



Luther And Calvin, And The Christian Work Ethic

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Abstrak: Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan dan mendeskripsikan hubungan antara teologi reformator dengan pandangan orang Kristen Eropa reformasi tentang hakikat gereja dalam kehidupan sebagai pengikut Yesus. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk menjelaskan dan mendeskripsikan hubungan antara teologi reformator dengan pandangan orang Eropa Kristen tentang hakikat gereja dalam kehidupan sebagai pengikut Yesus. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah kualitatif dengan teknik pengumpulan data, studi kepustakaan dan analisis data adalah deskriptif kualitatif. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa teologi panggilan Luther di segala bidang kehidupan dan teologi predestinasi, pengudusan dan pembenaran Calvin menjadi dasar perubahan etos kerja masyarakat Eropa saat itu. Mereka melihat kerja dan hasil kerja adalah bagian dari iman, oleh karena itu mereka bekerja keras, menghargai waktu dan menghargai hasil kerja atau materi. Jadi bekerja adalah bagian dari kehidupan iman. Dalam perkembangan selanjutnya, terjadi apresiasi yang berlebihan terhadap material atau kapitalisme karena sekularisasi budaya kerja yang semula merupakan bagian dari keimanan. Padahal, Kapitalisme ini tidak sesuai dengan etika Kristen.

Kata kunci: Calvin, etika Kristen, Luther, predestinasi, teologi

Abstract: The aim of this research is to explain and describe the relationship between reformer's theology and the reform of European Christians' views on the nature of the church in life as followers of Jesus. This research is going to explain and describe the relationship between reformer theology and the reform of European Christians' views on the nature of the church in life as followers of Jesus. The research method used is qualitative with data collection techniques, literature studies and data analysis is descriptive qualitative. The results showed that Luther's theology of vocations in all areas of life and Calvin's theology of predestination, sanctification and justification became the basis for changes in the work ethic of European society at that time. They see work and the results of work are part of faith, therefore they work hard, value time, and appreciate the results of work or material. Therefore, work are part of the life of faith. In later developments, there was an excessive appreciation of material or capitalism because of the secularization of work culture, which was originally part of faith. This Capitalism is not in accordance with Christian ethics.

Keywords: Calvin, Christian ethics, Luther, predestination, theology

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1. Introduction

Theologians have tried to systematize thoughts about the relationship between God and humans based on the Bible. This theology is usually abstract and has direct relationship

with human belief. However, it is often not realized that theology as something that is believed to be true can change a person's life and even society. How religion affects people's culture, sometimes can be seen in various places in the world, starting from the way of dressing in daily habits, views about work and how to use the work products artificially.

Despite showing controversy, until now Weber's view of the role of Christian ethics in the formation of the spirit of European capitalism were always interesting to be elaborated in this literature research. Because through this discourse, we can see belief manifested in the reality of life. The problem could be stated in this view point, that the effect of human believe system were manifested in their culture and practical theology. Calvin's theology, especially the doctrine of predestination according to Max Weber¹, has had a strong influence on western change and contributed greatly to the triumph of western capitalism, although this teaching cannot be applied to that effect. Then, his doctrine later were accused as the trigger the spirit of Capitalisms. And the peak of this complexity, was pointed to the reform movement which done by Luther and Calvin. This impact occurred because of a fundamental change in the work ethic of the Calvinists (particularly puritanism) which later affected western society in general. In fact, according to research and analysis by Max Weber, Calvin's teachings that have the most role in shaping a new work ethic are predestination². However, before Calvin, the reformer who both has contributed any urgent role in helping the church to form the basic pattern of Christian ethics in European Protestant circles was Martin Luther. The theology of these two reformers specifically related to the work ethic of European Protestants after the reformation to the post-industrial revolution and modern times shall be delivered as to be shown below.

2. Research Method

To approach the certainty of data and information, a method is needed that is in accordance with the subject matter being studied so that the research results can be accounted for as accurate data. This type of research to examine the theology of Luther, Calvin and specifically related to the Christian work ethic is an approach toward qualitative research. The method along this research was an effort to do the Qualitative dominantly influenced by the literature procedure study. Especially, each data in every document, which seems described sufficiently shall be utilized as the main sources or references. Practically, the data collection technique in this paper is a literature study, which done by looking for material according to relevant books, journals and articles.

¹Matthew Levering, *Predestination: Biblical and Theological Paths* (oxford: OUP Oxford, 2011), 2.

²Richard Swedberg and Ola Agevall, *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts* (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 207.

3. Result and Discussion

Martin Luther

Luther was born on 10th November in 1483 in Eisleben, Thüringen Germany. His own mother's was Margareta, and then Hans Luther was his father's name. As a young man, Luther was raised in a pious family atmosphere. After his primary education in Mansfeld and secondary education in Magdeburg Luther entered the University of Erfurt.³ When Luther had completed his studies and was preparing to pursue his legal education, he experienced an event that frightened him, so he vowed to become a monk in the future. Nowadays, Luther well known as a reformer and a theologian. Luther brought fundamental changes especially for Christians and moreover toward the world. One of Luther's very big influences according to Max Weber's analysis is the strong influence of Luther's reformation on changing the ethos of European society. "One of the most important turning points in changing the work ethic of European society was when Martin Luther introduced his basic doctrine that so famous among all Christians is his teaching about priesthood of those who are called believers."⁴

Along the Luther era, it can be seen that those who were known as spiritualists (bishops or popes), or the priests, just live their life as the other Christians in any other or higher degree live without quirks, but within their authority, administering the sacraments and punishing the guilty are still carried out for the sake of prioritizing the good. The influence of patristic and scholastic domination were influence the culture of superiority of those who were in clerical position.

Various professions such as farmers, blacksmiths, also shoemakers, even everyone is seen as a human being who should have their duties and vocations. It seems that all are equally ordained priests and bishops, and even everyone whether in his office or wherever he works, they must show benefit to others and be useful to society, so that so many types of work can all be united into one community: just like the members of the body, all serve one another.⁵ In his article entitled "To the Christian Nobility of the German Nation" as shown in the section of the amelirate of Christian society, he spoke of the dangers posed by the supreme power of the Pope and of the difficulties of the German people, both socially and spiritually. Politicians of the Church of Rome have erected a wall around themselves, namely the statement that ecclesiastical power lies above worldly power and social affairs, as well as the opinion that only the Pope can interpret scripture and the assumption that only the Pope has the right to call

³F.D. Willem, *Riwayat Hidup Singkat Tokoh-tokoh* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2003), 168.

⁴Isaacs Mark, *Centennial Ruminations on Max Weber's the Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Florida: Universal-Publishers, 2006), 56.

⁵Marthin Luther, *First Principles of the Reformation or the Ninety-five Theses and the Three Primary Works of Dr. Martin Luther* Translated into English, (Edited by Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim) Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library : 2006, p. 75

people to gather for a council. Actually, these walls were torn down by Luther.⁶ In this paper, there are theological and religious principles that were at stake in his struggle, and which later became the basis for changing the ethos of western society (according to Weber's analysis), namely that all Christians are really members of the clergy⁷. There is no special class of priests who have privileges in the church and in society. A pope or bishop is not superior to a lowly priest nor is he superior to a simple Christian even if he is a woman or a child. All offices of preaching grace are given to all believers and these positions are carried out based on the priesthood of believers.⁸

Previously in the view of the Roman Christian Church, there was a very sharp separation between priests and laity, between monasteries and the world. This separation is hierarchical, priest and monastic life are in the jurisdiction of God's grace, while secular life and work are in a much lower realm of natural law, thus priests who live in monasteries spend most of their time on spiritual activities (reading the Bible, praying, fasting, etc.) is far more nobler than the laity who live in the "world" who have to spend most of their time working.⁹ Luther broke and changed this understanding radically. He removed the hierarchical boundaries and levels with the doctrine: the priesthood of believers. "Priest" is no nobler than "lay", "monastic life" is no more holy than "worldly life", "prayer" is no more meaningful than "work". All believers are priests to themselves and to others. This means not *only Ora et Labora* but *Ora est Labora*. The right prayer is to work with full responsibility and vice versa, our help is our prayer and our worship to God.¹⁰

Faith could be manifested in work. Furthermore, regarding the nature and existence of human beings which they cannot immediately exist without doing or not doing something. Including to survive or even escape from something. This is because the reality of life never stops, as we always see empirically. Therefore, let him be pious and filled with good deeds. As a man, he can begin and in all his life and work at any moment train himself to live and serve in this faith. In this too he is left to learn and do and leave everything unfinished in his constant faith. This further helps him to discover how much work he must do, and how complete all things belong to faith; how he never dared to be lazy, for his laziness must be an exercise and a work of faith.¹¹ More concisely and simply it can be said that, nothing can happen in or around us except for the reason that it is good and meritorious. Including it can be stated that everything that happens in us must be in the design of God's peace, so that if we believe (as we should)

⁶W.J. Kooiman, *Martin Luther, doktor dalam kitab suci: reformator gereja* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2006), 79.

⁷Kooiman, 133.

⁸Eka Darmaputera, *Pergulatan kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia: teks-teks terpilih Eka Darmaputera* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2001), 80.

⁹Darmaputera, 80.

¹⁰Darmaputera, 831.

¹¹Martin Luther, *A Treatise on Good Works* (New York, USA: Open Road Media, 2020).

that everything pleases God. There are the words of the apostle Paul: "Dear brethren, all that ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all in the Name of Jesus Christ, our Lord." Now it theologically cannot be done in that Name, instead it truly can be done through faith alone. Likewise, in Romans: "We know that all things work together for good to the saints of God." Therefore, when one said that good works are forbidden when we preach faith alone, it is as if I said to a sick man: "If you had health, you would have the use of all your limbs; but without health, the works of all your limbs are nothing"; and he wanted to infer that I had forbidden the works of all his limbs; whereas, on the contrary, I mean in this case, he should first have health. for it is this state of affairs which will enable him to be able to do all the work for all the members. Thus, it can be said that faith should also be present in every form of service work, be it as skilled workers or as captains, even including those who do not have degrees or functions.

For Luther daily office is work that humans do every day. That is the service he fulfils towards God. The work is very different from before when devotion to God was actually only the work of clergy, monks and nuns. According to Luther, we must exercise our divine office not only in the monastery or church but also in the workshop, in the study, in the kitchen and in the office.¹² Working with full responsibility and discipline is prayer and worship. This view not only does it eliminate the feeling that secular work is something that is not good for a true Christian. But it is also beginning to develop a general awareness that each of them accepts God's call for their duties in society which should be carried out in sincere obedience to Him. Even lowly work becomes something that is honourable in the sight of God. Worldly life is no longer seen as something to be shunned and avoided, but must be faced. The world is a place to carry out God's calling. Working for a living is an honourable act in the sight of Allah. People who are intentionally poor because they don't work are people who don't heed His call.¹³ He does not have to be given alms but is invited to work, "for if someone does not want to work, he must not eat" (II Tes. 3:10).

However, the blessings or the results of the work ought to be shared with others in need. Saint John said: "He that hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and *shutteth* up his bowels of compassion from him, how *dwelleth* the love of God in him?" And Christ: "He that *desireth* of thee, given to him"— that is, to him in need; in this case it is certainly not meant for people who are always lazy, or those who always live extravagantly; and what is generally seen are those who are classified as beggars. Ironically, even in our own consciousness, every gift that is intended for them in large numbers turns out to be often not helpful at all, and actually makes them even more deprived of the power and talent of God's blessing. Whereas as a creation of God, when someone is really poor, then all forms of attention and kindness should be given to him

¹²Kooimaan, *Martin Luther, Doktor dalam kitab suci: reformator gereja*, 133.

¹³Darmaputera, *Pergulatan kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia*, 106-107

properly and wholeheartedly, according to the abilities we have. Basically, all believers should never forget what the great narration written in the Bible: "He that hath two coats, let him part with one;" meaning all kinds of clothing that a person needs, according to his circumstances and calling, also for credit if necessary. Likewise, with the "daily bread", it must be recognize that various forms of attention and proper care for the body must indeed be devoted to it. As well as that by "the daily bread," it should be acknowledge that various forms of proper attention and care for the body should indeed be devoted to it.

Luther also emphasized respect for time. Time is a very important grace of Allah and should not be wasted. As it is often known that it is said, opportunity has a forelock, but is bald in the back. Let it be so because it is God himself who designed this through his work in this world. Just like a farmer who should be diligent and diligent in sowing his barley and wheat when the time is approaching for the Passover. Because if he put it off to Michaelmas, it would be too late. Likewise, when the apples are ready to be harvested, they must be plucked from the tree, because otherwise the harvest will be damaged. Such is the risk of the habit of procrastination whose results are as detrimental as working too hastily. There is my servant Wolf: when four or five birds fall into the bird's nest, he will not take them away, but says: O, I will stay until more come, then they all fly away, and he gets nothing. Opportunity is a big deal. Terence said well: I came on time, which is the main thing of all.¹⁴

More specifically Luther's theology of work as a "vocation". This nickname in English (German) term is called "*Beruf*". In simple terms, the teaching about this vocation is that it is not only when a priest or a monastic is living (monastic) that he becomes a servant of God and carries out God's call. Everyone receives a call from God. The believer's whole life is in carrying out that calling. The call itself is God's call to everyone to do the best work in this world, whatever the job is a form of a call from God.¹⁵ Just as believers can relate directly to God, so God directly calls His people through their respective professions to proclaim God's grace. When a believer carries out his work with the appreciation that he is carrying out God's call, it means that at that time he is answering His call. Through the work of each human being God gives a mandate for a great mission in His plan. As Luther said, "God will be milking the cows through you".¹⁶ People who truly believe and love Allah do charity by themselves because believers love to serve Allah. God measures not only prayers but also daily work.¹⁷

¹⁴Martin Luther and Alexander Chalmers, *The Table Talk of Martin Luther... - Primary Source Edition* (Wyoming: BiblioLife, 2013), 60.

¹⁵Luther and Chalmers, 106-107.

¹⁶John R. W. Stott and John Wyatt, *Issues Facing Christians Today: 4th Edition* (Michigan: Zondervan, 2011), 223.

¹⁷Darmaputera, *Pergulatan kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia*, 106-107.

The theological impact of Luther's teachings, especially regarding "the priesthood of believers" and "vocations", is a change in the attitude of believers towards work in the world, accompanied by a shift in attitudes towards worldly life. Work to earn a living becomes an opportunity to serve God. Faith is directly related to daily life, the contradiction between earthly and heavenly life is reduced.¹⁸ Protestants do good works not to seek heavenly rewards but to prove and manifest their faith. According to some scholars, Luther's teachings on vocations have brought about fundamental changes but are still static. On the one hand, the positive impact of this teaching is: that people will sincerely accept their job or position and then carry it out with full responsibility because that is what God has called them to do, on the other hand, the negative side is that a person will think that he has to stay in his job because that is what he has decreed. God, so that he does not try to get a more suitable job.¹⁹

However, regardless of expert views, Luther has laid the foundation for changes in the work ethic of Protestant Christians in particular and European society in general. The ethics he teaches have succeeded in becoming the ethos of society, precisely because they are no longer limited to certain people but all believers. If an ethic has succeeded in becoming the ethos of society then it will affect everyone in the society concerned, regardless of whether they believe in or understand the theological basis behind it.²⁰ Luther's teachings were later systematized and concretized by Calvin.

John Calvin

Johannes Calvin was born on June 10, 1509 as Jean Cauvin in the city of Noyon, Northern France. Following the custom among educated people at that time, the name Cauvin was later Latinized to Calvinus. Calvin later became known as the leader of the reform movement in Switzerland. Calvin in some ways also often considers himself a disciple of Martin Luther. Nevertheless, Calvin was able to show a rare exegetical ability in himself that truly deserves to be called the bearer of wider insight and explorer of deeper and pure ideas as the cause of the Reformation of the church. Like Luther and the other reformers, Calvin's emphasis was that man is born into the world already under the wrath of God. So it can be said that everyone wants to try to ascend to the knowledge of God through work, effort, devotion, or various forms of speculation, and their own pious experiences make futile efforts. Thus, Calvin warns emphatically that no good can come from any approach to the Father other than the incarnate Son, that is, through God's grace alone.

Indeed what is at the centre of Calvin's interest, it is also what has made his ideas more relevant than anything he might accidentally and unintentionally do to herald major changes in Western civilization. Calvin's obsession, the closest that I can tell, was

¹⁸Christiaan de Jonge, *Apa itu Calvinisme?* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1998), 321-322

¹⁹Darmaputera, *Pergulatan kehadiran Kristen di Indonesia*, 831-832

²⁰Darmaputera, 107.

the Father tender mercy not only delivered to western believers, but also it shown also toward sinners in the Son and through the Spirit.²¹ Calvin gave a special colour to the piety produced by the reformation in general. As the second generation after Luther, Calvin was quite much influenced by Luther's thinking. Calvin governed things that Luther had not, (such as the organization of the church). He also draws consequences that have not been drawn by Luther (such as the consequences of justification by God for the life of the justified). Calvin was very meaningful in compiling Luther's ideals in a reform movement that was able to defend itself against attempts to destroy and dominate it.²² It can be said that Calvin gave a concrete application to Luther's teachings so that they really touched the joints of human life. If Luther launched a doctrinal reform, the reforms carried out by Calvin prioritized the reform of life, both ecclesiastical life and public life in general.

In Calvin's view, both sanctification and justification are the fruit of fellowship with Christ that is realized when humans begin to believe in Christ. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that creates the relationship between man and Christ. This gift of faith is twofold and consists in the renewal of life which is manifested in the works of God and the deliverance from punishment for sin through Christ. But it is justification that guarantees salvation, not sanctification. Because he believed just like Luther that even the best works done by believers could not free them from God's punishment. Humans cannot perfectly follow God's will. In justification, human good works are considered righteous by God not because of their quality (which still does not meet divine standards) but because of Christ.

That's why, if there are exceptions to the discourse of belief in work, what we mean is only that deep in the Christian heart and thought should not fall back into the service orientation of work as an aid or an effort to gain salvation. Nevertheless, Christian theology should completely rethink the free promise of justification from God alone. However, all believers were forbid to affirm, bear and carry on this faith with signs of God's mercy on him. Because if humans are invited to remember all the graces that God has previously given us, even being given continuously then it is similar to the parable of the rays of the divine face, through which every believer is given the ability to be able to see the highest light of His goodness. This is manifestly visible and visible thanks to God's gift to humans, namely through the fruit of good deeds. Good changes and growth like this show that the Holy Spirit has changed a person. not by good works but only by grace.

Therefore, when believers feel their faith strengthened by an awareness of integrity, and have feelings of joy, it is only because the fruit of their calling assures them

²¹Michael Horton, *Calvin at 500: Does He Still Matter?*, *Modern Reformation Journal*, July 2009, volume 18, p.3-4

²²*Ibid*, 10-11.

that God has accepted them in a place among His children.²³ Sanctification is still based on justification. About the glory of God Calvin attaches great importance to the new birth (regeneratio) and sanctification (sanctificatio) which must accompany the justification of sinners (justificatio). The justified man is obliged to show his faith in deeds that are pleasing to God.

One of Calvin's most important teachings is Predestination. This doctrine has had a far-reaching influence on Calvinists. In his book *Institutio*, Calvin explains what is meant by Predestination. Predestination doctrine represents the purpose of God as absolute and unconditional. theologically, the perspective of God who is the great and mighty King of the universe, it is He who has determined the course of nature and with his authority has directed the course of history, from big things to trivial things even the smallest details. In His omnipotence, it is seen that all His Decisions are eternal and forevermore, unchanging, holy, full of wisdom, and in truly sovereign authority. It does not just refer to the physical world but extends to every event in human history from creation to judgment. This is noteworthy because it includes all the activities of the saints and angels in heaven and the damned and the demons in hell. Owes its existence to His creative and sustaining power, which always sustains in all circumstances. It is in this kind of mind that control or control over all of God's providence takes effect and is given where everything is hastened to the end of God's decree; and the goal is , "One far-off divine event. Toward which the whole creation move."²⁴

As most, Christians acknowledge the Predestination which define as the decree of God by which He determines for Himself what He wills will happen to each person. For not everyone is created equal; but for one is determined eternal life for the other eternal punishment. As just as the person was created for one purpose or another, he is said to be predestined for life or for death. Calvin, was the brilliant and systematic theologian of the Reformation, put it this way

: "Predestination we call the eternal decree of God, by which He has determined in Himself, what He would have to become of every individual of mankind. For they are not all created with a similar destiny; but eternal life is foreordained for some and eternal death for others. Every man, therefore, being created for one or the other of these ends, we say he is predestinated either to life or to death."²⁵ And this predestination is not only revealed by God in the individual, but he also shows it as an example in all Abraham's descendants ...those whom He chose this decision based on free grace, regardless of whether they deserve it... We further state that in the elect, the call is evidence of their election. That then justification is the second sign that reveals it

²³John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 536.

²⁴Lorraine Boettner, *The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination* (Michigan: Primedia E-launch LLC, 1951), 12.

²⁵Boettner, 13.

until the glory which is its fulfilment is achieved. But just as God marks his elect with calling and justification, so also for those who are rejected He closes off the knowledge of His name or sanctification by His spirit.²⁶

This article will not question the theological meaning of this doctrine, but what will be seen is the impact of the appreciation of faith it causes. The impossibility of knowing whether a person was elected or not, is a transcendental dominion, therefore the doctrine of "election" is the absolute and secret authority of God, caused the Calvinists to be anxious and anxious about his salvation. This indecision leads them to check themselves for signs of election. Firm faith and good works are considered as signs of election, because faith and good works are the fruits of justification. Because of this development the doctrine of predestination became so important not only for theology but also for the life of the church.²⁷ About sanctification and justification, Calvin emphasized that believers should pursue the holiness of life. The person who is chosen as a saint must prove in his life that he was chosen. If he is lazy he must be invited, among others, with church discipline. If he doesn't want to improve himself, he's forced to doubt whether he's elected. This tendency is seen in the puritans. The main emphasis is placed on practical piety, that is, expressions of faith in the conduct of life. For the puritans, there is not a single act that is separated from the will of God. Therefore the rules of puritan life are very strict with very high self-discipline; what stands out and is much talked about is the puritan work ethic.²⁸ Puritans are known for being hard workers, living frugally and simply, and avoiding things that bring mere pleasure. They do this to train themselves through "assessment in the world".

Puritans choose this lifestyle to glorify God. They work hard because work is seen as a task that God calls them to. People are called to glorify God through daily work. For this reason, puritans try to obey their calling as best they can through hard work, thoroughness, and honesty. Poverty is not rejected as a reality of life for many people but considers poverty due to laziness a sin. Useless luxuries are also rejected.²⁹ In his teachings Calvin always emphasizes the dangers of wealth for the soul and underlines that suffering, including poverty, is not God's curse but an opportunity to grow in faith, if people succeed in their work it is thanks to God, but it is not for pride but to be shared with fellow human beings in need any help.³⁰

One should strive to earnestly live a holier life than before. The word used in trying to live more righteously is "practice". The Christian life is a "continuous exercise" to resist sin and live according to God's will. The word practice referred to here is none

²⁶Yohanes Calvin, *Institutio [Pengajaran Agama Kristen]: Pengajaran agama Kristen*, trans. Winarsih (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 2008), 196.

²⁷Jonge, *Apa itu Calvinisme?*, 64-65

²⁸Jonge, 338

²⁹Jonge, 338-339

³⁰Jonge, 328

other than the word "ascetic" (monastic) which has the same meaning but is specifically used for monastic life. Believers are called to practice a new life in the world.

According to Calvin, God commands each person to pay attention to his calling in every action during his life. God has set obligations for each person according to their way of life. It is called calling; with greater willingness, the dignitaries and the government will carry out their duties, the head of the family will carry out their obligations, each person in their way of life will endure the unpleasant, the difficult, the sad, the boring if they believe that everyone is burdened by God, but what will be of great consolation is that as long as we are obedient to our calling, there is no work, however small and lowly, that will not shine and be valued in the sight of God.³¹

Pros and Cons of Protestant Ethics and Weber Capitalism

Protestant Ethics

The main topic Weber meant by the Protestant Christian ethic, referred primarily to puritan groups such as Calvinists, Pietists, Methodists, and Baptists. all of which are adherents of a world-oriented work ethic, which involves working hard to minimize the use of benefits, (boon/profits/returns) while pursuing benefit accumulation and the advantage of the investment. According to Weber the principle of such an Ethos is indeed derived from Protestant doctrine, which is could be summarized in three topics; those are the concept of vocation, the doctrine of destiny, and worldly asceticism.³²

As is generally acknowledged in the Protestant tradition, that basically the concept of vocation actually refers to the basic idea that the highest form of one's moral obligation is aimed at fulfilling his various obligations/debts in this world. In social philosophy, according to Weber, this concept was not found, whether in ancient times, including not found in the format of Catholic theology in the middle Ages. Thus, it can be concluded that this basic concept is purely a product of the Reformation carried out by Protestants. This basic concept creates a new projection of individual religious behavior, as well as communal behavior in their daily life and world. This clearly contradicted Catholic ideals about the concept of monastic life at the time. The origins of this concept already existed in Luther's previous teachings, but according to Weber, it was then the Calvinists who confirmed this concept of calling and developed it rapidly and massively in various puritan groups, and more specifically the Calvinists. That is why (for writers/researchers) put forward Weber as the person who is considered as the main character who proposes and grows most of the highlights in this analysis.³³

At a later stage, the concept or idea of this vocation then refers to the second and well-known concept of Calvin's teachings, namely the doctrine of predestination

³¹Calvin, *Calvin*, 161-162.

³²Max Weber, *Etika Protestan dan Semangat Kapitalisme*, (translated by, Jakarta, Pustaka Prometheus, 2000), 116.

³³Max Weber, 118.

Calvinism. This teaching confirms the belief that the fate and status of one's salvation in the afterlife has been determined by His authority. So basically all humans no one knows how their safety status is. Including the righteous themselves, will never be able to know correctly about their final status, i.e. whether they will be ranked among those who are saved or whether they are in a cursed status. Furthermore, uncertainty as a consequence of this thought/doctrine, on the other hand gave rise to psychological anxiety and various forms of self-anxiety among Europeans—especially in England—in the 16th and 17th centuries. Worry and anxiety arise only through one question that is "Am I among the people who will be saved or vice versa?" then, since no one can know his predestination status, then a Presbyterian, who became the successor of John Calvin's puritanism, then developed Calvin's teaching of predestination so that people can begin to understand or at least be able to know the characteristics of people who are saved in the afterlife. For Presbyterians, the consequences of Calvin's teachings are manifested by the accumulation of wealth and the reinvestment of one's profits. This is done in the context of the progress of the Jama'at of Allah. So this is one of the real characteristics or forms that a person is included among the chosen people who have been previously determined. The eschatological consequences give birth to the understanding that God will only give abundant grace to everyone He will save. The further effect of this teaching then led the Europeans to their own (subjective) conclusion that through the production of great wealth from a person for a community it can be considered and even believed to be a sign that God is pleased to grant salvation to that individual. By itself subjectively he believes that his achievements show that he is the 'chosen' person.³⁴

Furthermore, there was a development of this teaching, which teaches that someone who strives in this doctrine then becomes rich, then this person shows evidence or signs in this world that they already have salvation in the hereafter. The social implication is that every pious person should work harder and harder in order to make a lot of profit and accumulate wealth. These marks and statuses are pursued at all costs to ensure that they themselves are part of those who are saved. Through hard work in order to have wealth is an ethos that is embodied in Protestant principles for example, "every time that is not spent working is an hour that is lost in the context of serving the glory of God", or with the adage "time is money, thus Time is very valuable and should not be wasted. For Puritans influenced by Calvin's teachings of predestination, "wasting or wasting time is essentially the deadliest form of sin." What is concerning is the perception that socializing is a form of wasting/wasting time, including hanging out, or also that the need for sleep is more than medically necessary which deserves a moral condemnation. Weber in this case considers that, when worldly work is transformed into recommended spiritual work or actions. Then the existence of

³⁴Jack Babalet, Weber, *Passion and Profit, 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism'* in Context (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press, 2008), 46.

monasticism is even opposed, and this concept is very strongly visible in the teachings and movements of the puritans.³⁵

Therefore, it can be said that at this time, saving and accumulating profits back into surplus capitalization characterizes the existence of loyalty to God's great plan (predestination) for humans. The predestination teaching crystallized in Weber's approach that all wealth comes from God's hands and should be used to build God's Kingdom which is witnessed through a prosperous and materially successful life. So, even if the possession of wealth is obtained, but if it is used lavishly, stuck enjoying it without calculation, then this is seen as a despicable act. The view above shows that wealth is good, but if it was squandered then ethically it is seen as something bad, especially when it leads a person to a life of luxury or just for his own pleasure. An extravagant lifestyle is considered, according to Weber's view, which is rooted in the teachings of Calvin's predestination as an obstacle to the goal of creating the kingdom of God on earth. In fact, the more wealth, the more difficult it is for a person to bear the burden of the temptation to use that wealth. Thus, truly pious people will definitely practice a frugal lifestyle and have the habit of saving money in the amount that is necessary. They in their daily life will always try to limit the amount of consumption (especially goods with lux brands). It could be said that they will not spend more money than they should pay on certain obligations. This simple way of life shows the influence of the ascetic views (in early to medieval church history) of the puritans. In their lives and beliefs, they do seek wealth with hard work, but not as a means of satisfaction or fulfillment of material needs, but oriented to the spirituality of simplicity.

The Spirit of Capitalism

In the history of the development of the Protestant ethic, it can be seen that the lifestyle of the hermits and/or monks which was very unique and distinctive was then practically and theologically adopted by several puritan groups that existed at that time. The influence of this lifestyle of puritanism has mainly penetrated the lifestyle and spirituality of the Presbyterians, Methodists, and Baptists, and especially the Quakers. And this lifestyle increasingly spread to several communities in New England (United States), the Netherlands, and England starting in the sixteenth century. Concretely, the teachings of this church become more evident when the congregation practices a lifestyle that limits consumption, but it was also combined with the spirit of pursuing and accumulating wealth. The obvious practical fruits and results that become the logical consequence are the accumulation of capital that continues to accumulate and develop continuously (compounding).³⁶

³⁵Jack Babalet, 76.

³⁶Max Weber, *Etika Protestan dan Semangat Kapitalisme*, 227-278.

As Weber's basic view is, the Protestant ascetic lifestyle that is become an important factor toward the growth and development of the spirit of capitalism and makes it the strength to continue to accumulate all available resources. The structure in society was automatically influenced because it is driven by the theological spirit of every Protestantism to change the structure of society in the context of realizing the Kingdom of God. In this case, Weber honestly shows that how strong the influence of the Protestant-Calvinist ethic was with the success of the Dutch and English in controlling the world economy in the 18-19 centuries. From the point of view of social structure, Weber himself stated that the fact that the widespread influence of the puritan view had resulted in the growth and development of a rational bourgeois-style economic lifestyle. This is the most important impact for Weber because it has implications for the birth of a modern economy in Europe. Weber proved that the basic elements of the spirit of modern capitalism exist in history. And not only that, but gave an influence on the rapid development of modern culture in Europe which, according to Weber, was different from other places where has not been indoctrinated by Calvin's predestination teachings.³⁷

Critical Note

The simple relationship between religion and the founders of capitalism on objections and counter-examples. In essence, this new wealth and power represented a shift from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, which had its political roots in the Italian wars and the long-term rise of the Ottoman Empire. It brought dire social and economic catastrophe to the Christian coastal region of the Mediterranean. Another comparison is the strike is the economic backwardness of Reformed Protestant Scotland or Transylvania. It shows that the prosperity in England and the Netherlands arose not because they were well-governed Calvinist societies, but because from the mid-seventeenth century they had reluctantly taken root in religious pluralism alongside the privileged church. Protestant Dissenters in Stuart England found the best means of social progress available to them. Restricted from political power, ecclesiastical office, or law, they turned to commerce and manufacture. One strong objection to the notion of a structural or causal relationship between Reformed Protestantism and capitalism stems from a further, highly dubious relationship that is often made between Protestantism in general and individualism. Individualism is seen as one of the basic components of the capitalist ethos. Protestantism, considered disbandment of community and promoting the kind of individualism embodied in Luther's apocryphal exclamation, "Here I stand; I can't do anything else." But in truth Calvinism is a faith centered on the Eucharist and therefore community minded. The resulting society forms one of the most powerful and integrated expressions of community that Europe has ever seen.

³⁷Jack Babalet, Weber, *Passion and Profit*, 32.

The “Spirit of Capitalism” debate shows the sensitivity we have to place theology in its context before without reason and consequence. Reforms and counter-reforms always interact from their aspects and the society in which they operate. Likewise, we must not forget that theology is an independent variable, capable in the Reformation of bringing about major transformations in society and behavior. We do not need to fall into the trap of accusing or judging Weber, despite the controversy and much criticism leveled at this basic idea and his ideas. What really needs to be learned is that Weber himself never intended to use a one-sided idealistic analysis of historical explanations as a substitute for a one-sided "materialistic" analysis. However, in essence, Weber really wants to get out of this deterministic view, whether it is a materialism view or an idealistic perspective. For Weber, the two might work together. Calvin's teachings, more or less, can be concluded as the root of a lifestyle that has a Protestant spirituality, which was further crystallized by Weber's study of Calvin's teachings.

4. Conclusion

The ability to work is a blessing from God for the world. The Christian work ethic is rooted in the image of God, God works, and/or as Jesus also did. Work is a basic requirement for existence that is unique to humans, meaning that in realizing its existence, humans must work. "All cultural values can only be produced and maintained by work". On the other hand, the order or form and system of human life as workers determine the form and cultural order as well. The Christian work ethic is closely related to the Christian faith (theology) which comes from the Bible. When a believer carries out his work with the appreciation that he is carrying out God's call, it means that at that time he is answering His call. Through the work of each human being, God gives a mandate for a great mission in His plan. Although it does not contribute to salvation, because salvation is solely a gift from God through Jesus Christ, but work is related to sanctification and justification. Luther and Calvin both are the church reforms, they insisted that believers should pursue the holiness of life. The person who is chosen must prove in his life that he was chosen.

The Christian work ethic ought to advocate hard work, smart work, respect for time and material things. But in the case of the worship of capital (capitalism), this value does not come from Christianity, but it was caused by the dynamic tension between people desire and cultural changes. But it's pity, the church also trapped into depravity. Positive values in the Protestant Christian work ethic that are sourced from the Bible change the way believers view the nature of work, thereby changing their work practices and ultimately bringing about changes in culture.

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