

A Theological Reflection on Work from a Contemporary Ghanaian perspective

Isaac Boaheng¹ 

¹ Christian Service University, Ghana; University of the Free State, South Africa.



ABSTRACT

The productivity of a society is a major determinant of its socio-political and economic development. A positive attitude toward work promotes growth, innovation, and national progress, while a negative work ethic leads to stagnation and retrogression. In Ghana (the context of this study), despite the recognized value of work, many individuals and institutions exhibit attitudes that hinder productivity. Issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and undue emphasis on wealth accumulation by some religious groups have contributed to the country's ongoing socio-economic challenges. This paper, therefore, seeks to offer a theological reflection on work, drawing from biblical-theological principles to propose a framework for cultivating a more responsible and productive work ethic. The study is literature-based, utilizing published books, journal articles, Bible commentaries, and academic dissertations to explore the theological foundations of work and their implications for contemporary Ghanaian society. The paper argues that work is not merely a means of survival but a divine mandate that reflects human participation in God's creative and redemptive purposes. It discusses how a biblical understanding of work can reshape societal attitudes toward diligence, integrity, and service. The study recommends the integration of theological teachings on vocation into church education, leadership training, and national work ethics to promote accountability, productivity, and social transformation. The paper contributes to the fields of public theology and biblical studies by developing a theological framework that links faith, work, and national development. It also offers practical insights for fostering a work culture that aligns with biblical values and supports Ghana's socio-economic progress.

Correspondence

Isaac Boaheng

Email:

boahengi@ufs.ac.za ;

revisaacboaheng@gmail.com

Publication History

Received: 14th July, 2025

Accepted: 23rd October, 2025

Published online:

30th December, 2025

To Cite this Article:

Boaheng, Isaac. "A Theological Reflection on work from a contemporary Ghanaian perspective." *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences* 6, no. 14 (2025): 3673 - 3682, <https://doi.org/10.38159/ehass.202561420>.

Keywords: Corruption, Work Ethics, Theology of Work, Public Theology, Ghanaian Society

INTRODUCTION

Ghana, a West African nation bordered by Ivory Coast to the west, Togo to the east, Burkina Faso to the north, and the Gulf of Guinea to the south, was the first Sub-Saharan African country to gain independence from colonial rule. This historic achievement in 1957 sparked great optimism for self-governance and economic prosperity. However, the post-independence economic ambitions of Ghana were short-lived due to political instability, a series of military coups, and governance challenges. Although the country has enjoyed relative political stability since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in 1992, sustainable socioeconomic development remains elusive.

A major hindrance to Ghana's progress is the prevailing negative attitude toward work. Productivity and economic growth are crucial for national development, yet issues such as corruption, inefficiency, and lack of commitment to work have contributed to stagnation. Public sector corruption,

characterized by bribery, mismanagement of funds, and nepotism, has eroded trust in state institutions, discouraging foreign investment and limiting public service delivery. More so, negative work ethics—manifested in lateness, poor accountability, and lack of dedication—have resulted in inefficiencies across various industries, undermining national development efforts. The role of religion in shaping attitudes toward work cannot be overlooked, especially in a country where Christianity is the dominant faith. The rise of prosperity theology—a doctrine that equates material wealth with divine favor—has negatively influenced the work ethic of many Ghanaians.

Despite the significance of work in national development and the strong influence of Christianity on Ghanaian society, there has been limited theological engagement with the concept of work in the Ghanaian context. Most existing discussions on work ethics focus on economic, political, and sociological dimensions, with little attention given to theological reflections on the subject. Given the pervasiveness of negative work attitudes and their implications for national progress, there is a need for a theological framework that fosters a more productive and ethical work culture in Ghana. This study seeks to address this gap by providing a biblical-theological perspective on work, offering insights that could inform both individual and institutional attitudes toward labor and productivity.

METHODOLOGY

This research is literature-based, drawing from published books, journal articles, Bible commentaries, and academic dissertations. It engaged biblical and theological perspectives on work while analyzing their relevance to contemporary Ghanaian society. This paper argues that work is not merely a means of survival or economic advancement but a divine mandate that reflects human participation in God's creative and redemptive purposes. A biblical understanding of work challenges negative work ethics, promotes integrity, and fosters a culture of excellence and diligence. Furthermore, a responsible theological perspective counters the distortions of prosperity theology by affirming the value of hard work and responsible stewardship of resources.

ASPECTS OF CONTEMPORARY GHANAIAN SOCIOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

Ghana faces several sociopolitical challenges that hinder national progress and development. Poverty, corruption, and negative work ethics remain critical issues, affecting economic growth and social stability. While structural factors contribute to these problems, certain ideological perspectives, such as prosperity theology, have also shaped people's attitudes toward work and wealth. This section examines these issues to provide the context for the study.

Poverty remains a significant challenge in Ghana, particularly in rural areas where access to basic infrastructure, quality education, and economic opportunities is limited. Although the country has made progress in reducing poverty levels, a large portion of the population still struggles with inadequate income, food insecurity, and limited access to healthcare. The growing economic gap between urban and rural communities exacerbates economic inequalities. Many young people migrate to urban centers in search of better opportunities, only to encounter unemployment or exploitative working conditions. Structural issues such as land tenure insecurity and low agricultural productivity further entrench poverty, making it difficult for many to break free from the cycle of deprivation.

The current state of affairs is somehow attributable to such factors as negative work ethics, corruption in the public sector and the negative influences of the prosperity theology on people's attitude toward work. A strong work ethic is essential for national development; yet certain attitudes toward work in Ghana hinder productivity. Issues such as lateness, inefficiency, and lack of commitment to assigned tasks are prevalent in both the public and private sectors. In some cases, people prioritize personal engagements over professional responsibilities, leading to delays and inefficiencies. Furthermore, nepotism and favoritism in employment undermine meritocracy, and discourages hardworking individuals. These negative work ethics not only contribute to stagnation in various industries, affecting service delivery and overall economic growth.

Corruption remains one of the most critical obstacles to Ghana's development. Etymologically, the term "corruption" is derived from the Latin *cur-rumpo*, which conveys meanings such as "to break completely; to destroy, ruin, spoil, waste; to falsify, adulterate, pervert, degrade, seduce, mislead; to gain

by gift; to bribe.”¹ This definition highlights corruption as any human action that disrupts social harmony and deprives individuals of a just and fulfilling life. The National Anti-Corruption Coalition further defines corruption as “the misuse of entrusted power for private gain,” emphasizing its fundamentally unjust, antisocial, and dehumanizing nature.²

Despite various anti-corruption initiatives, enforcement remains weak, and many perpetrators go unpunished. Corruption manifests in various forms, including bribery, nepotism, extortion, fraud, and embezzlement, all of which undermine national development and social justice. Bribery involves the exchange of money or favors to influence decisions unfairly,³ while nepotism grants undue advantages to relatives and friends in public service, often leading to ethnic and political biases.⁴ Extortion, which entails coercion or threats for financial or personal gain, further weakens ethical standards.⁵ Fraud, through deception or misrepresentation, results in financial losses and institutional inefficiency.⁶ Embezzlement, the misappropriation of entrusted resources, remains a significant issue in Ghana’s governance, with public funds frequently diverted for personal enrichment.⁷ These corrupt practices collectively hinder transparency, accountability, and national progress.

While some denominations emphasize strong work ethics, diligence, and integrity, others propagate prosperity theology that promotes negative work attitudes. Prosperity theology emphasizes four key aspects: material prosperity, seed sowing, faith healing, and positive confession of faith. Proponents argue that God desires financial success for all believers and that material wealth is a sign of divine blessing.⁸ Bishop Oyedepo insists that poverty is not God’s will for Christians, questioning why God would take pleasure in a believer's lack. He asserts that divine prosperity is independent of one's profession, career, or family background.⁹

Prosperity theology teaches that giving to the church guarantees miraculous financial returns.¹⁰ Oyedepo claims that sacrificial giving is the only way to attain lasting wealth.¹¹ Supporters cite biblical passages like 2 Corinthians 9:6-11 and Luke 6:38 to justify the seed-sowing principle,¹² and refer to Jesus' promise of a hundred-fold reward (Mark 10:29-30). Copeland presents a mathematical formula for divine returns, suggesting that giving \$1 yields \$100, and \$1000 results in \$100,000.¹³ This belief motivates many believers to contribute financially to their churches. From this perspective, to be poor is the result of a lack of faith, a lack of giving or being under a divine curse.

While faith is an important aspect of Ghanaian society, this theological perspective has negatively influenced many people’s attitudes toward work. Some individuals now believe that wealth is primarily a product of divine blessings rather than hard work, diligence, and strategic planning. This mindset promotes laziness, a get-rich-quick mentality and an overreliance on miracles for financial breakthroughs, rather than engaging in productive labor and skill development. Additionally, some religious leaders promote excessive reliance on divine intervention at the expense of personal responsibility. In Ghana, some ministers claim to possess the power to miraculously deposit large sums of money into people's accounts without any record of physical transactions or the recipients having worked to earn such funds. This mindset discourages initiative, innovation, and productivity, as individuals prioritize prayers for financial

¹ Christian Council of Ghana, *2002 Christian Home Week: Booklet on Corruption* (Accra: Christian Council of Ghana, 2002).

² National Anti-Corruption Coalition (NACC), *National Anti-Corruption Action Plan (2012–2021)* (Accra: NACC, 2011), 23.

³ Samuel Waje Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2008), 165.

⁴ Philippe Zgheib, “Bribery and Corruption,” in *Business Law and Ethics: Concepts, Methodologies, Tools, and Applications*, ed. Information Resources Management Association (Hershey, PA: Business Science Reference, 2015), 145; Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 165.

⁵ Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 165.

⁶ Zgheib, “Bribery and Corruption, 145”; Kunhiyop, *African Christian Ethics*, 165.

⁷ N. G. Adjei, “Poverty in Ghana: Theological Reflection on the Response of Some Churches in Kumasi Metropolitan Area.” (Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2012), 51.

⁸ C. M. Goliama, “The Gospel of Prosperity in African Pentecostalism: A Theological and Pastoral Challenge to the Catholic Church – With Reference to the Archdiocese of Songea, Tanzania” (University of Vienna, 2013), 143.

⁹ David O. Oyedepo, *Understanding Financial Prosperity* (Ikeja: Dominion Publishers, 1997), 7.

¹⁰ Don Enahimion Okosun, “Poverty, Illiteracy Cum Prosperity Theology: A Quantitative Study,” *International Journal of Social Sciences (IJSS)* 8, no. 1 (2018): 83.

¹¹ David Oyedepo, *Possessing Your Possession* (Lagos: Dominion Publishing House, 2007),76.

¹² Dag Heward-Mills, *Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians Become Rich* (Wellington: Lux Verbi BM, 2009), 1.

¹³ Peter Cotterell, “Prosperity Theology,” accessed September 1, 2018, <http://www.theologynetwork.org/world-religions/going-on/prosperitytheology.htm>.

success over acquiring the necessary skills and knowledge for economic advancement. This is why some individuals spend their entire week moving from one prayer center to another, neglecting work while hoping for a miraculous financial breakthrough. When faith is misapplied in this way, it weakens the sense of accountability in workplaces and fosters attitudes of entitlement rather than commitment to excellence.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WORK

Work is a fundamental aspect of human existence, shaping identity, society, and personal fulfillment. From a theological perspective, work is not only a means of survival but also a divine mandate that reflects God's nature and purpose for humanity. This section explores various theological perspectives on work to provide the theological basis for critiquing contemporary attitudes toward work later in the study.

Work as Self-Affirmation

First of all, work forms an intrinsic part of human life; therefore, work defines our humanness. It is a natural activity of humans; that is, human beings are by nature working beings. Just as the Creator is a Worker (Gen. 1 and 2), so are human beings created as workers to rule over other creation.¹⁴ God showed his working character by creating, designing, fashioning, engineering and crafting the universe. The connection between God's work and humans' work is evident in the use of the same Hebrew word *mela'khah* for God's creative activities (Gen. 2:2) and humans' work (Ex. 20:9-10).¹⁵ Work, then, "is a good thing for human beings not only because it facilitates the positive transformation of society, but also because through it one "achieves fulfilment as a human being, and indeed, in a sense, becomes 'more a human being'."¹⁶ Of all God's creation, it is only human beings who have the capacity to work; humans must be thankful to God for that.

God made work an intrinsic part of humankind so that by working, they can recreate themselves and their society as they work.¹⁷ It is, therefore, not ethically acceptable to be lazy. Being idle (instead of being active) or being destructive (instead of being creative) contradicts the nature and purpose of human life. Nobody should be idle; everybody should be engaged in one industry or another. This does not, however, mean that a child, a sick person, or a retired person is not human because they are not working. The child will have the opportunity to serve when they grow; the sick person will serve when they get better, and the retired person may engage in active service even if unpaid for it. There is nothing wrong with retiring completely from work after one has served the society enough and now needs to reserve the rest of their energy for daily non-commercial activities. It is wiser to retire than to continue working and die earlier. However, anybody who is in the working range should try as much as possible to be engaged.

Work as a Divine Command

Again, work is—from a theological perspective—primarily a divine command and to some extent human initiative (given that it serves to fulfill who human beings are).¹⁸ That is why Paul could say those who are capable but unwilling to work should not eat (2 Thess. 3:10-12). Labor, as ordained by God, is meant to improve human lives.¹⁹ For this reason, "Wealth creation without work [or without the rendering of services] is unacceptable in God's divine plan."²⁰ This fact is illustrated in God's provision of manna for the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings. Immediately they entered the Promised Land, the manna ceased falling, underscoring the need to work to earn their living.

¹⁴ John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Zondervan, Michigan 49530: Grand Rapids, , 2006), 218-219; I. U. Tanimu-Saminaka, *Exploring Theological Resources That Can Contribute to the Transformation, Recovery, Reclaiming of Human Dignity in a Gendered Development Process in Rural Communities of Africa* (Integrated Rural Community Sustainable Development (IRCSD), 2019), 74; John Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 67.

¹⁵ Tanimu-Saminaka, *Exploring Theological Resources That Can Contribute to the Transformation, Recovery, Reclaiming of Human Dignity in a Gendered Development Process in Rural Communities of Africa*, 74.

¹⁶ Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 220; Tanimu-Saminaka, *Exploring Theological Resources That Can Contribute to the Transformation, Recovery, Reclaiming of Human Dignity in a Gendered Development Process in Rural Communities of Africa*, 74.

¹⁷ J. N. Kudadjie and Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1992), 109.

¹⁸ S. B. Agang, "Work," in *African Public Theology*, ed. S. B. Agang, A. A. Forster, and H. J. Hendriks (Cumbria: HippoBooks, 2020), 82; Kudadjie and Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics*.

¹⁹ John Jusu (ed.), *African Study Bible: God's Word through African Eyes* (Chicago, IL: Oasis International Limited, 2016), 144.

²⁰ Jusu (ed.), *African Study Bible*, 144.

The ceasing of the fall of the manna just after the Israelites settled in the land of Canaan and were able to work to meet their food needs was meant to teach the people that even though YHWH is the God of providence, he requires humankind to work and earn their living. God did not provide manna for people who could work but were unwilling to work; he provided manna for people whose circumstances in the desert made them unable to cultivate crops to meet their needs. Ghanaians, in response to God's command to work, are traditionally hardworking. Ghanaians traditionally celebrate work because it determines the dignity of the community and its social, political, and economic identity. The Ghanaian culture frowns on laziness because, as the saying goes, "the only result of laziness is poverty." Everyone is expected to work in order to have a sense of belonging and to participate in sustaining the life of the community. One's harvest determines one's economic status, and so everyone is determined to work hard. This encourages people to work very hard to cater for their family and others in society. This cultural aspect serves as a good foundation for building a robust theology of work for the Ghanaian society.

Work as a God-glorifying activity

Even though people must be encouraged to engage in gainful employment, it is not every kind of work that is permitted. The work that is worth undertaking is that which glorifies God.²¹ This point serves to correct the erroneous dichotomization of work into sacred and secular. Before God, there is nothing like secular or sacred work; all works are sacred when undertaken to the glory of God. Going to the market to sell goods is no less sacred than preaching the gospel in the church. The God-glorifying purpose of work implies that work is a form of worship, and therefore relates to every aspect of human life, including human-divine, human-human and human-environment relationships.²² If work is a form of worship, then it must not only meet one's socio-economic needs but also their spiritual needs. In the contemporary Ghanaian society where economic values are controlling personal and community priorities, the worship-centered perspective of work is needed to guard people from having misplaced priorities in the world of work.

The proposition that Christians can engage only in commercial activities that glorify God contradicts such practices as engagement in betting activities, illegal mining activities, the use of chemicals for fishing, and the unhealthy use of agrochemicals for farming, among contemporary Ghanaian Christians (and non-Christians). These activities are not worth undertaking, no matter how lucrative they may be, because they end up causing serious, devastating effects on the individual, the society and the environment. Wealth creation, as this study argues later, must be done only through ethical means so as to attract God's blessings. God may not bless one's economic activity if it will end up destroying lives and the environment.

The above work ethic is illustrative in the example below. A young man was earning a lot of money working at a guest house serving food to customers. A corporate merger between the canteen and the bar brought additional responsibility to him, that is, selling alcohol to people and providing pornographic movies for guest room televisions. The conflict between his work and his Christian principles resulted in an ethical and economic crisis for this man. The man decided to leave his lucrative work with his integrity, spiritual and mental health intact, rather than partaking in the alcohol and pornographic trade. This is the kind of work ethic that Ghana needs. This does not, however, mean all liquor shops should be closed in the country. There are good reasons that people may use liquor. His religious conviction should keep him away from the pornographic trade. The point is that ethical principles are important in the workplace.

Work must not only be productive and fruitful but also transformative (Hughes 2007:68). This leads to the next aspect of our theology of work, namely, the role of work in community development.

Work as a Service to the Community

In addition, work is not only meant for the fulfilment of the worker but also for the benefit of others.²³ Work must go beyond the production of things for our basic needs to the production of things that serve

²¹ Agang, "Work," 88.

²² J. N. Kudadjie and Robert K. Aboagye-Mensah, *Christian Social Ethics* (Accra: Asempa Publishers, 1992), 105; Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 220.

²³ Jusu (ed.), *African Study Bible*, 144

other people and other creatures. Hughes argues that it is not simply working to meet our own needs to make humans distinct, but free labor, production that is excess, surpassing our needs, and creating something more than the mere reproduction of ourselves.”²⁴ It is in this sense that work is considered a divine calling to serve God and society. Naboth’s example of cultivating crops for the benefit of his family (1 Kings 21:1-16) and other such examples show that the productivity of the soil, which was the main occupation in ancient Israel, was meant to serve the needs of the community. God’s instruction to Israel to share their produce with the poor, the alien, the widow and the orphan (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-21) also attests to the need communal perspective on the benefit of work. Therefore, work must be perceived beyond the means to success and happiness to include the fact that it is a call to society’s common interest. As a form of service, work is not necessarily “paid employment”; it may be done without any remuneration. For example, one may care for the environment, offer counselling or work for the church without demanding remuneration. Work may, therefore, be defined as the “purposeful activity involving mental, emotional or physical energy, or all three, whether remunerated or not.”²⁵

Therefore, the worth of one’s work must not be judged based on how lucrative it is but by how much it serves the common interest of the community. Hence, when choosing a vocation, one does not only consider one’s capabilities and inclinations but also the possibilities of serving the interests of the community through the vocation in question. This means the choice of vocation must be guided by the love of God and for neighbor. The love fact limits the number of permissible vocations from the Christian perspective. One has to be sensitive about the impact of their work on other human beings and the environment. For example, it is unethical for one’s work to destroy the environment and thus, threaten human existence.

The overall cultural, socio-economic, political, and spiritual development of the society is a combination of the impacts of the work of all the people in the society. “It is by the devoted day-by-day service of many ordinary and unnoticed citizens that the nation achieves greatness.”²⁶ The farmer produces food for the community, the mechanic fixes the equipment for farming, the cars are used to transport food to other places, the teacher trains the children of both the farmer and the mechanic, and the physician addresses the health needs of the people in the community with the energy obtained after eating the food the farmer produced. Each one’s work (whether office work or manual work, whether physically or mentally oriented, whether it makes one’s hands dirty or not) is important and must be respected as such. As Agang puts it, “No one should have to endure discrimination because of their work” because “no type of work is inferior to any other.”²⁷ Knowing that one’s work contributes to the communal well-being gives the worker a sense of satisfaction and belonging, and a motivation to work harder.²⁸ Given the importance of everybody’s work for the overall progress of society, it stands to reason that decisions about labor must only be taken after a broad consultation of all the stakeholders involved, rather than just the management team or the governing body. Work is good. Yet, there is a need to rest. The next section deals with this.

The Principle of Rest

Earlier, the nature of work was discussed within the context of creation. It was noted that God created humankind as a working being. The fact that human industry serves as the means of providing human existential needs was also noted. Given these facts, there is a high probability that some people would become slaves to work. The purpose of this section is to deal with such a tendency by arguing for the need to rest after working. Even though hard work enhances one’s chance of becoming financially prosperous and idleness makes one poor, the finitude of humankind places some limitations on what they can do. The theology of work reminds human beings of the finitude as opposed to God’s infinitude. Humans can only work as long as they have life and strength, unlike God, who is immortal and never grows weary. Unfortunately, some Ghanaians, with the belief that hard work can give them an economic breakthrough, overwork themselves with a negative overall effect on their lives. From the theological perspective, such

²⁴ Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism*, 68.

²⁵ Tanimu-Saminaka, *Exploring Theological Resources That Can Contribute to the Transformation, Recovery, Reclaiming of Human Dignity in a Gendered Development Process in Rural Communities of Africa*.

²⁶ Nana Agyei-Kodie Anane-Agyei, *Ghana’s Brong-Ahafo Region: Story of an African Society in the Heart of the World* (Abibrem Communications, 2012), 134.

²⁷ Agang, “Work,” 87.

²⁸ John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today*, 222.

an attitude should stop because God did not intend work to be all-consuming; people must take enough rest after working enough (Gen. 2:3; Exod. 20:9-11).

Theologically, the principle of rest underlines the concept of divine providence.²⁹ The principles that guided the gathering of manna by Israel (in Exod. 16) illustrate this point. God instructed the people to gather just as much as they needed for the day, and then come the following morning to gather for that day. They were to gather their daily need of manna and not to hoard any of it for the following day, else it would get rotten. However, on the sixth day, the day before the Sabbath, they were to gather twice the daily amount so that they would keep half of it for the Sabbath when no manna fell for gathering. The principle surrounding the gathering of the manna teaches at least two principles. First, it teaches people to develop a one-day-at-a-time mentality, a principle that Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount when he asked the disciples to pray for their daily bread and later when he told them to let each day think about itself (Matt. 6:34). The one-day-at-a-time mentality not only helps people to appreciate rest but also makes people value their life more than wealth so that we are not distracted by worries and anxiety (Matt. 6:26b-27).

Secondly, God used the manna-gathering principle to teach Israel that in his economy, the provision of people's needs depends on his gracious providence rather than their struggles. Thus, even though they did not go out to the field on the Sabbath to gather any manna, God provided for their needs. The Sabbath economy, therefore, contradicts the Egyptian economy in which Israel worked daily, without rest, before having their daily provisions. The need to work and the need to rest are both underscored here. Taking rest, therefore, honors God and underscores his providence. Taking rest is God-honoring because it offers us the opportunity to build our social life through interactions with others and spiritual life by engaging in spiritual disciplines like prayer, solitude, studying the Bible and fasting, among others.³⁰ The concept of rest also means that work is not the sum and purpose of human life. To conclude, the Sabbatical principle must be central in the church's effort in restoring the world to the Christian model of work, which improves human life rather than destroys it. The principle is not the strict adherence to a six-day work week and a day's rest. The Sabbath principle is about having enough rest after work. The principle of rest is meant to deal with any tendency to idolise work. It emphasizes the need to value human life more than wealth.³¹ It is actually the precondition of all other work and its true meaning. It teaches people to say "enough is enough."

What ethical transformation, with regard to work, will catalyze Ghana's development? The next section addresses this question.

TOWARD IMPROVED WORK ETHICS

The Ghanaian attitude to work is the first area that needs transformation if Ghana is to achieve sustainable development. Here, there are three main areas to consider—the *Aban-adwuma* mentality, cultural transformation and the get-rich-quick mentality.

Reversing the Aban-Adwuma (government-business) mentality

According to Adei, most Ghanaians (including political leaders) consider Ghana as "the proverbial community goat whom no one cares about." Worse still, the country has become "*sono nam*" (elephant meat), "which everybody goes out to cut a piece for their enjoyment with no conscience as they think there is plenty to go around."³² What Adei describes above is what the study refers to as the *Aban-adwuma* (government-business) mentality, a kind of society's negative perception of the individual's workplace, where people consider public work as belonging to the government and so offer their least effort. The most prevalent ailment in many government institutions in Ghana is lateness. Even the supervisors, who are meant to serve as a check on the subordinate staff, exhibit this behavior. And as a result, many managers lack the moral courage to monitor subordinate employees' tardiness. People go to work late and so are not able to achieve the best that they can. Pilfering is also not uncommon at the workplace. Some

²⁹ Jusu (ed.), *African Study Bible*, 143.

³⁰ Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism*, 13-14; Jusu (ed.), *African Study Bible*, 144.

³¹ Hughes, *The End of Work: Theological Critiques of Capitalism*, 12.

³² Stephen Adei, "Transforming Ghana Beyond Aid: The Way Forward." *Members Journal: The Official Journal of The Institute of Chartered Accountants*, 12-17 (Accra: Institute of Chartered Accountants, 2018), 13.

employees, perceiving their workplace as their “gold mine”, steal such items as electric switches, chairs, vehicle parts, tools, and equipment from their workplace. In addition, some Ghanaian workers will not carry out their duties without receiving a bribe from their clients, and still others use government resources for their private benefits. Yet, the same people, when employed in the private sector, work better and obtain a high yield. Obviously, the *Aban-adwuma* mentality costs the nation a lot of resources and militates against development. Contrary to the *Aban-adwuma* attitude to work, Paul exhorts believers to do every work wholeheartedly as if they were doing it for God (Col. 3:23). This attitude can be dealt with if people now see work as a divine calling that must be fulfilled in the service of the community and to the glory of God.

The progress of society depends on both the government and the output of everybody’s work. Therefore, for Ghana to develop, there is a need for deliberate and consistent efforts to change the public attitude, behavior and mindset about work. Whether the policeman keeping watch to ensure peace and safety in the society; the farmer in his/her fields, clearing, sowing, harvesting; the head potter carrying people’s load from the shop to the lorry station; the shop keeper in his/she shop serving customers with goods; the bank cashier working late to close his/her daily accounts; the invigilator ensuring that examinations are written without intimidation and according to laid down principles, the man/woman working in the factory so that orders may be fulfilled; the driver conveying goods or people from place to place; the technician, laborer, or government official performing different roles at different posts; the parliamentarian debating in parliament to scrutinize proposed policies, the lawyer and judge in the courts; the doctor in his/her consulting room, or the nurse at the patient’s bedside; everyone must work must do their best whether supervised or not, whether in the public sector or in the private sector. The following quote by Ephraim Amu sums it up: “Everybody is talking of the need for a better and happier state of things, expecting the other person to change his [or her] ways and work for this better and happier state. It is not a one-man [or woman] business; it is a worldwide change, individual change of heart, attitude and outlook. I must change, you must change, the other man [or woman] must change.”³³

Cultural Transformation at the Workplace

The culture of favoritism—manifested in cronyism and nepotism—poses a significant challenge to workplace ethics and national development. In many organizations, appointments, promotions, and job opportunities are often based on personal relationships rather than merit and competence. This unethical practice not only demotivates hardworking employees but also stifles innovation, reduces efficiency, and ultimately hinders economic and social progress.

Cronyism occurs when individuals are given special privileges due to their close personal relationships with those in power, while nepotism favors family members over other qualified candidates. Both practices contribute to an unhealthy work environment where mediocrity is rewarded over excellence. When people believe that their efforts and qualifications do not determine their career progression, they lose motivation to work diligently. In such a system, meritocracy is undermined, and organizations suffer from inefficiency and underperformance.

Obviously, there is a need for attitudinal change in terms of the social context in which people work. From a theological perspective, favoritism contradicts biblical principles of justice, fairness, and integrity. The Bible warns against partiality in leadership and governance. James 2:1-9 explicitly condemns favoritism, emphasizing that God values justice and righteousness. Likewise, Proverbs 20:23 states, “The Lord detests differing weights, and dishonest scales do not please him.” This highlights God’s disapproval of biased and unfair practices. When favoritism infiltrates the workplace, it creates an unjust system that deprives individuals of opportunities they rightfully deserve and breeds resentment and division.

Addressing favoritism requires a commitment to ethical leadership and institutional reforms. Employers and managers must uphold the values of fairness, transparency, and accountability in their decision-making processes. Recruitment, promotion, and reward systems should be based on clearly defined criteria, ensuring that individuals are evaluated based on their skills, experience, and contributions

³³ Philip T. Laryea, *Patriotism and Nation Building: Perspectives from the Life and Utterances of Ephraim Amu* (Accra: Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2017), 133-134.

rather than personal connections. Organizational policies should also include mechanisms for reporting and addressing instances of favoritism to create a culture of fairness and inclusivity.

In addition, Ghanaians must overcome an inferiority complex because it prevents them from discovering their own greatness.³⁴ There is a need to develop the “I can do mentality” and offer our best in all that we do. More so, the “Village mentality” which prevents people from living the modern way needs to be overcome.³⁵ It is the “village mentality” that makes the country continue to live by the same old method even when time changes demand a change in way of life. The reliance on rainfall for agricultural purposes and the use of labor-intensive methods of production rather than using machines in 21st-century Ghana fall under this category. Things have changed and the country must adjust itself to the technological developments. Finally, there is the need to overcome superstition, fetishism and idolatry as these cannot bring about development.

Dealings with the get-rich-quick mentality

The widespread get-rich-quick mentality among contemporary Ghanaian youth, often fueled by peer influence and exposure to external cultures, undermines the biblical work ethic. Many young people aspire to become wealthy overnight without engaging in any productive venture, an attitude that is both unethical and unsustainable. Unfortunately, certain Christian pastors reinforce this mindset by claiming to possess supernatural powers to miraculously deposit money into people’s bank accounts. Additionally, prosperity preachers contribute to this phenomenon by promoting the notion that financial success is solely dependent on divine intervention, rather than diligence and hard work. They teach that donating to the church or a church leader guarantees wealth, leading some to spend excessive time in prayer meetings while neglecting productive labor.

This distortion of biblical teaching discourages believers from fulfilling God's mandate to work. When miraculous financial breakthroughs fail to materialize, some individuals turn to unethical means—such as fraud, exploitation, bribery, corruption, and embezzlement—to acquire wealth. The theology of work presented in this study stands in direct opposition to these harmful beliefs and practices. It asserts that prosperity is not the result of idleness, deception, or mere religious rituals, but rather the product of diligent work undertaken under God's guidance.

Moving forward, Ghanaians must reclaim a spirit of hard work, perseverance, and ethical industry. A return to a biblical work ethic will not only help reduce unemployment but also alleviate poverty, ensuring a more just and sustainable society. Moreover, it is incorrect to assume that poverty is a prerequisite for entering the Kingdom of God—this idea is not supported by the overall message of Scripture. Rather than passively waiting for work opportunities, individuals must cultivate entrepreneurial creativity and practical expertise, seeking ethical ways to contribute meaningfully to society. True biblical prosperity is achieved through responsible stewardship, honest labor, and a commitment to improving both human and ecological well-being.

CONCLUSION

Transforming Ghana’s work ethic is fundamental to achieving sustainable national development. This study has highlighted three major areas requiring urgent attention: the *Aban-adwuma* (government-business) mentality, the culture of favoritism, and the get-rich-quick mindset. Reversing the *Aban-adwuma* mentality calls for a paradigm shift where public service is viewed not as an opportunity for personal gain but as a divine calling for national progress. Addressing favoritism in the workplace requires a commitment to fairness, transparency, and meritocracy. Promotions, appointments, and employment opportunities should be based on competence rather than personal connections. The pervasive get-rich-quick mentality must be countered by reinforcing a biblical theology of work that upholds diligence, perseverance, and ethical industry as the legitimate paths to prosperity. While faith and divine blessings are integral to Christian life, wealth should not be pursued through deception, laziness, or unethical shortcuts. The belief that financial miracles will replace hard work has led many into spiritual complacency and, in some cases, criminal activity. Instead, Ghanaians must reclaim the biblical principle

³⁴ Paul Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy* (London: Hurst and Company, 2004), 126.

³⁵ Gifford, *Ghana’s New Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalizing African Economy*, 127.

that prosperity results from responsible stewardship and honest labor, guided by divine wisdom. To end, Ghana's future depends not on quick fixes or supernatural financial interventions but on a collective dedication to hard work, discipline, and ethical excellence.

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ABOUT AUTHOR

Isaac Boaheng holds a PhD in Religion Studies from the University of the Free State, South Africa. He lectures at the Christian Service University, Ghana, and serves as a Research Fellow at the Department of Biblical and Religion Studies, University of the Free State, South Africa. He has over hundred peer-reviewed publications.