



Ethics and the dignity of work: An Orthodox Christian perspective

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Abstract

The article discusses matters concerning work and the dignity attached to it. It looks at the desired employer and employee attitudes towards workplaces and work per se. A theological approach which is deep-rooted in the Holy Bible and its teachings is desirable. A polemical method as well as an exegesis of some Holy Scriptures relating to workplace issues are addressed in this article. The synchronic approach to exegesis was employed. This synchronic aspect is interested in comprehensive biblical texts as they currently exist. The response is from a position of faith, based on ethical truths. Narrative and rhetorical criticism were also employed to an extent. The article suggests that work when viewed from a theological perspective, originated with the Creation and was not envisioned to become malevolent but also came to be comprehended as a punishment of sorts. Business is very dynamic and often severely challenged in diverse ways. The model workplace, has structures and relationships that work together around fundamental values and morals that transcend self-interest and ethical behaviour. Core values stimulate ethical efforts as employees become encouraged to do the right thing at all times. It is often very difficult for employers and employees to know if what they decide is indeed the “right” thing. Holy scripture can assist as it throws some light on a particular situation and illuminates people. The Biblical moral law offers us ethical guidelines which are applicable to work and life situations. A biblical ethics of work which is presented is suggested as a yardstick for attitudinal change in employers and their employees. Such biblical ethics of work may well be of invaluable benefit to employers and employees irrespective of creed.

Keywords: Ethics, work, gainful employ, malevolence, exploitation, managerial delusions of power.

Introduction

To the ancient Greek philosophers work was disparaging and there was a division, between the physical and immaterial. Plato's considered the gods as being absolutely immaterial and he believed they were involved in continuous scrutiny. Man's chief aim was to seek to be like the gods and live a life of scrutiny. Physical labour and business were regarded as undignified. However, labour and commerce were acknowledged as essential for human life to continue (Ruffner, 2004). Orthodox ethics operates in the context of relationships in a community. The ideal 'model community' is the Holy Trinity and relationships within the Trinity are determined by the divine Love, and the definitive ethical standard in Orthodoxy is *agape*. Love then should guide all activities undertaken by believers in either their workplaces or private lives (Harakas, 2004). Ethics should prevail in all activity as the "...discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation" (Merriam-Webster dictionary). Ethical behaviour perspective, is not only the application of formal principles or rules. Orthodox believers accept



certain rules of behaviour as being normative and obligatory because they believe them to be given as commandments by God who acts in their lives and to whom they are obligated and accountable (Hamalis, 2013). However all Christians are really at different stages of belief, and ethical understanding, commitment to serve and their behaviour will diverge at different times and in diverse work conditions (Luke 12:47-48; John 13:17). In the Orthodox theological tradition, the importance on ethics is always linked to the relationship one has with God and the ability to love (Carroll, 2017; Lister, 1998). Philosophers such as Ludwig Feuerbach, called as the “Father of Modern Atheism”, had a huge effect on the study of religion and is commonly regarded as the facilitator of the intellectual linkages between the thinking of Hegel and Marx. He is also considered to be an antecedent of Freud. Inspired by the philosophy of Hegel, he proposed the notion that the method by which religion was invented was merely a dream come true since prognostication is one of the most resilient desires of humankind. Within this thinking was a breeding ground for unethical conduct (Nicolaidis, 2015). Marx’s theory of value, capitalism and the free market economy was also flawed and to an extent broke down faith. Organizations need to drive production and take cognizance of their employees and other stakeholders as significantly important individuals and groupings with inalienable human rights that must be respected fully. The free market is probably the best way to eradicate global poverty but without a moral dimension as a core feature, it is doomed to failure. Even more so without faith in God. The morality of capitalism has now also become highly suspect as the pursuit of material wealth grows in leaps and bounds while billions suffer globally (Nicolaidis, 2016).

The Holy Bible gives us a good indication of the dignity of work and this is very closely linked to the teachings of the Holy Trinity. Whatever an employee does in the workplace, whether the person is the chief executive officer or a middle manager or a mere employee, his or her morals and whatever they do in the workplace must exemplify the teachings of Jesus Christ as an absolute moral leader (Blackburn, 1981). However it is clear when one reads the daily media articles that people are more and more degenerating into self-interested and relativistic actions. This tends to destroys their relationship with God and others around them. Their actions become a rejection of God and make one question the depth of their commitment to their faith. The Orthodox and Christian believers’ in general should have a solid work ethic that is archetypal. Yet many of the vilest employees also claim to accept Christ. They perceive work as an essential evil, and not a means of God’s provision for them and their families.

Whatever Jesus did in his life exemplifies for us the real value of the dignity of work. Before Jesus began his public ministry, he worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3). Jesus selected his disciples from the ranks of the working people such as fishermen. Mary was a housewife, Lydia was a businesswoman, Paul was tentmaker, Luke was a physician and Matthew was a civil servant, Priscilla and Aquilla worked in crafts and even Dorcas was a seamstress while Andrew and Peter were fishermen. The holy scriptures tell us “...if anyone will not work, let him not eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busy bodies, not doing any work. There are such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. Brethren do not to be weary in well doing”. The Apostle Paul serving the church at Thessalonica said, “For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:9). So work should be a place of witness in daily living. Diligence captures the compliance, discipline, fortitude, and attention to detail that is essential to a job well done and a life that is well-lived in the Lord.

Why is it important for people to be ethical in the workplace conduct? Wealth is closely bound to work and potential profits and so the morality of work is an important element of any economic system which strives to be ethical (Emerson & McKinney, 2010). Within this system labour must always be the outcome of ethical conviction and consequently the Bible teaches us that labour has within it an inherent dignity based on the notion that people are created in the image of God and give service to Him. “Rendering service with a good will as to the Lord



and not to man, knowing that whatever good anyone does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free”(2 Thessalonians 3:8). Increased responsibility generally results in increased work and people are called to share their talents as they serve one another and society. Harmon (2007) asserts that many people regard work as something to sadly be circumvented and tolerated and they tend to neglect ethical and spiritual motivations (Guillén et al, 2015), until the next opportunity for recreation manifests itself. We must bear in mind that people have many and varied talents and need to use them where appropriate (Burkett, 1998). Rayburn (2006) proclaims that the very first command ever given to people, indeed the very first words spoken to them, were a command to work, and to accomplish a certain job.

The Mosaic Law as expressed in the OT has three basic divisions: (1) the moral law, (2) the ceremonial law and (3) the civil law. The moral law is more commonly known as the Ten Commandments; the ceremonial law consists of ordinances which regulated Israel’s sacrificial system; and the civil law is the collection of ordinances relating to legal matters of private property and personal injury. Debate has centred on which, if any, of these divisions remain in force today in the life of a believer in light of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross. (Ruffner, 2004).

Colossians (3:1-25) says “If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry”. In Old Testament times work was the way in which one worshipped God. Scripture alerts us to the fact that the actions undertaken at work can be ethical or unethical depending on how these are applied (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Secularization is now dominating society so that it is leading to a marked decline of religious authority as economic life caught up in consumerism becomes separated from the domain of religious thinking (Chaves, 1994).

In Orthodox Christian ethics there are three assertions intimately linked. The first, referred to by Orthodox ethicist Stanley Harakas, is the characteristic consolidative nature of Orthodox ethics. This perspective upholds that ethics cannot be detached from any other part of life but must be considered as part of a single fabric of life.

Most important to this integrity is the unity between ethics or actions, on one hand, and faith or beliefs, on the other. For this reason, many Orthodox Christian ethicists will begin with or at least devote much attention to matters of theology proper (dogmatic theology, sacramental theology, etc.), rooted in Scripture and Patristic texts, when presenting ethical stances. The integration of theology and ethics is expected since Orthodox Christians conceive of ethics as resulting from the principle task of uniting with God—the second hallmark of Orthodox ethics. (Meawad, n.d.)

The Triune Godhead

The notion of work in the holy Bible is given a great value and this is because it reflects God’s work and Himself. The persons of the holy Trinity, the Father of the Son and the Holy Spirit work with one another and give us everything that is good. Jesus Christ is the Logos ‘the Word’ and this allows us to speak to each other and to the Holy Trinity. Human life including love and communicating with one another and seeking to do something beyond ourselves come from the Holy Spirit and indeed the Trinity existed before anything. When people go to work they need to be cautious and put avarice aside. Paul in his first letter to Timothy tells us that “the love of money is the root of all evil; it is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierce their hearts with many pangs” (1 Timothy 6: 10). Avarice is the



corrupt love of money which springs from people who are spiritually oppressed. Saint John Climacus tells us that “avarice is the worshipping of idols”. When people begin to value money more than virtue and often even more than God, then their hearts are given completely to Mammon and greed and the love of money. When people fix their gaze on material wealth, rather than on the Glory of God they do not want to know anything else except a false sense of happiness as they strive to obtain and amass wealth. When people are fixated on making money and seek to become wealthier and wealthier they tend to forget that it is God who is giving them the wealth to serve His purposes. Man becomes faithless when he forgets to remember God and what God has done for him. Judas Iscariot became a traitor because deep down in his heart he did not love his Lord and Master Jesus Christ, but rather worshipped money (John 12:16). Saint Luke tells us very clearly that Judas betrayed Jesus Christ because “Satan entered into his heart” and this was through the avenue of money (Luke 22:3).

The Pharisees saw Jesus Christ preaching amongst the people and fulfil great miracles, but instead of believing they were faithless. Luke tells us “the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, heard all this, and they scoffed at him” (Luke 16:14). People should “...aspire to live quietly, and to mind your own affairs, and to work with your hands, as we instructed you” (Isaiah 49:4). God judges all our work endeavours (Ecclesiastes 11:9). God exists as a Trinity which allows for mutual interdependence and collaboration. Work is based on in the creation itself (Ruffner, 2004). It is via work that man can express the divine image (Ruffner, 2004).

In the parable of the foolish rich man, God saw his excessive love of material things and says to him, “Fool! This night your soul is required if you; and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” (Luke 12:20). In the book of acts Ananias and Sapphira told the apostles lies because of greed. Peter admonished him and said “Ananias, why has Satan forced your heart to lie of the Holy Spirit... You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4). And so the result of the love of money becomes the entrance of Satan into humankind's hearts. Consequently Ananias and Sapphira were punished and they both died (Acts 5: 5-10). Judas's betrayal of Jesus also had a sticky end (Matthew 27:5). Christ teaches us in Luke 18: 24 to 25 “how hard it is for those who are rich is to enter the Kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for rich man to enter the Kingdom of God” (Luke 18: 24 – 25). Our objective is ultimately to honour Christ until we perceive him face-to-face and hear the prized words of our Lord: “Well done good and faithful servant ... enter into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:21).

Ethics in Orthodox Christianity

Religion can coerce nonconformity of some individuals to consider ethical actions once secular moral guidelines lose their influence to induce right action (Tittle & Welch, 1983). Theologians would argue that moral life with its wide range of exclusions and virtues is of necessity grounded in a God, who is a transcendent entity. Failing such grounding, humanity is susceptible to secular relativism that, by its very nature, weakens the moral fabric of society. The role of religion in postmodernist society is thus critical to salvation (Nicolaidis, 2014).

Christian moral theology is based on both faith and reason. In the twentieth century, Christian Churches have supported numerous moral issues connected to business ethics and corruption by employers and employees. The Holy Bible includes moral teachings and accounts of what a moral life should look include (Cessario, 2013). Morality and ethics do differ despite the terms being often used interchangeably. Morality from a biblical perspective denotes ones activities, character, attitudes, intrinsic worth, and ways of life that should describe a moral person and a moral society (Bay et al, 2010). Ethics on the other hand, functions on a more theoretical level and at times scientific one and attempts to elucidate on what a Christian moral life is, in a thematic, methodical, comprehensible, and dependable way.



Philosophical ethics is grounded on human rational and human experiences and does not accept the role of any faith or even revelation that is central to the notion of Christian ethics. Christian ethics asks how society makes choices, what is the upright thing to do and which values and goals should be followed. What attitudes and dispositions should characterize the person? Which actions are right and which are wrong? In the Orthodox churches, consideration is given to the teachings of the Early Church Fathers as well as to the various church synods and councils (Florovsky, 1972). Orthodox ethics is closely linked to spirituality. The outcome that is desired is for people to be godlike as they experience deification (*theosis*) via the channels of prayer and asceticism. Human rights are also understood in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1–17; Deuteronomy 5:6–22). These commands are a set of moral duties towards others and society (Meyendorff, 1979; Harakas, 1983). Jesus said: “whoever wishes to be the great come great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; just as the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve” (Matthew 20:27–28). One is called to be a ‘servant leader’ (Greenleaf, 1977) and take ethical decisions in all dealings (Jackson, 2004). It is also considered very important to promote the notion of spirituality in the workplace so as to improve performance and promote organisational sustainability (Giacalone & Jurkiewicz, 2003; McCann, 2011). Organisations should be communities of persons with sound moral and ethical settings (Melé, 2012). They should develop their employees in a ethos of right action and honesty. The leaders must be sound ethical role models and drive the ethical stance and moral base of the organisation as society is served.

Human work and dignity

A person’s work adds dignity in the strongest sense of the word. In the Decalogue God states “You share labour six days and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them and He rested on the seventh day” (Exodus 20:9-11). We also read that God even rested “...from all his labour” (Genesis 2:2). King David in his psalms often speaks about work. He prays for “the works of your hands” (Psalm 138:8). Furthermore in Psalm 121: 4, we read “...the one watching over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep”, so work and labour have a great part in the *Imago Dei*. Since we are created the image of God we must also work. In 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12, we read “if anyone will not work, let him not to eat. For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. Now such persons I command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work in quietness and to earn their own living. Brethren, do not be weary in well doing”.

The many widely-circulated cultural schemas construct people versus structures and also personal relationships versus money and influence (Emerson et al. 1999). In such “cultural structures, social structures pollute individuality, and money and power destroy the purity of personal relationships. A common frame for people to interpret work, is through the obstruction of personal relationships as opposed to self-interest, competition, and the quest for greater profits at all costs. In such a milieu, employees must demonstrate dignity and not to be disruptive in their relationships with their managers. An employee must always seek the best interest of the business before theirs. A business requires responsible business practices in which employees and employers are valued. This is in order to meet the needs of future generations (Tilman, et al, 2002). The current generations should not be greedy so that future generations are deprived of needed resources. This implies that there should be fair measure for work undertaken and pay for employees and employers that is commensurate with their offering at work within the bounds of reality and this must be carried out in a fair and just manner. Excessive pay should be avoided unless really called for.

Employers assume employees will do a good job for a reasonable rate wage or salary. Those who are lazy will ultimately be hungry “For even when we were with you, we would give you



this command: "If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat" (Proverbs 14:23). However Christian employees must demonstrate higher moral standards than others and should never fall into the materialism "trap" of expecting more than they actually deserve. "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (Galatians 6:9). Christians represent Christ in the workplace and must serve their employer as a witness of Christ (Van Duzer, 2010) and need to forge ethical partnership in the workplace (Pembroke, 2008). Vroom (1964) argues that employers must be cognisant of the fact that employees will behave or act in a certain way because they are driven to select a specific behaviour as opposed to others based on what they expect the result of that selected behaviour to be. They are thus motivated towards ethical behaviour by their employers. A Christian should in any event, be so meticulous that he or she is never called into question regarding their actions. "Whoever is slack in his work is a brother to him who destroys" (1 Timothy 6:10).

The early church fathers with authority in the orthodox church of served through hard work and their teachings, and in fact criticised those who were indolent and did not work. Especially those involved in manual labour such as farmers who perceived work to be a sacred duty were praised. Labour was considered to be honourable and an important part of the Christian way of living and was not the only beneficial from an economic point of view but added dignity to humans. However those employing labourers were charged to respect them and pay them sufficient and appropriate wages for any work which they were doing (Grudem, 2003). Labourers were not to be exploited like slave labour but rather treated with respect and dignity. John Chrysostom teaches us that: "let us not then despise labour; let us not despise work; for before the Kingdom of Heaven we receive the greatest recompense from work, deriving pleasure from that circumstance; and not pleasure only, but what is greater than pleasure, the purest health. For in addition to the one of relish, many diseases also attacked the rich who are generally idle; but the poor are freed from the hands of Physicians; and if at times they do fall into a sickness, they recover themselves quickly, being far removed from all luxuriousness, and having robust constitutions" (Chrysostom, 1889). What does God expect from employees and their demeanour in their workplaces? An 'employee' in the New Testament was a *doulos* that is a servant or even a slave. The notion of 'employer' is *kurios*, meaning either a 'slave-owner' or 'master' (Guthrie, 1981:941).

The love of money was essentially seen as a denial of the focal loyalty that we should have towards God and results in many other sins. Consequently 'love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Timothy 6:10). An obsessive love of money and material possessions is termed *philargyria* and results in total lack of compassion for others and in a determination to acquire more material wealth as the key objective. Avarice then has the tendency to distort the ethical values and moral precepts that should be upheld in society and its essence denies the persons true humanity. Virtue in all dealing should be extolled and followed through all spiritual struggles and primarily as a means to enjoy close communion with God (Meawad, n.d.). Employers are urged not to exploit local employees or migrant labourers: "You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your brothers or one of the sojourners who are in your land within your towns" (1 Timothy 6:6-10).

In classical Greek Society it was believed that work was based on an imposition by the pantheon of gods and was of part of one's fate. If one was to be free like the gods, one would not work at all. Whereas in the orient, work was seen as a burden and a slave labour from the gods who were consequently free from work and in essence labour was a burden without and dignity attached to it (Ruschhaupt, 1987). The moral law of the Old Testament provides an ethical framework of interpretation based on what can be known about God and His character, that is, God is eternal and invisible and has created the universe. From this knowledge, application of the moral law to all ethical issues can be made, including the practice of business (Ruffner, 2004) and we are exhorted to work hard: "In all things I have shown you that by



working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

Labour and a profession

In a positive light, terms, the Greek word *ergon* in the New Testament signifies 'work', 'employment' and any 'task'. It refers to work that is easy and pleasant or enjoyable (Vine & Unger, 1996). This parallels with ideas of work as God envisioned at the beginning of the Cosmos. There are also negative connotations attached to the word 'work'. The Greek words *kopos* can mean a 'beating' and *ponos* 'toil' or 'painful labour', suggest that work is often exhausting, worrying and very often also unrewarding. (Colossians 4:13 & Revelation 16:10, 11).

Labour is however, generally the free and conscious exercise of physical and intellectual abilities in order to produce some product or provide some service. Christian ethicists show great respect for all honest work and view it as an ethical and highly suitable contribution to one's wellbeing and also to society's benefit. However it is essential that all employees or workers should have a strong sense for the dignity of work and the tasks they perform. When people are employed there should carefully consideration of the type of work to go into and they should not become caught up in criminal activities as 'work'. Christians have a moral responsibility to prayerfully consider the choices they make when seeking employment. Employees are expected to be truthful and honest in all that they undertake (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22). When one makes a career choice it should be based on one's ability and education as well as opportunities which may arise. If a business owner is submissive to God they will likely use their wealth wisely for the good of all. However many exploit their employees as they strive for enhanced bottom-lines. Jesus speaks heatedly against the adoration of wealth, and not necessarily about wealth in itself (Mark 21:41-44). Making an idol out of wealth clearly violates the first commandment (Ruffner, 2004).

More importantly there should be a sense of obligation to serve humanity and thus God. Christians should thus view work as a mission and try to fulfil it in an ethical way so that the needs of God's people are not compromised. They should also endeavour to serve environmentally friendly planetary needs so that future generations may also enjoy God's creation. It is sadly the case in societies globally, that when people attain lofty positions in work such as for example being the CEO of a multinational corporation, they live by the work of others and generally exploit employees at the lower levels of the organisational matrix. This is anathema to Christian teaching as it negates the humanity of others. Paul gives us a good example when he says 1 Corinthians 15:10 and also in 2 Corinthians 11:23 "I laboured harder than all the others". He demonstrates his highly responsible attitude as a leader in the early Christian church. An employee cannot accomplish his or her directive at work without cooperation between all role-players. The notion of business is recognized within the creation account where it is clear that man cannot work alone. Consequently God created woman as a helpmate (Genesis 2:18). People had specialised tasks and work functions to carry out. Thus, Cain produced crops and Abel managed livestock in a responsible manner (Genesis 4:2). Within their functions they served God as well but had to work with each other to be successful.

Once a person is devoid of the Holy Trinity they tend to lose their sense of responsibility and begin to consciously and unconsciously exploit their minions. When capitalism begins to deny Christian responsibility the society ultimately becomes Marxist or Socialist as people begin to blame society for exploiting the working proletariat. In such societies it is ultimately the case that many people have the objective of amassing fortunes for themselves so that they can sit back and do nothing as well. Augustine professed that business is evil, and Jerome asserted that, "a merchant can seldom if ever please God" (Rayburn, 2006). Eizenberg and Jabareen (2017) call on society to be responsible in its use natural resources from the environment



without jeopardising the environment's ability to sustain future generations. Where environmental damage is caused by companies, this causes a degradation of the creation that God has given to us to preserve as custodians. Relational human existence involves interdependence and interaction simultaneously between human beings themselves and the nature they commonly share and companies need to be clear on this.

The preservation of the environment must be non-negotiable item on the agenda of any company or organisation. The notions of environmentalism and sustainability propose that we can take care and preserve God's Earth without fundamentally changing the way we live (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). No environmental ethics exists without an environmental ethos. Employers should carefully consider environmental issues and teach their employees to behave ecologically using an experiential framework which is provided by "...culture shaping people's attitudes to life before they come to a conscious grasp of what is right and what is wrong. People relate to their environment and form their attitudes to it long before they acquire an ethical conscience. It is on this soil that environmental ethics can grow and bear fruit" (Metropolitan John of Pergamon, 2002). We are mere stewards of creation, and not 'lords' and possessors of creation but only custodians and managers of creation and need to work in companies to promote this notion,

We should remember that God expects those to whom he delegates authority to also immerse themselves in work. "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ" (Luke 16:10). In Genesis 2:15 we read "The Lord God took the man and put in the garden of Eden to work it and take care of it". Jesus regarded His ministry as work (John 4:34; 1:4). Jesus likewise recognized God as a working God when he says "My Father is still working, and I also am working" (John 5:17).

Work, wages and relationships between Employers and Employees

Paul tells us in the second book of Timothy 5:18 "The worker deserves his wages" and so work must be paid for, because it has some value. In Proverbs 22:29, a skillful man in his work "will stand before kings; he will not stand before obscure men." Skilled employees who are irreplaceable to a business and its sustainability should be rewarded accordingly. The prophet Amos states: "...you may be rich but may not be lazy. It is the will of God, and he has given us creation for this purpose". We are called to live a life of virtue "For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Hebrews 4:10). An employee is expected to be meticulous, diligent and reliable. In Colossians 3:23, employees are told that whatever they do, they must work at it with all their heart, as if they are at work for the Lord. 2 Timothy 2:15 says "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach and not resentful."

In the fourth book of Maccabees the it is stressed that "...against the soul is arrogance, and the love of money (4 Maccabees 1:26). The constant striving for wealth has the tendency to destroy man's hope and separates him from God. It becomes the birth ground of pride and arrogance and makes people turn their gaze away from the Lord and they become guilty of hatred, broken families, wars, thieving and many other destructive things. Christ is very clear in Matthew 6: 25-33, "Therefore I tell you, be not the anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, or about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap



nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?... Seek first His Kingdom is righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well." In Exodus 31:3-5, employees are assigned various duties and skills "to work in every craft." The employer must be acquainted with the apposite position to place a skilled employee in. Good judgement gives the employee the utmost prospect of flourishing in the workplace. Many people, often take work for granted or very often complain about their work. Paul condemned inactivity and thievery and encouraged respectable work activity (Ephesians 4:28). Paul also told the Thessalonians to keep on working pending the return of Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:1-14).

Cooperation with fellow employees and employers is essential and is reflected flawlessly within the Holy Trinity where each member reciprocally submits and shares all that he has and is with the other persons so that all may share equally in the richness of the other. The Holy Bible confirms the personhood of persons and asserts that they should never be treated as a means but rather as ends in themselves. Irrespective of the type of work one performs, a person should never be debased. The Holy bible teaches us that there must be a relationship between employees and employers based on biblical teachings and it must be based on a mutual respect. Employers should always be truthful and reasonable when dealing with employees. Uprightness and justice should be applied to the hours an employee is expected to serve, and to the wages paid to him or her.

Employers are obliged to provide a safe working environment. The employees are anticipated to be honest and dependable in making efforts to meet (or even exceed) their employer's expectations. Paul in Ephesians 6:5-9 addresses the notion of "masters" and "slaves" or "servants" (KJV), and this is similar to relationships at work where a 'boss' has authority over an employee. Ephesians 6:9 instructs employers not to threaten employees or treat employees harshly, and Paul reminds them that God in heaven is the master of both the employee and the employer, and He has no favourites there are just no preferences. Ephesians 6:7 tasks employees so that they "serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people." Psalm 127:2 articulates the idea that, "It is in vain that you rise up early and go late to rest, eating the bread of anxious toil; for he gives to his beloved sleep." Consequently, employees should not be overworked or anticipated to 'live at work' whether working online from home or at an actual workplace. God introduced the role of management to regulate the diversity of work. People each have different gifts and these should be utilised in a fair and transparent manner.

Genesis has much material concerning the origin of work and all Christians agree that creation is the achievement of God. It is thus rational to conclude that work was initiated by God. God is thus a working God so as stated earlier, work then adds dignity. Davis (1988:728) recognises this when he writes "What this means is that as creatures made in God's image and likeness, we take after him in this attribute of being a worker". The Bible does not at all, assume that material wealth will be disseminated evenly. Each is given according to his ability (Matthew 25:15), thus not all aptitudes and capabilities are equal. These are dispersed evenly, meaning that they are given to all, but they are not given out equally at all. Employers must note these variances in ability within their employees and not overburden them with tasks beyond their capability (Ameson, 1997).

How Christians should view work

Christians should apply "Christian ethics" in their daily living. It is a systematic study of the way of life demonstrated and taught by Jesus and various other writers of the Holy Bible, applied to the diverse problems and decisions of human existence. Ethics invariably also needs to govern work activities. In the Old Testament, work was treasured as a gift from YHWH, and a similar attitude is upheld in the New Testament. Greek philosophers forged a



divide between work and spiritual life, and today, one's work life is valued but is viewed as being a separate thing from religious life. Whatever the vocation one is in, a Christian should view a job as a means of a testimony towards the employer, consequently a Christian employee should always put the employer's best interest before their own (Nash, 2003). The values of a Christian must always be established much higher than those from the rest of the world and they should act within ethically and morally justifiable bounds.

The Christian in business depends on God for sustainability as all our gifts emanate from Him, nonetheless all individuals are responsible to work hard and make suitable work decisions (Whelchel, 2012), but their success is determined by their allegiance to God. Business ethics then presumes a highly objective moral standard. The Golden Rule of "doing unto others as you would have them do unto you" applies in all areas of operation in a workplace and beyond. Employees are ethically indebted to their employer and need to work to the best of their ability. Work is a blessing and a solution to idleness and corrupt and illegal acts (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). A Christian business should treat its competitors with the greatest respect and consideration and not malign them in any way. Paul teaches that we should "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others" (Philippians 2:3-4). Paul stresses that:

Servants [employees], be obedient unto them that according to the flesh are your masters [employers], with fear and trembling [reverence and awe] in singleness [sincerity] of heart, as unto Christ [as if you were working for Christ himself]; not in the way of eyeservice [just when they are watching you], as men-pleasers [trying just to get by]; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart (Ephesians 6:5-6).

A Christian leader should have a work ethic that makes his employees realise he is a good role model. He arrives at work early and works his full shift. He/she take great pride in their work and always strive to do the very best he/she can.

1 Peter 5 provides additional qualities which a leader, in the biblical sense, should have. Many of the qualities noted in 1 Peter 5 overlap with the qualities already discussed in Psalm 23 and John 1; however, 1 Peter 5 addresses two qualities not mentioned in the previous two passages. First, a leader must be humble (v. 5). Leadership not only entails having authority, but also knowing when to lean on the expertise and experience of others. A leader will accept input from his subordinates as well as superiors in order to make the best decision possible. A leader is less concerned with self-promotion or self-advancement and more concerned with doing what is right. And secondly, a leader also humbles himself before God (v. 6), and he recognizes that his authority and responsibility, whatever the measure, is derived, ultimately, from God. Therefore, a leader places his trust in the Lord first and foremost. (Ruffner, 2004).

The leader in a business is ethically bound to do the 'right things' on an ongoing basis and to serve as a good role-model for employees. Nash notes that pay is definitely not the only contributing factor to good employee morale, and neither is it the most important (Nash, 1994). Employees should also not repeatedly protest about pay, or the conditions under which they work. Employees should be hard-working, honest and happy and not make any work associates despondent through their relentless backbiting. Employers should be willing to compensate workers suitably. Not to do so, is unethical and a violation of the Decalogue. Employees should have access to info regarding prevailing wages in their area of work in order to make an informed employment decision (Ruffner, 2004). God will reward all employees for the way they carry out their jobs while on earth (Colossians 3:24).



Proverbs 28:6, teaches us that it is “better (to be) a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.” Christians should then always seek to exhibit qualities of honesty, being on time, always being truthful and meticulous in seeking to improve the work environment. The relationship with competitors is comparable to that of an individual’s neighbour. We need to treat them in a spirit of love (Galatians 5:14). Employers as well as their employees are expected to consider work and its various challenges in very constructive terms. Christians should not be so anxious about work issues that their work replaces God. Serving Him, is far more imperative than work, something of everlasting worth. We should not ever ‘worship’ our work and should not put our trust in what it offers us. The only thing that brings true accomplishment is a realization that God is the Master of all (Bahnsen, 1996).

In the 4th century CE., Eusebius tackled the notion of work and stated:

Two ways of life were ... given by the law of Christ to his church. The one above nature, and beyond common human living; it admits not marriage, childbearing, property nor the possession of wealth, but, wholly and permanently separate from the common customary life of mankind, it devotes itself to the service of God alone in its wealth of heavenly love! And they who enter on this course appear to die to the life of mortals, to bear with them nothing earthly but their body, and mind and spirit to have passed to heaven ... Such then is the perfect form of the Christian life. (Eusebius n.d. cited by Rayburn, 2006).

Ethical principles to be applied to employers and employees

Beneficence and non-maleficence: is the ethical obligation to maximize benefit and to minimize harm, and necessitates that the risks of harm posed by work on others must be reasonable. Beneficence forbids deliberate inflicting of harm on persons in the workplace and beyond; This is also expressed as: non-maleficence (do no harm). Loyalty and responsibility are required.

Distributive Justice (equality) : This expresses the idea that there should be a fair balance of risks and benefits amongst all role-players involved in any type of work. Social justice, unity with nature, knowledge, and protecting the environment are key requirements here.

Respect for Persons (dignity and autonomy): This principle necessitates that people be treated with dignity and respect at all times irrespective of their rank in a business.

Ethics starts with the goals one wishes to accomplish. Christians derive their goals from their Christian values. In their workplace, their values can be divided into the organizational, professional and personal ones. The more multifaceted the goals, the more intricate the values become. Christian workplace ethics embodies enunciating and communicating Christian values. Leaders and managers can then perfect them to appraise actions, policies, people and procedures followed, always bearing in mind Christian teachings on morality and ethics. Ethics must guide all decision-making. Orthodoxy has been found to influence the religious identity, practices, and beliefs and then also the ethical decision-making and conduct, of working Orthodox adherents in their workplaces. This bodes well for organisations striving to ‘do the right thing’. Organizations with positive, virtuous ethical cultures enjoy bottom-line and top-line benefits, including: Higher employee job satisfaction, Increased legal compliance and rule-following, increased organizational commitment, increased cooperation, increased change management success, increased attraction of high-potential talent, lower turnover, lower health care costs, lower legal risk (SHRM Foundation, n.d.).



David Miller (cited in Broaddus, 2019), created a framework on faith integration in the workplace. Based on this, when someone brings their faith to work, it manifests in one of four ways:

Ethics—Faith motivating ethical behaviour and excellence within the workplace. This could manifest itself as individual or collective ethics.

Experience—Faith offering meaning to work as a place to live out one's calling and a context for utilizing one's unique gifts and talents in serving others.

Enrichment—Faith assisting in work by providing strength, guidance and the capability to cope with difficulties or suffering.

Expression—Faith being shared in word and deed as an example or witness to others.

Conclusion

An Orthodox and other Christian work ethic is one in which work is regarded as an honourable responsibility that has been authorized by God before and after the fall of man. Sloth is viewed as evil. Since we live in a fallen, sinful world, there will be times that work will contain a degree of strict Christian self-denial. Christian employees must be gratified and uphold a spirit of delight in the full knowledge that their work ethic requires a commitment to excellence in the jobs at hand which must be dealt with ethically and responsibly. People with a robust work ethic tend to be reliable, dedicated, productive, cooperative and self-disciplined. Christians are anticipated to comprehend that whatsoever service they offer and in whatever capacity, it is considered to be service rendered unto God (Cosden, 2004). This means employees must be self-disciplined, and drive themselves to complete work tasks instead of necessitating constant intervention by superiors. The Christian employee is generally honest and trustworthy, as they interpret such traits as befitting the high-quality employees they try to become. To demonstrate their strong faith based character, such employees embody positive traits daily, likely distinguishing themselves from others and they often put great effort into working well with others. They generally respect their superiors enough to work with any individual with whom they are paired in an industrious and gracious manner, even if they do not enjoy working with the individual in question. They also put in many extra hours beyond what is expected of them and dedicate themselves to their jobs as they serve God. An Orthodox religious identity, does generally shape the individual ethical decision-making and also the everyday behaviour of at least some working people. Christ's death for us is not by itself enough to justify us without God's pardon and so we require ethical conduct as part of our lives. When Christ suffered and died, He was judged by God, and He was condemned to death in our place. When God resurrected Him again, we were acquitted by God in Christ's person and need to be cognisant of this (Nicolaidis, 2012).

A Christian in business is obliged to behave in an ethical manner and utilise their diverse gifts to provide excellent service as employees and employers and be a light for others to behold in world of darkness (5 Matthew 15:14-16). Orthodox ethics occurs in the milieu of relationships within a wider community. Because the 'model community' is that of the Holy Trinity and the diverse relationships within the Trinity are determined by God's Love, the definitive ethical standard for believers in Orthodoxy is love. The world of business is a lively and for the most part an intimidating arena in which to move, so by applying moral law, the devotee identifies ethical apprehensions and comprehends what response he or she needs to take in work situations, based on Holy Scripture (Ruffner, 2004). Many Christians have an improper understanding of the moral standards as stated in the Holy Bible, but it is only by meditating on the word and prayer, that will they be converted to change their views and come to a moral and ethical persuasion that is aligned to Holy Scripture.

There is a need to work out an environmental ethic that is based on an environmental ethos borne out of a community of believers in which employers and employees share common



objectives. Employees must display diligence and hard work and be totally committed in performing their work functions. Employees show honour and respect their superiors in the workplace. Love as an ethical norm should rule in workplaces and it is justified inside the context of the Christian faith. We are called upon to demonstrate love in our relationships with those at work and beyond on the basis of our ethical judgments. Businesses produce severe challenges, but the Christian is fortified with decision-making ability to face any ethical dilemma or issue. Employees and employers should labour with diligence, truthfulness, and keep focused on eternity so that they can say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

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