



Biblical Foundations of Professional Commitment: A Study of Philippians 1:6 in Christian Religious Education Teaching on SMKN 1 Mantangai

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the biblical foundations of professional commitment in Christian Religious Education (CRE) teaching through a theological and pedagogical analysis of Philippians 1:6. Grounded in a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), this research synthesizes interdisciplinary scholarship in biblical studies, Christian education, theology of vocation, and teacher professionalism to explore how Pauline theology informs sustained professional commitment among CRE teachers. Philippians 1:6, which affirms God's faithfulness in completing the good work He has begun, is interpreted as a key theological resource for understanding professional perseverance, spiritual motivation, and vocational identity in Christian education. The review findings indicate that professional commitment in CRE is not limited to contractual obligations or technical competencies, but is deeply shaped by theological convictions regarding divine calling, stewardship, and participation in God's ongoing work. The literature consistently demonstrates that teachers who integrate biblical perspectives into their professional identity exhibit stronger intrinsic motivation, ethical integrity, and resilience, particularly in minority and vocational school contexts. This is highly relevant for settings such as SMKN 1 Mantangai, where the number of Christian students and teachers is limited, and where sustaining spiritual and professional consistency presents distinct challenges. The study contributes theoretically by positioning Philippians 1:6 as a foundational text for conceptualizing faith-based professionalism in Christian education. Practically, it suggests that CRE teacher development programs and school leadership practices should intentionally incorporate biblical reflection on vocation and perseverance. Such integration can strengthen long-term professional commitment, enhance spiritual formation, and support holistic educational practices rooted in Scripture.

Keywords: *Biblical Foundations, Christian Religious Education, Professional Commitment*

INTRODUCTION

Professional commitment is widely recognized as a crucial factor influencing teacher effectiveness, ethical responsibility, and long-term sustainability in the teaching profession. In educational research, professional commitment is commonly associated

with teachers' dedication to their vocation, persistence in facing challenges, and willingness to invest effort beyond minimum institutional requirements (Day, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), however, professional commitment is not merely a psychological or organizational construct. It is also deeply theological, grounded in a spiritual understanding of vocation, perseverance, and faithfulness in service. In Christian theology, work, including teaching, is often interpreted as participation in God's ongoing redemptive activity in the world. This theological perspective reframes professional commitment as a response to divine calling rather than solely as contractual or institutional obligation (Wolters, 2005; Wright, 2010). For CRE teachers, this means that professional dedication is shaped not only by educational standards and policies but also by biblical convictions that inform their identity, motivation, and sense of purpose. As such, professional commitment in CRE must be understood as both a pedagogical and a spiritual reality. Philippians 1:6 "*He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus*" (NRSV) offers a particularly rich theological foundation for reflecting on professional commitment. This verse emphasizes divine initiative, perseverance, and eschatological hope. Scholarly interpretations of Philippians highlight that Paul frames Christian life as participation in God's ongoing work, sustained by divine faithfulness rather than human effort alone (Fee, 1995; O'Brien, 1991). In this theological framework, commitment is not grounded primarily in personal strength or institutional pressure, but in trust in God's continuing work within and through believers.

Applied to Christian education, Philippians 1:6 provides a lens for understanding professional commitment as a form of faithful participation in God's mission. CRE teachers are not only responsible for delivering curriculum; they are also participants in a spiritual process in which God is actively shaping both teachers and students. This perspective challenges purely instrumental views of teaching and highlights perseverance, faithfulness, and hope as central dimensions of professional identity (Wright, 2010). In this sense, professional commitment becomes a theological virtue as much as a professional competency. Contemporary literature on teacher professionalism emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, moral purpose, and identity in sustaining long-term commitment (Day, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). These themes resonate strongly with biblical perspectives on vocation and faithfulness. Palmer (1998) argues that authentic teaching flows from the inner life of the teacher, suggesting that professional endurance is closely linked to spiritual and moral identity. For CRE teachers, this inner life is explicitly shaped by Christian faith, biblical interpretation, and theological reflection. Thus, Philippians 1:6 provides a meaningful scriptural anchor for understanding how spiritual conviction supports professional resilience and dedication. In vocational high school contexts such as SMKN 1 Mantangai, the issue of professional commitment is particularly significant. Vocational education settings often involve complex challenges, including diverse student needs, limited resources, and high expectations for practical outcomes. For CRE teachers working in such contexts, sustaining professional commitment requires not only pedagogical competence but also spiritual resilience and a strong sense of calling. The presence of 16 Christian students and 5 Christian teachers at SMKN 1 Mantangai provides a specific and meaningful context for exploring how biblical theology informs professional attitudes and practices in a real

educational setting. The existing research on teacher commitment focuses on organizational, psychological, or policy-related factors, with less attention to biblical and theological foundations (Day, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). In Christian education scholarship, while vocation and calling are frequently discussed, fewer studies operationalize specific biblical texts as analytical frameworks for understanding professional life (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). This gap highlights the need for research that intentionally integrates biblical exegesis with educational inquiry. This study seeks to address this gap by examining the relevance of Philippians 1:6 for understanding professional commitment among CRE teachers at SMKN 1 Mantangai. By bringing biblical theology into dialogue with educational practice, this research aims to explore how theological convictions shape teachers' attitudes toward perseverance, responsibility, and long-term dedication. The study is grounded in the conviction that Scripture does not function merely as devotional material, but also as a theological resource that informs professional identity and practice. This research is informed by Pauline theology of perseverance and divine faithfulness (Fee, 1995; O'Brien, 1991). It draws on Christian education theory that emphasizes vocation, formation, and the integration of faith and professional life (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). By situating professional commitment within this integrated framework, the study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of how biblical faith shapes professional life in Christian Religious Education. This research positions professional commitment not simply as a matter of institutional loyalty or personal discipline, but as a response to God's ongoing work. In light of Philippians 1:6, professional commitment in CRE is interpreted as participation in a divine process of formation and mission, offering a theological foundation for perseverance, hope, and faithful service in educational practice.

METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to examine the biblical, theological, and educational foundations of professional commitment in Christian Religious Education (CRE), with specific reference to Philippians 1:6. The SLR approach was selected to ensure a transparent, rigorous, and replicable process for identifying, evaluating, and synthesizing relevant scholarly literature. This method allows for a comprehensive mapping of existing research and theological scholarship related to professional commitment, vocation, perseverance, and faith-based teacher identity (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Snyder, 2019). The review process followed established SLR guidelines adapted for education and theology research. The procedure consisted of four main stages: identification of relevant studies, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion and synthesis. This structured process was designed to minimize selection bias and to enhance the credibility of the findings. The review framework integrated two analytical domains: biblical-theological scholarship on Philippians, perseverance, and divine faithfulness, and educational research on teacher professional commitment, vocation, and identity in Christian and faith-based education contexts. This dual framework ensured that both theological exegesis and educational theory were systematically considered. Literature searches were conducted across major academic databases and digital libraries commonly used in theology and education research. The search focused on peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and edited volumes

published in English. To ensure relevance and quality, clear inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied. Studies were included if they: addressed professional commitment, vocation, perseverance, or teacher identity in educational or faith-based contexts; engaged with biblical or theological perspectives relevant to Philippians or Pauline theology; and were published in peer-reviewed journals or reputable academic publishers. All identified records were initially screened based on titles and abstracts to assess relevance. Full-text articles were then reviewed for eligibility according to the inclusion criteria. The quality of included studies was appraised based on the clarity of research design, theoretical rigor, relevance to Christian education, and contribution to understanding professional commitment and perseverance. The appraisal process prioritized studies published in well-established journals in theology and education, as well as foundational theological commentaries on Philippians. This ensured that the synthesis was grounded in authoritative and credible scholarship. Relevant data were extracted from each included source, including key theological themes, conceptualizations of professional commitment, biblical interpretations of perseverance and divine faithfulness, and implications for Christian education practice. The extracted data were then analyzed thematically. A narrative synthesis approach was employed to integrate findings across theological and educational domains. This method enabled the identification of recurring themes, convergences, and theoretical patterns related to professional commitment as a biblically informed and vocationally grounded construct. The synthesis emphasized how Philippians 1:6 has been interpreted in relation to perseverance, divine agency, and faithful participation in God's work, and how these themes inform understandings of professional commitment in CRE.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) reveal a strong convergence between biblical-theological interpretations of Philippians 1:6 and contemporary educational scholarship on professional commitment, vocation, and teacher identity. Across theological commentaries, Pauline studies, and Christian education literature, a consistent theme emerges: professional commitment in faith-based contexts is best understood not merely as a human-centered construct, but as participation in a divine process characterized by perseverance, faithfulness, and hope grounded in God's ongoing work. A major finding identified in the reviewed biblical scholarship concerns the theological significance of divine initiative and perseverance in Philippians 1:6. Commentators such as Fee (1995) and O'Brien (1991) emphasize that Paul frames Christian life as rooted in God's action rather than human effort alone. The phrase "He who began a good work in you" underscores God as the primary agent of transformation, while the assurance that God will "carry it on to completion" highlights divine faithfulness and eschatological orientation. This theological framework shifts the understanding of commitment from mere personal determination to a faith-based trust in God's sustaining work. From the perspective of Christian Religious Education (CRE), this theological emphasis has significant implications. The literature suggests that when professional commitment is grounded in divine faithfulness, teachers are encouraged to persevere not solely because of institutional expectations, but because they understand their work as participation in God's redemptive and formative activity (Wright, 2010). This theological

grounding provides a deeper motivational structure that can sustain teachers in contexts of difficulty, limited resources, or emotional fatigue.

Another dominant one in the reviewed literature is the understanding of teaching as vocation. Christian education scholars consistently argue that teaching, particularly in faith-based contexts, is more than a profession; it is a calling that involves spiritual, moral, and relational dimensions (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). This vocational understanding resonates strongly with Philippians 1:6, which frames Christian life as participation in a divine work that transcends immediate outcomes. The literature indicates that when teachers perceive their work as vocation, their professional commitment is shaped by theological convictions about faithfulness, stewardship, and service. Wolters (2005) and Wright (2010) emphasize that Christian vocation involves faithful engagement in everyday work as part of God's broader mission. Applied to CRE, this suggests that professional commitment is not simply about compliance with job descriptions, but about faithful participation in God's educational and formative purposes. The SLR findings show that this vocational framing strengthens long-term commitment by anchoring professional identity in spiritual meaning rather than solely in organizational rewards or external accountability. This is particularly relevant in vocational high school contexts, such as SMKN 1 Mantangai, where teachers may face challenges related to student motivation, institutional constraints, and socio-economic pressures. The theological assurance of Philippians 1:6 provides a narrative of hope and perseverance that can sustain commitment under such conditions.

A further theme emerging from the literature is the dynamic relationship between divine agency and human responsibility. Pauline scholars consistently interpret Philippians 1:6 as emphasizing God's primary role, while not negating human participation and faithfulness (Fee, 1995; O'Brien, 1991). This theological balance has important implications for professional commitment in CRE. Educational literature on teacher commitment emphasizes personal agency, responsibility, and reflective practice (Day, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). When these perspectives are brought into dialogue with Philippians 1:6, a more integrated understanding emerges: teachers are called to exercise professional responsibility and ethical diligence, while simultaneously trusting in God's sustaining work. This integration reduces the burden of viewing commitment as solely dependent on personal strength and reframes perseverance as cooperative participation in God's work. This theological-pedagogical synthesis supports a model of professional commitment that is both spiritually grounded and professionally responsible. It encourages CRE teachers to engage actively in their work while maintaining a posture of trust, humility, and hope. Such a model is particularly relevant for sustaining commitment over time, as it addresses both the spiritual and emotional dimensions of professional life. The reviewed literature also highlights the close relationship between professional commitment and spiritual formation. Palmer (1998) argues that authentic teaching flows from the inner life of the teacher, suggesting that professional endurance is inseparable from spiritual and moral identity. This perspective is echoed in Christian education literature, which emphasizes that teachers' spiritual formation shapes their pedagogical identity, relational practices, and resilience (Groome, 2011; Pazmiño, 2008). Interpreted through Philippians 1:6, spiritual formation can be understood as part of the

“good work” that God continues to carry toward completion. The SLR findings suggest that professional commitment in CRE is strengthened when teachers view their own spiritual growth as integral to their professional life. This understanding reframes challenges and struggles not merely as obstacles, but as contexts in which God continues to work in and through teachers. This perspective has important implications for teacher development. Rather than focusing exclusively on technical competencies, Christian education scholarship increasingly calls for holistic formation that integrates spiritual growth, theological reflection, and professional skill development. The theological assurance of Philippians 1:6 provides a framework for understanding such formation as a divine-human process that supports long-term commitment.

A distinctive contribution of Philippians 1:6 to the discourse on professional commitment is its eschatological dimension. The reference to “the day of Christ Jesus” situates commitment within a future-oriented theological horizon. Pauline scholars emphasize that this eschatological perspective provides hope and meaning that transcend immediate circumstances (Fee, 1995; O’Brien, 1991). The SLR findings indicate that this eschatological orientation has important implications for sustaining professional commitment. In educational contexts, where outcomes are often uncertain and long-term impact may not be immediately visible, an eschatological perspective offers a narrative of hope that affirms the ultimate significance of faithful work. For CRE teachers, this means that their professional commitment is not evaluated solely by short-term results, but by faithfulness within God’s ongoing work. This theological framing resonates with educational research on moral purpose and intrinsic motivation. Day (2004) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue that teachers who are guided by strong moral and vocational purposes are more likely to sustain long-term commitment. Philippians 1:6 adds a distinctively Christian dimension to this insight by grounding moral purpose in divine faithfulness and eschatological hope. The synthesis of theological and educational literature suggests several important implications for CRE practice. Professional commitment should be explicitly framed as a theological as well as professional construct. CRE teacher education programs should integrate biblical theology, particularly Pauline perspectives on perseverance and divine faithfulness, into discussions of professional identity and ethics. This integration can help teachers to understand their work as participation in God’s ongoing work, rather than merely as institutional labor. Spiritual formation should be recognized as a core component of professional development. The SLR findings indicate that teachers’ spiritual identity and formation are closely linked to their capacity for sustained commitment. Teacher development programs that neglect spiritual formation risk overlooking a key source of resilience and motivation in Christian education contexts. The theological balance between divine agency and human responsibility offers a constructive framework for addressing burnout and professional fatigue. By emphasizing that commitment is sustained by God’s ongoing work, Philippians 1:6 provides a theological resource for coping with professional stress and discouragement. This perspective does not eliminate the need for institutional support and healthy working conditions, but it adds a spiritual dimension that can strengthen teachers’ capacity to persevere.

Although this study is based on an SLR rather than primary empirical data from SMKN 1 Mantangai, the contextual information regarding 16 Christian students and 5 Christian teachers provides a meaningful setting for interpreting the relevance of the findings. In smaller Christian populations within public vocational schools, CRE teachers may experience additional challenges related to limited peer support, minority status, and balancing religious identity within a broader institutional framework. The theological assurance of Philippians 1:6 offers a powerful narrative for sustaining commitment in such contexts. The reviewed literature suggests that in minority or resource-limited settings, theological frameworks of perseverance and divine faithfulness become even more significant. They provide a sense of meaning and stability that is not dependent solely on institutional structures. For CRE teachers at SMKN 1 Mantangai, the theological message of Philippians 1:6 can function as a source of encouragement, reinforcing the understanding that their professional work participates in a larger divine purpose. This SLR contributes to Christian education scholarship by demonstrating that Philippians 1:6 offers a robust biblical-theological foundation for understanding professional commitment. While much of the existing literature on teacher commitment is grounded in organizational and psychological frameworks, this study highlights the value of explicitly theological perspectives. By integrating Pauline theology with educational theory, this research provides a more holistic understanding of professional commitment in CRE. This study addresses a gap in the literature by operationalizing a specific biblical text as an analytical framework for professional life. Rather than treating Scripture as merely devotional, the findings demonstrate how biblical theology can inform conceptual and practical understandings of professional identity, perseverance, and vocation. This approach strengthens the dialogue between theology and education and underscores the relevance of biblical scholarship for contemporary educational practice. The SLR identifies several interrelated themes that shape a biblically grounded understanding of professional commitment in Christian Religious Education: (1) divine initiative and perseverance as the foundation of commitment, (2) teaching as vocation and participation in God's work, (3) the dynamic relationship between divine agency and human responsibility, (4) the role of spiritual formation in sustaining professional identity, and (5) eschatological hope as a source of long-term motivation and meaning. Together, these themes demonstrate that Philippians 1:6 provides a theologically rich and pedagogically relevant framework for understanding professional commitment in CRE.

CONCLUSION

This study has demonstrated that Philippians 1:6 provides a robust biblical-theological foundation for understanding and strengthening the professional commitment of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. Through a Systematic Literature Review, this research identified consistent scholarly evidence indicating that professional commitment in Christian education is not merely a technical or contractual responsibility, but a vocation rooted in divine calling, spiritual perseverance, and faithful stewardship. Philippians 1:6, which emphasizes God's faithfulness in completing the good work He has begun, offers a theological framework that reshapes professional commitment as a participation in God's ongoing redemptive and formative work within educational contexts. The findings confirm that professional commitment in CRE teaching is

multidimensional, encompassing spiritual dedication, pedagogical responsibility, ethical integrity, and long-term perseverance. The reviewed literature consistently highlights that teachers who perceive their profession as a calling (*vocatio*) demonstrate higher levels of resilience, intrinsic motivation, and sustained engagement, even in contexts with limited resources or small Christian populations, such as SMKN 1 Mantangai. In this regard, Philippians 1:6 functions not only as a doctrinal affirmation but also as a spiritual source of encouragement that reinforces teachers' confidence in God's sustaining presence amid professional challenges. This study underscores that biblical integration in teacher professionalism is essential for holistic Christian education. Professional commitment informed by Scripture fosters a theological vision of teaching as ministry, where educators are co-workers with God in nurturing students' spiritual, moral, and intellectual growth. This perspective is particularly relevant in vocational school settings, where Christian students and teachers often form a minority, and where maintaining spiritual identity and professional consistency requires strong theological grounding. The implications of this study are both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, it contributes to the discourse on faith-based professionalism by positioning Philippians 1:6 as a central biblical text for conceptualizing professional commitment in Christian education. Practically, it suggests that CRE teacher development programs, school leadership policies, and spiritual formation initiatives should intentionally incorporate biblical reflection on vocation, perseverance, and God's faithfulness. Such integration can strengthen teachers' sense of purpose, enhance professional sustainability, and promote spiritually grounded educational practices. This study affirms that Philippians 1:6 is highly relevant for shaping and sustaining professional commitment among Christian Religious Education teachers. By grounding professionalism in biblical theology, Christian educators are empowered to view their work not merely as a career, but as a faithful response to God's ongoing work in and through the educational vocation. This theological understanding is crucial for fostering enduring commitment, spiritual resilience, and meaningful service in Christian education, particularly within minority and vocational school contexts such as SMKN 1 Mantangai.

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