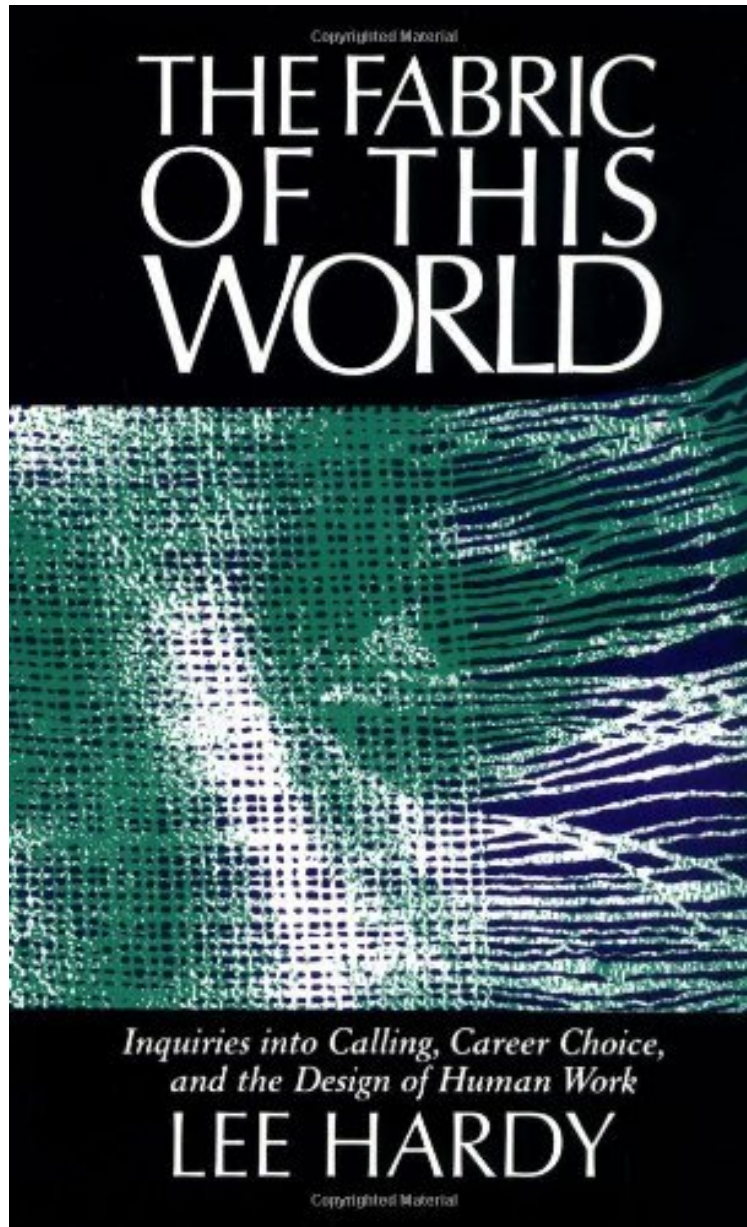


# The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work

Lee Hardy

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Lee Hardy : The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Fabric of This World: Inquiries into Calling, Career Choice, and the Design of Human Work:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Superb  
By Justin Coulson  
The idea of a calling received newfound modern attention in Bellah et al's (1985) "Habits of the Heart". Building on this brilliant beginning, careers literature has boomed in recent years as researchers and careers counsellors have attempted to find ways for people to find greater meaning and purpose in their careers. Hardy's "Fabric of this World" is a stellar review of the history of calling and vocation, turning a challenging history into a pleasing page-turner that I read in no time at all. Hardy's "Fabric" was published only six years after Bellah's seminal work, and provides a deep foundation that puts "Habits of the Heart" in context, but also offers a wonderfully solid theoretical platform from which research in recent times has launched. That this book was written before we had any of the research knowledge that we currently enjoy is a credit to the detailed and high quality research Hardy put into creating "Fabric". While the final chapter deals with 1990's management theory a little too much for my liking, the historical review and discussion of how we find meaning and purpose in work through a 'service' prism was edifying. I highly recommend this book. Simple, succinct, satisfying.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Thoughtful  
Treatise on the Lost Concept of Vocation  
By Aleithia  
Here is an excerpt from pages 97-99 I read today. I think it speaks for itself."... the constant temptation is to evaluate a job solely on the basis of salary, security, status, and satisfaction -- all, oddly enough, benefits which accrue directly to ourselves. Certainly adequate pay, financial stability, a measure of social dignity, and a sense of vocational fulfillment are significant considerations in applying for jobs. But the most important consideration for the Christian is service. Those who belong to the household of faith, Calvin counsels, should "choose those employments which yield the greatest advantage to their neighbors." As Christians, we are obliged to evaluate a job by its actual social content -- the way in which it benefits, or harms, others. For God "let us in this world," Calvin adds, "on the condition that every one of us should consider wherein he may be able to help such as have need of him." Because of the effects of sin upon the institutional shape and social direction of work, we cannot automatically assume that all existing occupations are equally legitimate, nor can we assume that the highest paying ones are the ones that fill the greatest and most important needs. Nor can job satisfaction serve as an infallible guide to the right occupation. Much is made these days of self-fulfillment. We must to our own selves be true. When it comes to work, we are inclined to think that jobs exist primarily for our sake, to assist us in the realization of our selves. This is what we expect from a good job. If it happens that others are served or edified in the process, then so be it -- we will count it as a happy by-product. If, however, we find our work unsatisfying, then even if we are serving others in it, we take ourselves to be entirely justified in quitting. The Christian understanding of work does not deny that job satisfaction is a good and valuable thing. But job satisfaction cannot, for the Christian, serve as the sole or even primary criterion by which a job is evaluated. For an occupation must be first considered in terms of how it provides a fitting place for the exercise of one's gifts in the service of others. If job satisfaction comes along with the work, then one must count that as a blessing and be thankful. But it cannot be a goal. "The greatest reward of faithfulness to vocation," writes Barth, is to be able to devote ourselves to our concern not only with interest but with desire and love, with gladness that we are what we are. But this is a reward which we cannot expect nor demand, and at which we are not to aim. Our task is to do justice to what is demanded at the place which we have occupied, whether gladly or otherwise. Yet these may not be absolute alternatives. There will always be exceptional cases of men who can gladly fulfill their sphere of operation from first to last and in all its dimensions; just as there will always be those who do so with the greatest reluctance. For most of us the reality will lie somewhere between. We shall have much cause for sighing, yet also for joy, and visa versa. There will be much to make us glad but also much to depress us." These are hard words of advice. They suggest that making the best decision about what to do with one's life may involve a degree of personal sacrifice, even self-denial. But behind these hard words lies the exquisite paradox of the gospel message: those who seek to gain the world will lose themselves in the process, while those who deny themselves for the sake of Christ will gain themselves back again a hundredfold. This ground rule of the kingdom of heaven, plus Christ's identification with the poor and need of the world, should make the overall vocational direction of our lives disturbingly clear. "This book has provoked more thoughtful discussion about the nature of work (with co-workers and fellow Christians) than any treatise I've read.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A true comprehensive view of work.  
By Alexander L. Hood  
Lee Hardy gives a fascinating exploration of work, the origins, and the movements that lead up to now. Without context, our calling and understanding of work, even for God, will remain hollow. Lee Hardy takes the reader back into the ages, and into modern day. While intellectual, it is easy to read, stimulating, and brings a wide scope of perspective. While he is an evangelical christian, he has a great open view of how each era, and labor movement, had some good and bad points. In this economic climate, it's a good read to understand where America's roots came from. And I appreciated his exhaustive research.

An in-depth historical, philosophical, theological--and practical--exploration of work from an evangelical perspective. Hardy discusses several historical views of work from the ancient Greeks onward, highlighting the Christian concept of vocation as articulated by Luther and Calvin; these expositions lead to practical applications regarding the personal issue of career choice and the important (but often neglected) social issue of job design.

From Library Journal Hardy looks creatively at the meaning of work according to Greek, medieval, Renaissance, Marxian, and Freudian perspectives, then at Luther's view and subsequent Calvinist development and modification, concluding with contemporary Roman Catholic convergence. The second half of the book applies the theory to personal career choice and social job design; it then reviews seven management theories and ends with perceptive remarks about combining people-oriented choices and profit choices. Highly recommended. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. Theology Today "This book is useful for those who seek to understand and interpret work in the modern world. It gives a realistic understanding of the complexity of the workplace and the complexity of working. . . It raises both the personal and the social and systematic issues surrounding work. It addresses those looking to enter the world of work, those already at work, those whose work is not paid work or employment work, and those who have responsibility for the form and character of the workplace."