on the behaviour of the individual both in his community and the surrounding society. This mode of living has to be founded on core Christian virtues with the realization that every person is responsible for their deeds in the long run (2 Cor. 6:4-7; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 4:32; Phil. 4:8; Col. 3:12).

Another important philosophy of Pauline work ethics is modesty in the acquisition and maintaining of personal riches. Unhealthy attachment to wealth, especially considering them above God, and the selfish pursuit of wealth, were condemned by Paul; "selfishness, or individualism, was not compatible with membership of the Pauline church communities" (Chamblin, 1993: 107). Paul's injunction that economic activities be re-ordered separately from competitive attitudes which favour self-sufficiency as well as promoting enhanced sacrificial giving in an unsupportive social system perfectly explains this situation. This economic scheme proposed by Paul rests on the eschatological confidence of the new life defined by the resurrection. It is only such a benign experience that is capable of providing an assurance that human labour would not turn out futile at last; at a deeper level, it would enable the believers "to excel in good works" (1 Cor. 15:58), thereby instituting and fostering an economy that projects hope and mercy for members.

Paul considers material prosperity to be a gift of the divine, "a result of God's grace" (2 Cor. 9:10-11). These divine gifts are connected with a crucial spiritual purpose. In this light, Christians are in every way enriched by God to undertake every kind of generosity. Apparently, Paul explicitly emphasizes and proposes the behaviour of the Macedonian believers as an example, "who offered not only their money, but also themselves" (2 Cor. 8:5). Under this economy, it is the one God who "praises cheerful givers" (cf. Proverbs 22:8), that also endows the believer with the fullness of his grace. He does this in order to promote the enabling conditions that would prompt Christians to carry out their acts of kindness with pure motives, "by a genuine inner commitment of the human heart" (2 Cor. 9:7).

5. IMPLICATIONS OF PAULINE WORK ETHICS TO CONTEMPORARY NIGERIAN SOCIETY

Pauline work ethics denotes a concept where human work should be viewed as a righteous function that has been commanded by God right from the fall of man and thereafter. The inevitability of work to man consequently places new and tasking demands on workers in modern society. It raises important questions on what integrity should look like in workplaces. A major difficulty facing workers in Government service is maintaining the spirit of integrity expected of them. It follows that a Christian worker in any establishment is put on a pedestal. This is a status which is expected in terms of positive attitude and conduct of a worker. The most realistic way of transforming such condition into something that glorifies God is simply to practically live and act Christianity in everyday living. Biblical work ethics "requires more than just hard work....It also requires a worthwhile enterprise of doing one's work with excellence and integrity" (Pamela, 1996: 101). Best (2000: 73) corroborates this by stating:

Practical ways of showing integrity in work include the following: to show up at work on time and give advance notice when need arises to be absent or report late for duty; to stand for justice and display loyalty, honesty, trustworthiness, dependability, reliability, initiative, self-discipline and self-responsibility; to engage in teamwork by respecting the rights of others, to demonstrate

appositive attitude and organizational skills which should manifest time management, personnel management, flexibility, stress management and ability to change, to demonstrate good skills in communication' which should be displayed in appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skill.

It involves cultivating a good sense of cooperation and respect which should be shown in leadership and followership skills; maintaining appropriate relationship with both superiors and peers as well as dealing appropriately with diversity and treating everyone with respect. Biblical work ethics includes not only how a Christian feels about his/her job, career or vocation, but also how one does or discharges his/her job or responsibilities.

The Bible does not invite humans to discard the material world but to help in shaping and transforming it through involvement in worldly tasks and responsibilities. This involves seeing work as an activity in which humans must labour with all honesty, be of service to those in need, work to foster justice and contribute passionately to charity. Workers in all fields of human activity are called to pursue justice and practice civic virtues which offer sound principles to shape human participation in public life. In the Biblical tradition, work is viewed not as something burdensome; it is not equally viewed just as how humans make a living, "but as a way of supporting our family, realizing our dignity, promoting the common good and participating in God's creation" (Raimo, 1994: 407). These values, according to the Catholic Social Teachings, include "working with integrity and creativity, treating others fairly and with dignity as well as demonstrating diligence and humility" (Best, 2000: 72). Humans are enjoined to decide on their work based on how best they can put to use the gifts of God deposited in them.

Studies have shown that decisions taken at workplaces can contribute meaningfully to the overall ethics of justice, integrity, punctuality, honesty, hard work and self-responsibility. Ethical responsibility does not entail only just keeping away from evil, but *also* doing right in all our live endeavours. The Biblical standpoint on work is that work is one field of human endeavour "that needs to be rescued from capitalism on the one hand with its view of the worker as an instrument of production, and from communism, on the other hand, with its view of social classes polarized by work into ceaseless historical warfare" (Meeks, 1983: 88).

Not only does work separate humankind from animals but also life is unthinkable without work. The creation story of God's six days of labour gave birth to the world of work. Therefore, whenever someone raises bread to his/her lips, he/she pays silent homage to the fact that work has constructed the world. It follows, therefore, that whenever someone works, he/she acknowledges the toil of previous generations and builds the inheritance of future generations. It is only when work is expressed in these terms that it becomes possible to understand exactly why industriousness is seen as a virtue while slothfulness is seen as an evil in all cases.

In a nutshell, what exactly does Paul's teaching on, and approach to work mean for Nigerians today? Surely, Paul's rejection of the receipt of any form of reward for preaching the Goodnews, together with his personal example of hard work leave great lessons for contemporary Nigeria. Here are some ways Paul's model can re-invent the work ethics in contemporary Nigeria:

a. People should shun laziness

Here is the point we should never miss: Paul is presented to have been a hard worker. Records have it that in most places where he preached, he also worked. In Corinth, at Thessalonica, and in Ephesus, Paul always worked. And

as presented in the foregoing, he gave good reasons for his hard work. In the same manner, Paul persuaded other converts to follow his example of hard work.

- "In all these things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak." (Acts 20:35).
- "For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us, because we were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you." (2 Thess. 3:7-8).

This point is especially important and relevant for modern Nigerians if laziness would be eschewed and the spirit of hard work imbibed.

b. People should work without a mentality for entitlement

Paul's teachings and work example prompts several challenging questions for Nigerians today. For example:

- Is my primary aim of service for the paycheck only?
- Do I have the willingness to offer some service for free when required?
- Do I constitute myself a financial burden to anyone?
- Does my salary positively impact the efficiency of my work?
- Do I exert too much effort and skill towards earning money through the use of another skill concomitantly with fulfilling other tasks?
- Do I have the ready disposition for voluntary service in order to enhance societal well being when I am able and called upon?

Paul presented a noble example in the above points. He outrightly refused remunerations instead of expecting and accepting to always be compensated for his work of preaching and teaching. Paul did not just do this only once but several times, as if to say, "I'll preach this one sermon without pay... He lived and ministered in Corinth for more than a year and during that time he refused to be compensated by the Corinthian church" (Peterman, 1997: 105).

c. Manual Labor is a dignified activity and should not be despised

Watson (1986: 112) posits that "physical work was not something Paul tried for a couple of weeks then moved on to another method. He labored in Thessalonica, working 'night and day' (2 Thess. 3:8)". In the course of his two years in Ephesus, he worked so hard that he was not afraid to use it as an appeal to the Ephesians believers: "You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak" (Acts 20:34-35a).

d. Ordinary Jobs should not be Despised

Paul the apostle was regular at his work, which was an ordinary work. He was a tent maker. Tent making was an ordinary occupation at the time. Paul did not claim to be too spiritual to engage in his work beside others; he worked together with both believers and unbelievers. Neither did he claim to be too spiritual to sell his products in a common marketplace, in the process, interacting with all sorts of people who attended the same markets. Paul's teaching and example serve to encourage people to see ordinary/regular jobs as equally sacred. Many Nigerians today are faced with the same option of serving in a manner and work similar to Paul's. They are faced with options of working on common occupations and services for either little or no incomes.

6. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

There has been perceived over time a seeming lack of commitment to work among Nigerian workers. Issues of truancy, negligence, absenteeism, red-tapism and general apathy to work are noticeable in

various facets of the work economy. The situation seems to suggest that many Nigerian workers no longer understand and value work ethics. Many people no longer see the need to work, forgetting that man's alienation from work is un-natural because it goes against one's natural ability of contributing to harnessing the environment to man's benefit and thwarts the progress of the future. Concerning this, Ogabo (2020: 355) opines that "the state of every era is dependent on the amount of hard work and production of the preceding one". If this supposition is anything to go by, then one can suggest that what the world enjoys today is the sweat of past epochs. Thus, the attitude of many Nigerian workers to alienate themselves from work prompts an urgent response, propelled by philosophical questions such as: What is responsible for this evasion from work? What potent means can be employed to free Nigerian society from this bad attitude towards work? How can the desire for idleness be overcome in Nigeria? The answer to these puzzles as investigated in this work is the germane contribution of the study.

7. CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted a philosophical presentation of a consistent, dependable, logical and coherent model of Pauline work ethics and its relevance in revitalizing work ethics in contemporary Nigeria. From this paper, it is clear that there is dearth of work ethics in the contemporary Nigerian State. This has snowballed into various negative effects for productivity in the country. For the situation to improve, there is need for workers to imbibe the Pauline work ethics. Practical ways of doing this include the following: to show up at work on time and give advance notice when need arises to be absent or report late for duty; to stand for justice and display devotion, sincerity, trustworthiness, reliability, self discipline, consistency, initiative and responsibility; to engage in teamwork by respecting the rights of other members of the society; to demonstrate apposite attitude and organizational skills which should manifest time management, personnel management, flexibility, stress management and ability to change, to demonstrate good skills in communication' which should be displayed in appropriate verbal and non-verbal communication skill; to cultivate a good sense of cooperation and respect which should be shown in leadership skills; to maintain appropriate relationship with both superiors and peers as well as dealing appropriately with diversity and treating everyone with respect.

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