



Contemplating Christian ethics and spirituality for sound leadership in organisations

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Abstract

For the Orthodox believer, and most Christian denominations, Christian ethics applies to Christian faith and positive servant leadership motivations based on deep spirituality which is required to link in a manner which allows for the desired principles, standards, and procedures for actions and a set of divinely inspired virtues to be in place with relevance to all economic activity. In the modern world in which we live there is seemingly very little agreement regarding desired standards of good or ethical behaviour. One's *weltanschauung* and culture invariably influence and shape human opinions on business ethics and what constitutes 'good' behaviour. There are numerous limitations in modernism when it comes to moral issues and the role religion can play. This article provides a brief explanation of the Christian worldview and the role of spirituality as an alternate approach to probing ethical matters in business. The Orthodox Christian Holy Bible speaks commandingly and expansively on all aspects of life, including desired conduct in business activities. There is indeed a systematic biblical context which appraises the desired practice in business for the global world of commerce.

Keywords: Business ethics, *Weltanschauung*, Christian dogma, Orthodox ethics, leadership, spirituality.

Introduction

Theologians contend 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. What is the role of religion in a postmodernist society then and where does Christian ethics fit in?

In the last four decades Christian Churches have advocated numerous relevant moral issues associated to the issue of business ethics. Numerous authors have also argued in the last two decades that in order to exhibit ethical leadership such as a moral manager, one requires a high level of personal spirituality which delivers support on all levels to them (Alford & Naughton, 2001; Elegido, 2003; Giacalone & Jurkiewicz 2003; Fry, 2003; Pearcey, 2004; Naughton 2006; Lower, 2008; Booth, 2009; Hoffman & Sandelands 2005; Cornwall, 2009; Tullberg, 2012; Gustafson, 2013; Abela, 2014). Ethics is a philosophical term derived from the Greek word *ethos* which means character or custom and it involves thinking systematically about morals and conduct and the making of moral choices about what is right and wrong in day to day decisions (Lewis & Gilman, 2005). There are certain moral precepts and rules which correspond to the various global cultures so in spirit there is cultural as well as moral relativism (Meerhaeghe, 2006). Much of the current literature on ethics in general, and business ethics, in particular, is concerned with questions of moral responsibility and the reconciliation of self-actualization and



personal freedom with the rights and needs of others. Less obvious, is the assumption of order and control necessary, for implementing moral decision making. Kouzes and Posner's (2006) work in *Christian Reflections on the Leadership Challenge* promotes the notion of integrating formal religious beliefs into leadership practices.

Christian ethics is a division of Christian theology that outlines virtuous behaviour and wrong behaviour from a Christian worldview. However, the systematic theological study of Christian ethics is termed moral theology. The focus of ethics is generally on how we should participate in the world in which we live. It speaks to our freedom as moral agents and stresses the responsibility we have for self-reflection and who we are in terms of whether we live a life of virtue or not. It also speaks to the principles and regulations we are required to conform to and thus the norms which are part and parcel of deontological ethics and the relationships we have in all aspects of life including the work place and the community we build.

Christian theology has created and responded to the communal and intellectual settings in which it has progressed. It has thus incorporated and transformed the way one views the world of work irrespective of denominational slant. Christian ethics originates from Biblical scripture and Christians have always considered the Bible to be ideal to teach, reprimand, correct, and train in righteousness (Westminster Dictionary of Christian Ethics, 1986). Religions give us principles and maxims grounded on the authority of their sacred books based on God's revelation to prophets, and theology joins faith and reason and philosophical approaches and develops a systematic body of knowledge with internal logic. So theology, and more especially moral theology, necessitates reasonability (Mele, 2006). The set of core beliefs, which identify conventional Christianity irrespective of denominational variances, is firm part of Christian holy tradition.

In the *weltanschauung* of modernism, reality, knowledge and morality are grounded in human reasoning, science, and in the provision of objective evidence (Wogaman, 1993). Consequently, our faith in a higher being and our values are wholly idiosyncratic and, therefore, find no place in objective truth (Pearcey, 2004). In postmodernism however, the nature of reality, knowledge, and morality is self-defined and self-referential. Postmodernism queries whether we can in fact know anything with any certainty so that based on one's *weltanschauung* our understanding of what comprises ethical and unethical behaviour will diverge substantially. In modernism, Christianity was not considered to be compatible with truth and how we live our lives. This knowledge was science based and religion could have no claim to objective knowledge (Pearcey, 2004). Postmodernists considered the relationship with the other to be a significant role for a spiritual being.

To some extent it can be said that postmodernism replaced the self-centric paradigm of modernism with the other-centric paradigm. Postmodern holism also introduced the philosophical concept of the interrelationship between God and man and nature. We can, thus, gain some insight from postmodern holism. At this point, the meaning or the identity of 'the other' needs to be investigated. 'The other' of postmodernism represents the opposite concept of 'the self' in modernism. In short, 'the other' of postmodernism includes the neighbour, other people, the marginalized in a community as well as the emotions as part of the whole person. It comprehends cosmic nature as well. (Cheong, 2000:76)

Biblical ethics contrasts with philosophical systems because its foundation is the human relationship with the creator God. Humanity has an obligation to obedience based on our covenant with God. We are called to be Christ-like because this is directly related to love and



attitude of gratefulness based on our redemption through the work of the Logos and His salvific action on the Cross on our behalf. We are called to consider and care for the needy in fulfilling God's Kingdom on earth. The imitation of Christ is an important contemplative devotion through which we inwardly seek to imitate Christ in all our actions.

Spirituality at work

McGrath (1999), asserts that spirituality is important as it is that which stimulates a person's life of faith and moves a person closer to perfection as one created in the image of God. So fellowship with Christ and deep spirituality must encompass a person in body, mind, and soul. When we are called to Christ, we are called to apply moral law in business circumstances and in all dealings with all stakeholders. Applying the moral law in business is derivative from the notion of possession. We are the possessors of God's creation and thus moral law resides in us. Work priorities tend to mirror dynamic cultural values and are subject to consistent changes. A person's spirit is the dynamic enlivening force which is traditionally perceived to be a life-affirming force within all human beings. It is considered to be a state of intimate affiliation with one's core of higher values and ethicality based on moral virtue as well as recognition of the reality of the inner nature of fellow human beings. Private sector organizations are considered to be more likely to assimilate formal religion into the workplace applying an unambiguous Christian mission and vision focus in countries where Christianity is the key religion. Where there are diverse beliefs and differences of opinion with non-Christians, these should be open to constructive debate. Many businesses generally use a values-based approach in the workplace which is in any event based on similar aspects to the Christian ethic. "The challenge is to cultivate an atmosphere of inclusion that encourages employees to act responsibly while deterring those who would abuse the privileges of free expression" (Greenleaf, 1977). The "Divine Plan" is apprehended through the combined efforts of man and the Creator.

The issue of workplace spirituality invariably involves the manner in which employees' experience their sense of meaning while working. Christian leaders need to guide and help employees to fulfil their spiritual needs while at work. Spirituality is an intrinsic attribute of all human beings. It includes what is considered to be sacred in almost everything and it is in terms of one school of thought, not bound to any religious denomination. It is all encompassing and is espoused by all people and in essence entails how one experiences or is able to promote the image of a god through association (Smith & Rayment, 2007). While many see no link between religion and spirituality in the workplace, there are a number of articles which demonstrate that many people tend to identify workplace spirituality with religion (Kriger & Seng, 2005). Today's workplace requires an emphasis on intelligence and also spirituality (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

Managers and leaders in spiritual organizations work on a strong ethical foundation and desire the promotion of individual employees' growth. Employees are generally treated as human beings and are not merely a 'staff number' on the payroll. Christian spiritual managers and leaders need to support their staff in their endeavours to develop a strong feeling of connectedness with the organization. Employees' skills should be utilized to the full and they are to be valued and respected for the contributions they make to the organization. In essence the 'whole person' is considered in whatever is undertaken in the workplace. Spirituality in the workplace is directly focused on the creation of a sense of meaning and purpose in the lives of employees. It thus augments human well-being which in turn endorses the nurturing of a caring society in which people feel a sense of fulfilment in the workplace and elsewhere.



Early Ethicists

Nicolaides (2014c), states that the Greek philosophies of Plato and especially Aristotle had an important role in the theology of work during the history of the Church. The Greek philosopher Aristotle, in the fourth century B.C. regarded ethics as that which sought to describe “the good for man.” His book *Nicomachean Ethics*, was not merely the exposition of an ethical theory but rather a specific description of a way of life and an ethos that should have existed in Athens. It was incumbent upon man to develop virtues (*aretas*) such as justice, bravery (*andreia*), moderation (*sophrosune*) etc., in order that total happiness (*eudaimonia*) could be arrived at. Aristotle’s ethical system was entrenched in his cultural setting and he discussed the conditions under which moral responsibility could lead to the achieving of happiness in human life and the core concept for him is the question of a person’s character or personality (Nicolaides, 2014c), What is it that makes a person good? Virtues are, according to Aristotle, acquired human qualities and an immaculate character, which allow a person to achieve ‘the good life’. Virtue is determined by the right reason and the right desire to do good (Aristotle, 1985). In order to building character and moral leadership in today’s business world, many managers believe they would benefit hugely by pursuing Aristotle’s aphorism : ‘always act towards the right person, at the right time, in the right place, in the right amount, and in the right way’ (Aristotle, 1985).

In a business ethics context, the virtues would allow employees to cooperate and allow the business community to achieve its collective objectives. In order to cultivate virtue in business students, knowledge about virtue needs to be taught and students need to be trained to be virtuous, especially when society at large is unscrupulous (MacIntyre, 1981). Virtues are dispositions to feel and act in a particular manner and according to Aristotle, these needed to be practiced. What the majority of people thought was important, but it was necessary to understand that virtue was a middle ground between two extremes which are vices (Nicolaides, 2014c).

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) was born into a very wealthy family near the village of Aquino, between Naples and Rome. In 1244, he was ordained as a Dominican friar. Aquinas’s teleological ethics was in a sense similar to Aristotle and concurs with the latter that all events occur to achieve some or other end. Essentially, Aquinas universalized and made more humane, Aristotle’s conception of ethics (Davies, 1993). In his view, no human being was excluded from seeking to do universal good. Aquinas presupposed that God created the cosmos, which reveals His purpose in creating it. To arrive at that purpose is to constantly seek the supreme good.’ This search for good [Natural law] is the participation of the human person in the divine law of God’ (Kenny, 1984). Elsewhere he states that natural law is “nothing other than the light of understanding infused in us by God whereby we see what is to be done and what is not to be done” (Copleston, 1991). Aquinas added faith, hope, and love to the list of virtues espoused by Aristotle.

To both Aristotle and Aquinas, virtue was a quality which when exercised, invariably led to ‘the good’ and a good life for human beings precedes the concept of a virtue. Humans thus have their own natural ends but can select the way in which they will arrive at their given end. It is ethics which determines which ends are worthy of pursuit (Davies, 1993). When people do evil they become deficient in fulfilling the natural goal which is to do good and God fulfils their natural end. The human will is to seek what is good, but reason must inform the human will as to what is good and how to obtain it. Aristotle’s moral theory falls short in that it is naturalistic and humans are regarded by him as simply another species in nature. Humans do not have a special relationship with the God and what is good is not necessarily declared so by God. Aquinas believed that Aristotle’s moral vision was good but required what Christianity could provide in terms of understanding. The supreme good could only be found in God and one had to be familiar with such ideas (Nicolaides, 2014c), The ancient Greeks considered work to be demeaning as a person was hampered by a physical reality which tended to subjugate him to his physical functions. Man was born to live a contemplative according to the Greeks so that



work was undignified and undesirable. Seeking the mysteries of life was the key objective. The pursuit of pleasure was also viewed as a base activity and not suitable for philosophers as such.

Saint Augustine, amongst other saints such as Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian, sought to elucidate on the role of ethics inside a theology of salvation for humanity which is corrupted by original sin and thus needing God's grace. Saint Augustine prompted the desired social ideal as the 'City of God' (Augustine, 2012). He maintained that people were free agents but in many, a spirit of good was lacking. God's grace is the only way a person can have a good disposition of will. He prompted the idea of *eudaemonia* which is morality as the pursuit of good that will ultimately make all people happy. Augustine believed all personal Christian virtues were to be followed by all of us. It was however Thomas Aquinas who set about trying to discover the ultimate goal in the vision of God which is only possible through divine revelation. He maintained that only correct reason, and faith through divine grace can guide a person to the correct Christian virtues (Dierksmeier & Celano, 2012). Saint Ambrose the Bishop of Milan and a theologian, was one of the most influential ecclesiastical figures of the 4th Century. He considered the poor not as a distinct group of outsiders, but rather a part of the united people of God (Nicolaidis, 2014a). For him, giving to the poor was not to be considered to be an act of generosity towards those at the peripheries of society but rather as an ethical repayment of resources that God had formerly bequeathed on everyone equally and that the rich had appropriated through their greed (Brown, 2012).

In the 19th century Christian ethics took on new dimensions – it was clear that the church and the state and all humans needed to cooperate to make the Kingdom of God a reality. Walter Rauschenbusch's social gospel believed that Christ's rule in all human relationships needed to be established requiring the social order to become more Christian in orientation (Rauschenbusch, 1917). Dietrich Bonhoeffer believed Christians should live for others as stated in his work *Ethics*. In this school of thought, ethics focuses on distinguishing right from wrong, but it is inclined to produce behaviour that is basically not wrong, whereas the Christian life should as an alternative be marked by the highest form of right. Rather than ethical reasoning, they stress the standing of meditation and one's relationship with God (Green, 1999).

Karl Barth rejected the idea of natural morality and desired an objective authority of what God says to people through Christ (Barth, 2009). Thus, ethics is essentially the implied doctrine of God's commandments in Christian theology. We are obliged then and indeed privileged to obediently accept that God as the Creator is right in all that He does and requires of us. There are various liberationist movements such as feminism etc. which also stress ethical conduct that is in line with Christian teachings. The seven Christian virtues emanate from two sets of desired virtues. The four cardinal virtues are considered to be Prudence, Justice, Restraint (or Temperance), and Courage (or Fortitude). The cardinal virtues are viewed as the elementary virtues required for one to have a virtuous life. The three theological virtues, are Faith, Hope, and Love. These virtues are seemingly strayed away from more and more by 'believers' who are caught up in a quest to attain as much wealth as possible, and often at the expense of the poor and downtrodden in society and the planet we are supposed to be the custodians of.

We are called to be servant leaders as we develop ourselves and others (Greenleaf, 1970). In Matthew (20:27.28) Jesus informs us that: 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.

Miller (2007) discerned three attitudes among Protestants towards wealth acquisition. It is viewed as either offensive to the Christian faith, or an obstacle to faith, or it is due to one's faith. Cobb (2010) has argued that the "economism that rules the West and through it much of the



East", and thus materialism and greed is unswervingly opposed to sound traditional Christian doctrine. Cobb quotes Jesus "man cannot serve both God and Mammon (wealth)". He proclaims that it is apparent that "Western society is organized in the service of wealth" and so the drive for wealth has triumphed over the desire to serve God in especially the West.

There are a diversity of Christian views on deficiency and wealth. On the one hand there is a view which sets wealth and materialism as evils to be circumvented and even contested. On the other hand, there is a view which asserts that prosperity and well-being are a blessing from God. Christians argue that a appropriate understanding of Christian teachings on wealth and poverty needs to take a greater view where the accrual of wealth is not the dominant focus of one's life but somewhat a resource to promote the "good life" for one as well as others in society (Liacopulos, 2007).

Christian ethics does not comprise inaccessible moral principles but largely depends on a Christian view of reality as articulated in the association between God and creation. Thus, the Holy Scriptures teach us and offer us an all-inclusive understanding of reality such as the nature of God and man, and what the essence of life is as we offer service to humanity as good stewards of the planet and its various resources (Calkins, 2000).

What is certain, irrespective of which Christian ethical system is applied is that people are called to uphold the moral standards revealed to them by God. Their actions must be relevant to preserving the planet and its people and we are called to imitate Christ in all we do on a daily basis. Work offers us a chance to nurture our relationship with God and experience His Grace. We may face injustice but this allows us to grow as we seek God and acquire the ability to be more compassionate towards others in the process.

Business Ethics

In any business venture or activity, it is crucial that humanity is served and not merely manipulated for the unscrupulous personal gain of a miniscule percentage of beneficiaries. In this regard there is a distinct significance as one's talent is deeply entrenched, according to Christianity, in the order God established at the very foundation of the cosmos. Man is aware of this but is apparently blinded by consumerism, materialism and the narcissistic ethic of self-preservation which makes him impotent or possibly even reluctant to behave in an ethical way. Safeguarding that people and the planet are served by wealth and not governed by it is a Christian teaching which is clear in Matthew's gospel where Jesus Christ informs us that "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other, Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). In addition we are called to observe the Golden Rule which Jesus pronounced as being: Do to others as you would have them to do to you (Luke 6:27; Matthew 7:12). This rule requires compassion, kindness, support, love, toward others irrespective of ethnicity, gender, race or creed. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) must be part of the business's strategy and today many organisations engaging in unethical behaviours that have led to huge corporate scandals have learned the error of their ways and are ploughing benefits back into society in a win-win situation. It has become urgent for companies to enhance their governance and develop efficient and effective ethics programmes to enable them to operate more responsibly in the societies in which they operate. Christian ethics is in many cases the desired approach. (Nicolaidis, 2014b). CSR is widely considered to be non-negotiable from a Christian standpoint but more needs to be done in this regard (Nicolaidis, 2017).

Protestantism has laid the current foundations for the economic theory espoused in the West and the resultant secular slant of activity in business poses a severe challenge to older Christian traditions such as Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism per se. The modern world is grounded in



materialism as a consequence, hence the many teachings on prosperity. The prosperity gospel as it is called, is based on the notion that God rewards growths in faith with increases in health and also wealth which are considered to be the automatic divine right of all Christians and they are multiplied by faith because the Atonement of Christ embraces the elimination of illness and poverty. Thus, the so-called 'Prosperity' theology considers the Holy Bible to be an agreement between God and people. When people place their faith in God He will make them prosperous (Walton, 2009). There are miscellaneous slants as to what Christian ethics entails (Crook, 2002), but they have only to an extent a shared understanding on the basic teachings of Jesus Christ and His Apostles. The Eastern Orthodox Church by means of contrast, maintains the unchangeable preservation of the teachings of Jesus Christ and the Apostles, in their particular form as available to us in the Holy Bible and in the Holy Tradition and creeds of the Church. The wisdoms of early Church Holy Fathers were fashioned on these fundamentals and led to the foundation for later concepts, including the current views of Orthodox writers on issues such as ethics in business.

In the light of the many globally reported corporate ethics violations such as Enron and Arthur Andersen, there is increasing attention being paid to the various moral issues related to business including the idea of corporate social responsibility as an ethical duty and the promoting of business ethics in all management education course offerings at institutions of higher learning (Conroy & Emerson, 2004). The idea that businesses are only of economic value, and ethics, theology or religion, have no place in them, has been the common view held for many decades. However, De George (1982; 1986) states that any amorality of business is a myth that must be outmoded. Business actions remain human actions and are still the consequence of free, deliberate decision-making by all business big and small. They thus have an ethical dimension. Ethics is critical in business for a number of reasons for example, ethical behaviour supports sustainability and is in any case the 'right thing to do'. In a Christian context, our faith ought to guide us to right actions and virtue and morality assist in making a business virtuous and relate to quality management and quality service provision and infuse these aspects to become part of a quality paradigm (Nicolaidis, 2015).

Key monotheistic religions such as Christianity contain universal moral creeds, such as the Decalogue which are applied to Christianity, Judaism, and also Islam (Ali et al., 2000). They also have other Biblical traditions that offer enlightening ethical direction (Friedman, 2000). There have been efforts to assimilate spirituality and religion into business practice so as to mitigate the ethical challenges posed in the modern world of business (Gotsis & Kortezi, 2007). St. Augustine of Hippo in the fifth century alluded to spirituality in work and saw the human being as a perfect unity of soul and body that needed to serve humanity (Augustine, 1974). Others such as Clement of Alexandria and Basil of Caesarea for example, followed suit in this regard (Meister & Copan, 2013; Ashwin-Siejkowski, 2015; Hildebrand, 2014). In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther and John Calvin the protestant reformers used some insights obtained from St. Augustine for a transformed interpretation of Christian Ethics. Because we are the stewards of the earth on which we live and are called to be responsible as leaders in society. Luke 12:42-48 asserts:

42 Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? 43 Blessed is that servant whom his master when he comes will find so doing. 44 Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. 45 But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming' and begins to beat the menservants and the maidservants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, 46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will punish him, and put him with the unfaithful. ... 48 Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more.



The Greek Holy Bible Greek text for 'steward' is *oikonomos*, it is the one who cares for the 'home' and keeps it in a good state. In business organisations, he or she is the leader and manager who cares for the economy of the organisation and for all those serving therein. A good Christian leader embraces a sound moral work ethic and acts in a responsible way all the time as a given moment of his life because he knows that the 'master' could come any time and so sound business ethics is fully integrated into his daily life. A bad leader encroaches upon and exploits the people and the planet he should be the custodian of. He or she sees themselves as the 'be all and end all' of everything. He is fixated on mammon and has a lust for power whereas the good *oikonomos* relies on God for his accountability, deference and self-respect (Stückelberger, 2007). Jesus offer us the perfect example of an *oikonomos* as he served as a servant washing the feet of his disciples. In addition he offered them direction and guidelines through his parables. Above all, "...he remained faithful to God whom he called father, even on the cross. The disciples of the resurrected Christ are invited to become such good stewards of God's gifts" (Stückelberger, 2007:5). Many Holy Fathers have also attested to the needed aspects of economic life including the social responsibility of business to serve the broader community.

Work - an Orthodox Christian view

Work is a collective extension of God's creation and consequently work is an act of co-creatorship that man shares with God. Work includes a mark of humanity that comprehends an exclusive dignity in the fruit of man's labour in all spheres of work. Work is thus is a human venture, and expression of a person's individuality as well as having a major social significance. Catholic and also Orthodox social thought as articulated in the authorized documents of the Churches contend that the moral obligations of corporate managers are not only reducible to maximizing profit or shareholder return (Zúñiga y Postigo & Schmiesing, 2013). The Church maintains that Governments must deliver on sound regulations and a system of taxation which encourage businesses to preserve the natural environment, hire disadvantaged workers, and create jobs in the most depressed areas as a priority. Managers and stockholders need to be cognisant of their responsibilities toward society as a whole and thus all the stakeholders. In this regard the Church is a key element of civil society, and should serve as a watchdog, more than it currently does.

The core aim of business is profit, and it has a huge influence in society. Nonetheless business is expected to cooperate with society via discussion and reporting as it contributes to the common good and takes care of its many social and environmental responsibilities and duties through partnerships and support programmes for example. Workplaces should exude religious values in a spirit of generosity and compassion. All business irrespective of size must strive fulfill their social responsibilities with a spirit of integrity. In God's economy, affluence is a shared affluence. Various Old Testament prophets viewed wealth-sharing as a just cause (Amos 5; Isaiah 58). Shared prosperity is critical as we need to provide for future generations to be able to sustain themselves and not degrade the planet beyond any viable usability. When an organisation uses its economic wealth wisely it serves as a means to higher human needs and purposes but it is not the solitary Christian principle for business to embrace.

Virtuous practices all round are required aligned to greater Christian spirituality which can then help as a source of deeper service offered by inspiring leaders in business. God is always at work and so should we be. Work is part of who we are and allows us to sustain ourselves and our families and is often a place of growth on a personal level. However, there are times when one feels disaffected and humiliated in the workplace when we witness or may even be involved in unethical acts. An understanding of the triune Godhead is essential to understanding what we term work and its rudimentary relation to human reality (Mcgrath, 1998). Just as the three entities comprising the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit have mutual fellowship, so we as the *oikonomoi* of the planet need to have fellowship with all God's creatures,



including nature. We may think we revere diverse beings but in reality we are co-dependent on others and our planet and are part of a broader community. We have a common purpose, to do good, since we are created in the *imageo-dei*. (Genesis 1:26-27). We thus have a moral and ethical obligation to do the right things and need to be able to trust others. Christian ethics requires a focus on Christ and not oneself and other things. This may mean that Christians become oppressed by others but this is where the faith keeps us strong.

Saint Basil the Great stressed that when there is a non-religious slant to socio-economic problems the desire in most people is to gain as much material wealth as possible in almost frenzied state : “So your soul, possessed by lust for money, sees gold in everything, sees silver in everything...You wish that everything be turned into gold alloys and think only about as many ways as possible to make it happen. Is there anything that you will not do, or have done, for the sake of gold? Bread for you becomes gold, wine is deposited into gold...every thought brings you gold.” (Vasiliy Velikiy, 1993). Business ethics requires Christian people to re-contemplate their expectations and beliefs about their religion and also what constitutes reality. Christianity is a *weltanschauung* that is relevant to any area of life (Pearcey, 2004).

The world of business is very often an intimidating one. When Christians apply the moral law, they get to distinguish ethical apprehensions and understand how they must react. Once a person of faith is fortified with ethical decision-making tools to tackle an ethical dilemma or avert a moral maze that arises, their business becomes invigorated and they work and conduct themselves as beings created in God’s image. One’s being and work are intimately linked and so we need to have good relationships with others and our planet or we are missing our Orthodox directive. Seeking the common good of a company can serve as a guide for humanistic management since communal good is required for one to realise personal good. In any event the communal is only possible if it is slanted towards toward individual good. All human beings deserve to be treated with dignity and this aligns with universal human rights which are equally contained in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:1.17; Deuteronomy 5:6.22), and they are collectively valued by Jews and Christians alike and speak to our very humanity.

In the Holy Synods of the Orthodox faith, the economic problems, and many questions relating to the social responsibility of business are addressed. Ethical principles are regularly discussed such as the Code of Ethical Principles and Economic Rules which was espoused at the Fourth Global Russian People’s Council of the Russian Orthodox Church. This indicated the regulatory teachings, and described the idyllic model of economics, which does of course not exist, but towards which we should strive (The Code of Ethical Principles and Economic Rules, 2004). The Orthodox Church gives its blessing to any work activity that serves the common good and which is in line with Orthodox dogma and sought ethical behaviour (The Foundations of the Social Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church, n.d.). In Christian ethics, the two commandments of love (*agape*, in Greek). love to God and one’s neighbour and also the imitation of Jesus love for others and the planet are vital along with other qualities, values and standards are also relevant Mele (2012; 2016). Jesus Christ in some of his parables teaches that all employees and all employers are subject to social responsibility. We thus have a calling without which our lives lose meaning. We then need to carefully unpack how our divine calling relates to work and business. Our faith needs to opens new vistas prospects for careful reflection after all putting on the image of Christ by believers is the ultimate goal of Christian ethics. In Matthew 5:3,6,10.

Jesus states that the Kingdom of Heaven would be bequeathed to the poor in spirit and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled; those who are persecuted in the pursuit of righteousness will possess the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus who asserted that His disciples would receive the greatest good. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you' (Matthew 6:33). Jesus thus connected the Kingdom of God with the highest good for all peoples and the welfare of the Earth in a very a diverse way



of life to the secular world we currently inhabit. Thus to love one's neighbour necessitates involvement with the whole community since all believers are one in Jesus Christ.

The Holy Bible suggests a recognition of the ethical dimension of work in that it can be ethical or unethical depending on what we do. Ecclesiastes 11:9 makes it clear that God will judge us according to our works. We must thus “fear God and keep his commandments” (Ecclesiastes. 12:13). This awareness has a singular implication in the modern world where we need to consider the plight of the homeless, unemployed and downtrodden, and those who are ill in a time of horrid pandemic. If we do care for them “...the Lord Your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.” (Deuteronomy 24:19-22). We need to also consider the elderly, disabled and deprived elements of society and above all scorn child labour.

Christian ethics and the sound metaphysical anthropology provided by the Orthodox faith is astutely echoed in the Church tradition of faith and offers a solid grounding for adherents to observe. The socio-ethical principles, including inter-alia the dignity of the human person and the common good principle, are all repeatedly stated so that in many Orthodox businesses they are efficaciously rendered of great value in business management. The Orthodox Christian worldview is undoubtedly a very good alternative to the dominant modernist archetype as an ethical perspective in the business world. Christian ethics founded on Scripture offers us the desired moral standards that allow us to judge between what is right and wrong. The requisite ethical standards and expected behaviour for workplaces are found in Holy Scripture (Gotsis, & Kortezi, 2007). The teachings of Jesus deliver sound moral guidance for businesses based upon a truth as expressed in the relationship between people and the Creator.

Reflection on CSR

The Cappadocian Holy Fathers, including Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus and Saint Gregory of Nyssa asserted in their teachings that God is the ultimate proprietor of all created things. People are thus only stewards or managers of what God has entrusted to them and as such they are expected to manage the planet and its various resources in compliance with God's will. Public property needs to be managed in love according to God's will. We are called to serve our neighbours as best we can and should not exploit them. The wealthy need to serve the poor who deserve their help. Saint Basil the Great warns us “Do not think that everything was arranged for your enjoyment, but treat what you have as entrusted to you, not your own. It will not keep your heart merry for long; it will soon wither and disappear, but you will be asked to provide an account for your actions.” (Vasiliy Velikiy, 1993). The Holy Fathers were averse the idea of wealth and inequality and argued that it should not exist. Consequently, people should support others who are less fortunate with acts of philanthropy and ingoing support as appropriate. In any event, Saint Gregory the Theologian argues that material wealth “quickly passes by, is granted for an hour, and, as pebbles in a game, are tossed in and thrown from one place to another in different directions, and belong now to one person and soon to another.” (Grigoriy Bogoslov. 1994). All employees and employers must be subject to social responsibility so that there is an exploitation of capital by work. The two key reasons for work are to provide for oneself and to give to those in need. In the process however we are duty bound to preserve our ecology and the natural environment for future generations to enjoy.

Socially responsible behaviour in business has many guises such as for instance fair competition, values-driven CSR, not using morally-degrading advertisements, honest advertising and so forth. This calls us to be attentive to how and what we do in the workplace, and our motivation in this regard. Businesses need to seriously consider their strategies related to CSR and make good on the moral duty they have to society at large. It is time to cease paying huge sums of money executives who clearly fail in their mandates. It is also time to cease the exploitation of employees through questionable and immoral labour practices and other practices such as false marketing, greenwashing, greed, inferior quality products etc.



(Nicolaidis, 2017a). A value-driven CSR would practically require the firms to embed their perceived morality. But, it is an ongoing exercise and a multidimensional value system that depicts organizational ethical philosophies and conducts. CSR should be faith-based and espouse the value system that a business says it has. The quest for profit must be balanced by societal support. Events companies for example, are obliged to develop strong cultures of ethically driven CSR because it is the 'right' thing to do and not simply to enhance their strategic objectives. Ethical CSR should be based on a genuine virtuosity and a desire to engage with the moral values of society (Nicolaidis, 2017b).

Conclusion

Self-centrism is associated with a materialistic secular existence that flies in the face of Christian spirituality and teachings. We are called to be custodians and good disciples of the world and to genuinely care for the planet and its peoples. to develop the potentiality of Christian ethics and spirituality in business. There are a various areas for further research on the topic of Christian ethics and spirituality in business that should be considered in greater depth such as for instance the role of the state in preventing corruption which paralyses social systems and the role of business in driving positive programmes to uplift communities and lead us to an existence which is more aligned to the Kingdom of God which is totally different from this world's egocentric principles. Business managers and leaders need to become life-giving spiritual beings and need to serve with humility (Matthew 20: 1-16). The kingdom of God is reminiscent of God's wedding banquet for Jesus which does not conform with earthly things. Those who are not worthy will be kept out of the festivities. This is why in the modern and also the postmodern world we should emphasize Christian love. Our orientation must be towards God as our real life is Christ and when he appears, then we too will appear with him and share his glory.

Christian businesses must then seek a new path that is not only profit driven. Singh and Nicolaidis (2014) developed a conceptual framework that could be used by business to promote values driven CSR and promote sustainability for an enterprise. The conceptual framework (Fig. 1) for sustainable development and CSR clarifies the routine areas that any business enterprise should focus on if it desires to be sustainable. Business has no option but to work together with all stakeholders to protect the environment and transform in a spirit of social justice. Workplace spirituality must be included as a part of organizational change that is needed to make a transition to an organizational form that is suitably considerate of both current and future organizational and employee needs. Faith based values integration in business is essential in maintaining an ethical course (Greenleaf, 1977). A Christian ethics requires that business clearly shows its care for society through sound social responsibility. Business has to carefully reconsider the environmental consequences of its actions and where there is wasteful consumption of energy and raw materials these should be reduced. Food security is a major problem as for example, the loss of soil due to mining activities is leading to desertification. Water is also becoming scarcer due to the activities of certain industries. No stakeholder should stand alone as the process of value creation unfolds. Business needs to carefully balance its competing demands and generate long-term stakeholder value by embracing opportunities to improve performance leading to sustainability. While CSR is important it is perhaps time to move to corporate social innovation in business by proactively driving sustainability.

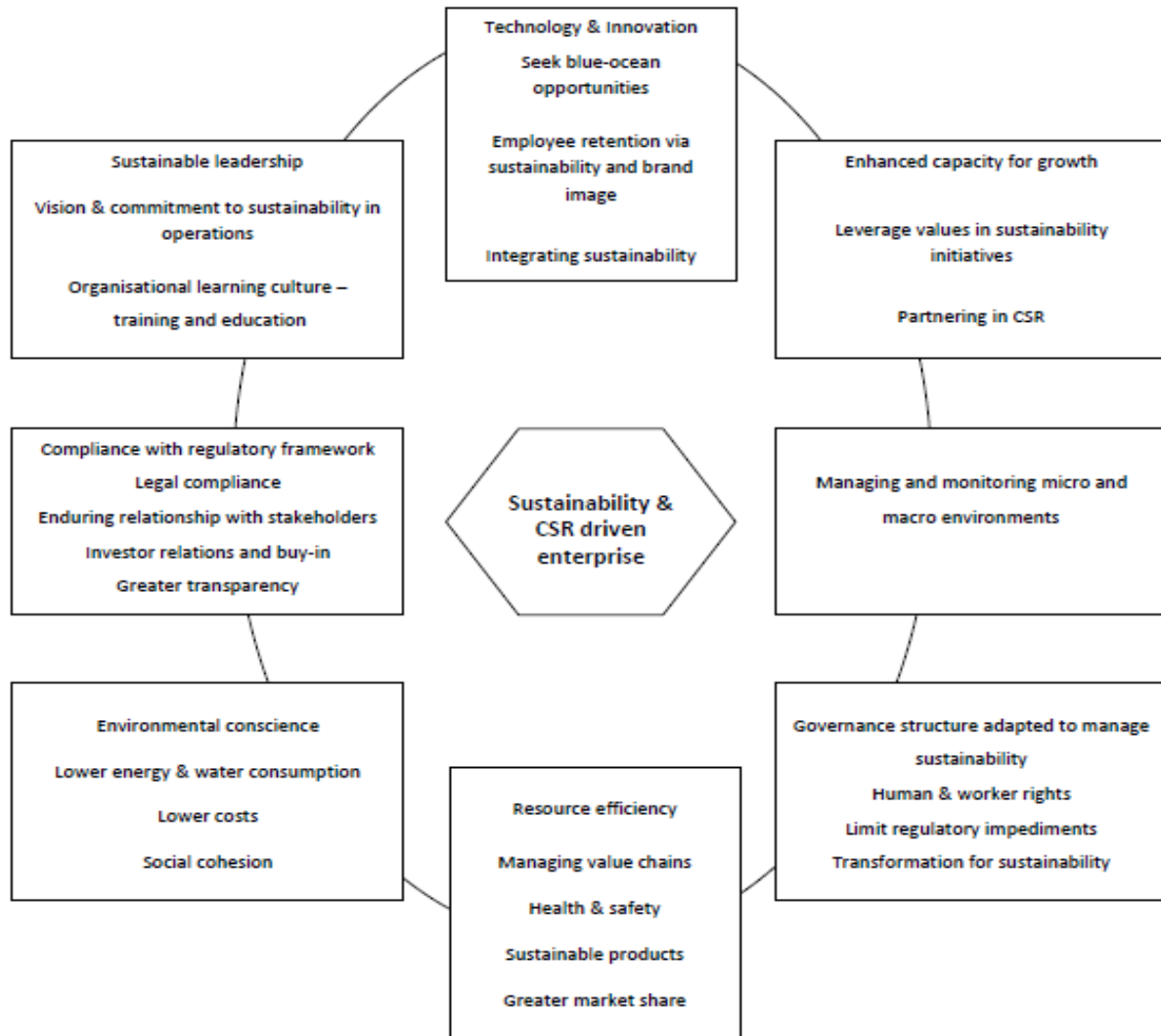


Figure 1. A conceptual framework for a sustainable and CSR driven enterprise

The values embraced by Christian leadership determine organizational morality and ethical performance and their positive role modelling is critical to success. Current modern and postmodern ethics based on the ego and replete with self-preservation cannot in any sense align with the desired Christ-centric ethics. Modernism accepts that knowledge, truth, and ethical practice originated in science and rationality, but Christianity is grounded on the belief that God is our architect and we should try to get as close to him spiritually speaking as possible by living a Christ-like life. We should also have dialogue with other religious and metaphysical traditions, to enhance the way the planet is managed and sustained.

Christian ethics in the workplace and corporate accountability must give the rationale for protecting the environment for future generations and the shareholders and other stakeholders must be communicated with so as to support sustainability initiatives. The hyper-connectedness in trade and the interdependence between business and society make it imperative that business build its intangible assets and create future value, process improvement and innovation which go way beyond the bottom-line that pleases only the shareholders.

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