

## ***The Contemporary Theological Project***

# **Work, The Bible, Workers, and Theologians: Elements of a Workers' Theology<sup>1</sup>**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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What does it mean to construct a genuine theology of work? This essay discusses the elements involved in developing a theology of work that is the product of workers themselves. The usual role of the professional theologian as the expert who uses the insights of others is analyzed and critiqued. A rather different role for the theologian emerges within a process in which the experience, faith, biblical interpretations, and interests of workers are fundamental.

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### **Introduction**

It seems to me that many people concerned with a theology of work have been moving gradually towards at least one very important conclusion. The conclusion is this: a genuine theology of work will have to be a worker's theology, that is to say, a theology constructed by workers and for workers – a theological reflection of workers upon their experience of work and their experience of struggle. This does not mean that the professional theologian, biblical scholar, or pastor will have no role to play in the construction of a theology of work but that they will have a subordinate role to play. To say that a genuine theology of work must be constructed by Christian workers and not expert theologians raises a host of

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<sup>1</sup> This article is reprinted, with permission, from James R. Cochrane and Gerald O. West, *The Threefold Cord: Theology, Work and Labour* (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 1991). See also ICT Church and Labour Research Group. 1991. "Workers, the Church and the Alienation of Religious Life." In *The Threefold Cord: Theology, Work and Labour*. Ed. James R. Cochrane and Gerald O. West. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.