



Theological Eastern Orthodox Teachings and Ethical Business Practice for the 21st Century

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Abstract

What constitutes 'good' or ethical behaviour in business is a debatable issue in the increasingly modernistic profit-driven and materialistic world of the 21st Century. This article addresses this pertinent issue by examining the viewpoint of Orthodoxy as it relates to business ethics and ethics in general. It is argued that ethics as a distinct field of study cannot be found in the tradition of the Orthodox Church. What are the pitfalls of modernism when it comes to ethical issues in business as it is evident that modernism and Christianity diverge considerably. It is further argued that theology can undoubtedly make a distinguishing contribution to business ethics practice. Viewed through a moral realism lens, Orthodoxy communicates that any ethical vision is inseparable from and ultimately grounded in an Orthodox understanding of the Trinitarian Godhead. Viewed teleologically, the objective of human life is *Theosis* which commences in physical existence and continues into eternity in a spiritual sense. The limitations of the present study, as well as the areas of prospective research, have been taken into consideration. The paper nonetheless attempts to propose a tentative way of thinking about business ethics epitomising the implication of Orthodoxy for right business conduct.

Keywords: Orthodox Christianity, philosophy, modernism, morality, business ethics.

Introduction

The devil does not hunt after those who are lost, he hunts after those who are aware, those who are close to God. He takes from them trust in God and begins to afflict them with self-assurance, logic, thinking, criticism. Therefore we should not trust our logical minds (St Paisios of Mt Athos)

It is prudent to begin this article by clarifying the terms used. 'Ethics'. As stated by the Merriam-Webster dictionary, it refers to the discipline dealing with what is good and bad and with moral duty and obligation. 'Modernism' refers to a movement in the direction of modifying traditional beliefs in accord with modern ideas, especially in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It was grounded on an 'ideal' vision of human life and society and a belief in advancement, or moving forward of society away from traditional values as espoused in Christianity. Most business ethics course at universities tend to present philosophical and not religious ethical approaches to business activity because there is a highly secularized ethos, and religion is considered to be irrelevant for the most part in both business and in the public sphere in general (Epstein & Hanson, 2006).

Eastern Orthodoxy has 389 million adherents globally and promotes ethical practice in all spheres of life. It is argued that Jesus makes positive reference to several businessmen who tried to grow their profits, but He warns us against greed, and having an disproportionate anxiety toward future needs, and in thus serving Mammon (money) instead of serving God. Considering the human dignity of all employees and business stakeholders and having a



genuine care, anxiety and love for all people are crucial tenets in Orthodox Christianity. The Church alludes to a strong sense of justice in business and honest practices such as a strict compliance in contracts, observing ethical protocols and working for the common good.

Numerous theologians in the Orthodox faith have viewed ethics from the viewpoint that ethical problems can be addressed through the life of the Church and its modus of worship, holy scripture, the writings of the early church fathers and canon law. These all clearly affirm ethical instruction in the life of the Orthodox Christian (Harakas, 1977; Yannaras, 1984). Salvation is the purpose of human life in Orthodox practice, thus the approach is soteriological and Christological and is dependent on the belief in a Trinitarian Godhead and this moulds the manner in which people relate to others around them in the broader community and society in general. The 21st Century is clearly becoming increasingly narcissistic and an ethic of self-preservation is driving individuals and organisations to strive for an increased bottom-line and he profits at the expense of employees and the planet.

Nicolaides and Duho (2019) state that the values that should be espoused by leaders should include legitimacy in their role/s, the desire to develop a group of people and promote the growth of individuals, a strong community focus, joint decision making in a spirit of sharing values, the promotion of dignity and respect in the culture of an organisation and in its climate, diversity and management and the sharing of values in an environment where solidarity is evident and the planet is safeguarded. This is unfortunately merely a 'pipe-dream' for many leaders. However from a Christian perspective, including Orthodoxy, it is the only and necessary way to operate considering Biblical teachings on human conduct and ethical practices. In the current media that one interrogates, there are many cases of corruption and ongoing corporate ethics abuses at the expense of employees and the planet. Human rights are violated and employers yield immense power to willy-nilly sack employees and very often without just cause. A range of moral issues associated with unethical business practices such as corruption, mis-information and the corporate social responsibility discussion are growing daily (Conroy & Emerson, 2004; McWilliams & Siegel, 2001; Nicolaides, 2014; 2017; 2018a). For the Orthodox believer, the moral life is a fight against malevolence, wickedness, and fallenness, and one should strive to be ethical in all dealings (Harakas, 1992; Chryssavgis, 2003; McGuckin, 2010).

Some efforts have been made to fit in spirituality and religion in business practices so as to deter ethical glitches that often very adversely impact upon contemporary organizations and society (Gotsis and Kortezi, 2007; Nicolaides, 2016; 2018b). Viewed from an Orthodox vantage point, a person requires a Christian worldview to mitigate unethical practices in business and life in general. A workplace is an important part of one's life and adds to the realisation of a spiritual life in which one strives for *Theosis*. The decisive ethical standard in Orthodoxy is *agape* love which emanates within the Christian faith and how one understands the Trinitarian Godhead and relates to fellow human-beings. It has been ascertained that there is indeed a very positive relationship between faith and ethical values and how one acts in the workplace and the role of spirituality in advancing ethical practices (Epstein, 2002; Giacalone, & Jurkiewicz, 2003; Longenecker et al., 2004; Gotsis & Kortezi, 2007; Jamta, & Mohd, 2018; Driscoll et al., 2019).

In business circles and practice, there is scant accord regarding the basis or standards of ethical behaviour in business practice. How business is conducted is generally assumed to be in line with the golden rule which is a mutual approach across most religions and which is viewed as the norm when dealing with stakeholders. This rule states that one must treat others in the same way that you would want to be treated in the same situation. In workplaces, the Golden Rule means that you would not seek to take any advantage of someone or lie to get ahead and bolster the bottom line, because you would not want others to treat you this way (Cunningham, 1998; Bruton, 2004). Theories of corporate social responsibility strongly



suggest that there is a moral responsibility on a business entity to society beyond production of goods and services (Etzioni, 2002).

There are of course many businesses across the globe that refute having any universal standards of right as opposed to wrong in business as they argue that each business should have its own ethical philosophy and religion should not necessarily provide the ethical norm as the business of business is to make as much profit as possible.

Milton Friedman introduced his famous theory in a 1970 essay for The New York Times titled "A Friedman Doctrine: The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits". He contended that a company has no social responsibility to the public or society at all and that its solitary responsibility is to its shareholders (Friedman, 1970). Such a worldview is upheld by many businesses to this day and is the context within which they operate. Invariably, ones values and beliefs are entrenched in the worldview they have (Schweiker, 2004; Nicolaidis, 2016; Ibrahim & Heuer, 2016).

Sadly, the conduct and behaviour of many businesses which was once widely held as being totally unacceptable is now endured and has become the norm for many (Pearcey, 2004; Boulouta & Pitelis, 2013). This is despite many benefits accruing from doing good in society and being involved in acts of philanthropy and corporate social responsibility (Orlitzky, 2005; Galbreath, 2006; Lin, C. et al., 2008; Muise, 2009; Newman, 2020).

There are numerous theories which repudiate the role of corporate social responsibility towards society. This demonstrates the extent of materialism's growth in the global business world. Thus in Friedman's mould, many companies demonstrate strategic interest only in their profits and growth and in shareholder benefits while working to the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law. There is no interest in serving society in a genuine partnership. It is nonetheless well researched that by observing an ethical strategy a business does gain a strategic competitive advantage. Businesses devoid of a desired Christian or other religious ethical stance are increasingly being reported on as being involved in corrupt activities, coercion, and dictatorial monopolistic actions.

Modernism, Post-Modernism and Christianity

In Modernism, authenticity, knowledge, and ethics are founded in science, human reasoning, and in objective evidence. It holds that faith in a God and related values are wholly personal and very subjective. In a quest for objective truth, faith has no clear role to play. In postmodernism, authenticity, knowledge, and ethics are self-defined (Daniels et al., 2000). The modernists hold that universal ethics is uncompromising and does not diverge through space and time. The postmodernists thus encourage a life of fabrications and extreme relativism in which may say and do as they wish. Postmodern ethics thinkers such as Bauman (1993), however question the omnipresence of universal ethics.

The Christian worldview was centrally held in Europe preceding the Enlightenment. According to this worldview there are valid sources of knowledge about the nature of reality which do not rely on mathematical proofs. There is a higher being who is omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the early church promoted this worldview. (Pearcey, 2004). Modernism thus opposed Christianity and embodies the post-Enlightenment viewpoint of pragmatism and human reason and it refutes any supernatural being that one's senses cannot see. Charles Darwin in his *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*, published on 24 November 1859, contended that God was not needed to explicate the creation and all that matters is cause and effect. Thus Christianity was no longer like-minded with truth which only scientists believed they could provide. When viewed from a Christian perspective:



...we believe that the ultimate norm and ultimate standard of rightness is the character of God and his perfect righteousness. So biblical principles of ethics have great relevance for the business world... When we use the term ethics, we're talking about doing what is right. From a Christian perspective, we believe that the ultimate norm and ultimate standard of rightness is the character of God and his perfect righteousness. So biblical principles of ethics have great relevance for the business world. I'm talking about simple things like God telling us it's wrong to steal. You don't have to be a Christian to appreciate honesty and respect for private property in the business community (Sproul, 1996).

Biblical verses supporting good business ethics

The role of a biblical theologian is to reconnoitre the contemporary context of the word of God as it was first spoken, and to express as logically and precisely as he can how the Church understood and retorted to the message of salvation as an expression of their faith. This is a big challenge that the author has tried to meet. If a Christian has a leadership position within a business of any size, then his or her level of influence may be momentous as their decisions about how to integrate their faith in the workplace will have a great impact and implications for his or her employees and all stakeholders. Christian executives, have a huge responsibility to do right and to act fairly in all instances as they in implement ethical changes in their business practices (Beckett, 1998).

Christian CEOs and owners of business need to know what biblical teachings, if any, support and instruct business dealings with all stakeholders of a company. There are many verses in the Holy Scripture supporting good business ethics. Only a few are list below for reader edification (See Table 1). There are thus distinctive moral obligations are incurred by virtue of one's Christian faith. Holy Scripture does not give us all the needed answers to what are often vexing issues and business ethical questions. It is clear from a Christian vantage point that all ethical deeds are an important part of one's journey of discipleship (Cafferky, 2015). Our pathway is unique, and our dilemmas and actions may be unique and will require novel approaches- but *agape* must prevail in all we do since God is love.

Table 1. Some biblical verses supporting ethics in business

Leviticus 19:11	You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another.
Proverbs 22:1	A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold.
Romans 12:2	Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
Proverbs 11:1	A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is his delight.
Mark 8:36	For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?
Leviticus 19:13	"You shall not oppress your neighbour or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning.
Matthew 6:24	"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.
Luke 16:15	And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.
Proverbs 20:23	Unequal weights are an abomination to the Lord, and false scales are not good.
Leviticus 25:39	"If your brother becomes poor beside you and sells himself to you, you shall not make him serve as a slave:
Deuteronomy 15:13-14	And when you let him go free from you, you shall not let him go empty-handed. You shall furnish him liberally out of your flock, out of your threshing floor, and out of your winepress. As the Lord your God has blessed you, you shall give to him.
Leviticus 23:22	"And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, nor shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God."



Leviticus 19:10 And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.
James 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.
Proverbs 13:11 Wealth gained hastily will dwindle, but whoever gathers little by little will increase it.
Deuteronomy 8:18 You shall remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your fathers, as it is this day.
Colossians 1:10 So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.
Luke 16:10 "One who is faithful in a very little is also faithful in much, and one who is dishonest in a very little is also dishonest in much.
Philippians 4:13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
Proverbs 28:6 Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity than a rich man who is crooked in his ways.
Proverbs 21:6 The getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.
Proverbs 16:8 Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues with injustice.
Psalms 128:2 You shall eat the fruit of the labour of your hands; you shall be blessed, and it shall be well with you.
Luke 6:31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.
Jeremiah 22:13 "Woe to him who builds his house by unrighteousness, and his upper rooms by injustice, who makes his neighbour serve him for nothing and does not give him his wages,
James 5:4 Behold, the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, are crying out against you, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts.
2 Corinthians 9:8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.
Proverbs 16:3 Commit your work to the Lord, and your plans will be established.
Proverbs 22:16 Whoever oppresses the poor to increase his own wealth, or gives to the rich, will only come to poverty.
Proverbs 22:1-29 A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, and favour is better than silver or gold. The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all. The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it. The reward for humility and fear of the Lord is riches and honour and life. Thorns and snares are in the way of the crooked; whoever guards his soul will keep far from them. ...
Psalms 112:5 It is well with the man who deals generously and lends; who conducts his affairs with justice.
Proverbs 11:3 The integrity of the upright guides them, but the crookedness of the treacherous destroys them.

An Orthodox perspective

The Orthodox Church is not only repository of biblical declarations, but rather a living community which has assessed God's word down through the ages in both its mind and sentiment, reflecting and meditating upon it prayerfully and inspired by the Holy Spirit. In the course of this process there may be some minor human error distortions creeping in which perhaps allowed it to clarify and formulate its meaning in diverse ways, but the basic Truth is one and the Truth shall set you free. We should be clear that God's word not only lives but also grows in the understanding of the faith which is then expressed in consciousness of the meaning in all its Holy scriptures, patristic teachings, doctrines and dogmas. From the foundation of the Christian faith, the Orthodox Church has fully understood the message of salvation which Jesus Christ affords humanity. We are called to strive for *Theosis*.

In Orthodoxy the teachings of the church are grounded in the Old and New Testaments, the writings of the church fathers, and the synodical, canonical, liturgical, and spiritual tradition of faith as lived, practiced, and reflected upon in the consciousness of the church, for which the overall term "holy tradition" is employed (Harakas, 1983). The church comprehends ultimate reality to be in the Holy Trinity. Consequently, the ultimate objective is to live as a community of divine persons in everlasting love and accord.



A divine reality created everything that exists, including the visible and invisible. People are created as a compound being with a body and spirit, and are in the "image and likeness" of the Holy Trinity. "Image" refers to characteristics that are human including for example, imagination, love, self-determination, and ethical insight. "Likeness" on the other hand, refers to the possibility open to one to become "God-like" in *Theosis*. Humanity is called to commune with the Holy Spirit or 'Comforter' and in so doing one is able to become 'God-like'. God's Kingdom is not only a futuristic "last days," but also a present reality through Christ's Glorious Resurrection and the existence of the Holy Spirit. Orthodox Christian ethics is thus based on striving to achieve God's Kingdom (Mantzaris, 1995).

Core ethical teachings include are a love for God and one's neighbour, understanding that we are all sinners but have a chance to live according to elementary norms through a basic natural moral law. In addition, the relationship of the material and spiritual dimensions of one's life must be fully integrated and one needs an ability for self-determination when making ethical decisions (Harakas, 1983). The Orthodox metaphysic is entrenched in the biblical metaphysic of God as 'Maker of Heaven and earth' and master of the entire cosmos and the view of the nature of reality is "biblical theism" and "biblical personalism" which is ultimately the certainty that ultimate reality is a personal God who acts, shows and speaks to believers. We can thus know and recognize truth and moral virtue through the application of reason and revelation. Saint Athanasius of Alexandria states: "He was incarnate that we might be made god" [Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνθρόωνθη, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν] (Athanasius of Alexandria, 2011). In Orthodoxy ethics is existentially bound. Original sin alienates us from God the Father and humanity became unethical and corrupt and thus requires redemption through striving to become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). The values followed by the church are soteriological, and seek to obtain human "redemption" as the "greatest" gain of every human being (Economou, 2003).

For the Orthodox Christian believer, Matthew 5:38-39 is particularly important: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, 'Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.'" This and of course the decalogue and all Christ's utterances such as the Sermon on the Mount, and His actions such as the miracles He performed teach us the way we need to behave when dealing with others. They all set norms for us to abide by. When we partake in the Liturgy we experience God. We simply cannot experience God in purity, unless one purifies oneself through virtue (Meyendorff, 1983). Reason is thus the foundation for Christian ethics together with revelation from the beginning of the religion. As stated earlier, *Theosis*, or deification must be a transformative process for the believer who strives for union with God. The desired *Theosis* can only happen when one is purified in mind and body and thus acts ethically all the time and his or her mind is illuminated with the 'vision' of God' which is life's ultimate resolution. When one has any business venture or manages one, it should be kept in mind that:

God is therefore "Owner" (Κτήτωρ), and "Creator". The possibility of "Creation" establishes the right of Divine property and the assignment of its conditional use. By making a reduction to modern terminology, we could say that God is the "Ownership Shareholder" who provides through franchise raw materials and know-how. In fact, according to the approach of the Orthodox Church, even the "Entrepreneur" man is the property and property of God and that is why in the theological texts it is also referred to as "property part" (Περιούσιος). All this know-how, the raw materials, the chapter and the knowledge of God's handling are reflected in the term "trust" which is recorded in many theological texts. (John Chrysostom, Makarios the Egyptian, according to the Matthew Gospel). Etymologically the term describes something given with "trust". (Bourletidis et al., 2019)

Orthodoxy has a distinctive teleological approach to ethics and teaches that the telos of human



life is divine–human communion which commences on earth and endures into eternity. We are after all created in the *Imageo Dei* (Hamalis, 2008) and thus need to act from an ethical basis. St. John Chrysostom completes most of his homilies with ethical ideas, for example, in *Homily 22* on the Gospel of St. John he states, "It is impossible, though we perform ten thousand other good deeds, to enter the portals of the Kingdom without alms-doing." Many of the church fathers make similar utterances (Guroian, 2002). Likewise Canon law also displays a number of examples for the clergy and congregation alike. Apostolic canon number 27 says:

If a bishop, presbyter, or deacon shall strike any of the faithful who have sinned, or of the unbelievers who have done wrong, with the intention of frightening them, we command that he be deposed. For our Lord has by no means taught us to do so, but, on the contrary, when he was smitten he smote not again, when he was reviled he reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not. (Apostolic canon 27, New Advent, n.d.)

Many such examples exist but there are also a plethora of liturgical petitions and priestly prayers which promote ethical principles such as inter-alia, agape, peace and forgiveness. A life in Christ is anticipated to possess a strong ethical dimension towards *Theosis*. When reflecting on moral realism Orthodoxy clarifies for the believer that the church's ethical vision is intimately bound to the notion of the Trinitarian Godhead. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople asserts that, "Orthodox Christianity is a way of life in which there is a profound and direct relationship between dogma and praxis, faith and life" (Chryssavgis, 2003: 209). Orthodox ethics avows that it is conceivable for humans to know and recognize truth and ethical good through the application of reason and also revelation. It is via *theoria* (illumination with or direct experience of the Triune God), that people come to recognize and understand what it means to be fully human, i.e., the created image of God which is always fully ethical. Through communion with Jesus Christ, God shares Himself with the us so as to conform us to all that He is in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness replete in ethical practices. We can only reconcile with God the Father through the fight to conform to the image of Christ. Without this struggle, the actual praxis, we do not possess true faith and it is faith that leads to ethical action, without which faith is in essence dead (Irenaeus, 2001). The person of Jesus Christ is both perfect God and perfect man a *theanthropos* and our perfection is reached only in full communion with God. Through daily prayer and partaking in the Eucharist we begin to make sound ethical choices and pronouncements in our workplaces and in society in general. For Orthodox believers Jesus as well as the saints of the Church who are venerated are imitators of Christ, and dynamic paradigms of human virtue and total holiness (McGuckin, 2010).

It is ultimately the *Paraclete* (Holy Spirit) who guides us the Church into the fullness of truth and also guides all our ethical decisions. Our Saints give us examples of how we can ascend the ladder towards holiness and ultimate *Theosis* (Mantzarides, 1995). Virtue ethics is highly likeminded with Orthodoxy's normative vision which stresses the role of the community in moral and ethical development. One thus needs a strong Christian character to exhibit Christ-like actions in only ethical dealings and in how people and society are treated by them (Guroian, 2002).

The principles personified in the lives of the saints especially agape love are what we require to exemplify in our own lives and obtain the Holy Spirit. Divine love is demonstrated in a perfect mutuality between the persons of the Trinity that provides full communion while preserving and honouring individual distinctiveness, and this is a much needed ideal that sequentially passes into the realm of social relationships with those in workplaces and elsewhere (Zizioulas, 2006). A truly moral life requires prayer, commitment, a strong will, total self-determination, and ethical choices.

The Church and business ethics



Orthodoxy has an ethical stance which incorporates the social milieu of human life in workplaces and society. The teachings stress ethical actions, fairness and justice aimed at transforming society for the better (Harakas, 1992). Thus Orthodox adherents are called upon to care for the downtrodden in society and remove social injustice, and to protect the natural environment as custodians of God's creation (Chryssavgis 2003). Ethical issues are undoubtedly linked to Orthodoxy. However over the decades of the 20th and 21st Centuries as modernism grew, many ethically sensitive issues and questions were addressed lacking any referencing of Orthodox or other Christian teachings and so society has become blinded by materialism. In this period, Utilitarianism made ground and thus ethical issues fell victim to studying the effect of actions upon society not by appealing to supreme fundamentals but by considering pleasure or happiness as the only aspect that has intrinsic value and all actions are acceptable if they promote one's happiness. If something is tried and it works, it cannot be considered to be bad for others (Veith, 1994). It is clear that in business ethical standards are frequently implicitly presumed, and religious values such as the 'Golden Rule' are much spoken of as a normative foundation for business ethics (Brammer et al., 2007) but words are cheap.

Social contract theory (Kavka, 1986; Dunfee et al., 1999) is operative in some business, and it includes the obligations that businesses owe to the communities in which they operate and to the world as a whole. This often manifests as corporate philanthropy, corporate social responsibility and corporate governance and in many ways it aligns with the Orthodox ethic for business. However in many cases it is a mere façade and marketing tool. When people reject God and the Holy teachings they are no longer God's creation but instead only another part of nature, obsessed by narcissism, self-interest, greed and the excesses of ultra-capitalism and materialism. In Orthodoxy, such interests are a vice to be overcome for the benefit of the common good. Theology can thus make an idiosyncratic contribution to business ethics and fairness and justice. Orthodox Christian ethics which are based on Holy Scripture give us ethical standards which guide and permit us to navigate moral mazes and ethical dilemmas and they help us to rightly judge between what is right and wrong. It is the duty of every leader in business to choose between right and wrong in any business activity and to follow ethical principles in all dealings and with all stakeholders, not only shareholders.

The Orthodox faith holds that notions of what is right and what is wrong can serve one well if one is informed by a Christian final standard through which ethical and also moral judgments can be made, which aligns with suggestions by Colson and Pearcey (1999). The Holy Scriptures present us with a solid foundation for ethical business practice and business ethics is justified by faith in Jesus Christ. From a business perspective ethical practice makes good sense because it has effects such as reduced employee turnover, amplified productivity, and greater profitability (Kim et al., 2000). For Eastern Orthodoxy, organizational ethics must always seek to affirm the explicit set of values, and attitudes towards stakeholders which emanate from biblical teachings. This requires that the organizational cultures and the various philosophies embraced by businesses should consider individual employees' Christian existence both on earth and the afterlife. Thus the traditions embraced by business should have a Christian basis. The challenge is to appoint managers and leaders who apply fairness in all their dealings, and seek to profit not only the business but all employees and also the communities in which they operate (Harakas, 1999).

Big business plays a fundamental role in society and shapes government policy and therefore is challenged to conduct itself in a manner that contributes positively to the meaningful socio-economic transformation of society and the protection of the global environment for future generations to enjoy (Nicolaidis, 2017a). The common hierarchical and bureaucratic organizational structures which are found in most businesses are inherently ineffective and take little cognizance of the human element, which is in essence the lifeblood of the business. Management, and particularly in the upper echelons of an organization, maintains the power to deliberate and formulate decisions which ultimately have a bearing on subordinates and all



other stakeholders and it is they who should be the guardians and promoters of for example corporate social responsibility (CSR). Business leaders clearly play an enormous role in whether or not their business operates ethically and is CSR sensitive or not. In Socrates *Republic*, the “Guardians” are leaders who view their high office in terms of their social responsibility. It is incumbent upon them to serve society by promoting ethical practices in all spheres of operation (Gini,1996).

Aristotle proposes in his *Nicomachean Ethics* that morality is not simply learned by reading about it, but by witnessing the behaviour of a morally sensitive person who serves as a role-model for others (May, 2010). From a philosophical and perspective, role-modelling is not enough to satisfy the basic needs of an ethical business at either the normative or descriptive levels. Jean-Paul Sartre states that we are by definition morally bound because we share the planet with others whom we need to consider in the choices we make (Sartre, 1960) and this aligns with Orthodox thinking based on Holy Scriptures. The primary paradigm of evaluation is always the self in relation to others. We should be basically always acting on the behalf of the interests of others (Gini, 1996), but sadly do not. The expectations of customers are thus not met. What is needed is sound business based on ethical principles. An organizational climate of fairness and cooperation is needed to ensure social and personal cohesion and the development all stakeholders of the organization, and this must transmitted to the organization as a whole through effective codes of conduct.

The significance of the Word of God as an enduring rejoinder should not be disregarded. Holy Scripture is not only the utterly faithful expression of God's message of salvation but endures as the response of the community of believers to the call of God (Schnackenburg, 1964). God thus continues to express His word to humanity. We seek to remain responsive in faith through the words which, though written in the past, are now their response to him. Holy Scripture is undoubtedly an elementary, indispensable, constituent component of the Church at respective periods of its reality (Schillebeeckx, n.d.). The Holy Scriptures instruct us to be benevolent and to honour contracts. We need to timeously pay our bills and treat stakeholders with dignity. We are required to be honest in all dealing and have integrity. Such qualities are important in every aspect of business dealings. Especially critical is how we treat people in business – we are all created in God's image. Do managers and business leaders always treat people with dignity? (Sproul, 1996). This is the uppermost priority for an Orthodox Christian from an ethical perspective.

Conclusion

Eastern Orthodoxy exhibits a very high respect and concern for human life as a God-given gift. Whatever one undertakes must be based on supreme values and concerns. “The Orthodox ethic is a virtue ethic, but not a rationalistic one. The virtuous man is not Aristotle's *spoudaios* in whom right reason alone reigns supreme. He is, rather, the new Adam, the man-god in whom divine love is incarnated and the creature is reunited” (Guroian, 1988). Working in any business provides the Orthodox believer with an opportunity to live virtuously and truthfully. A business offers a perfect milieu for a believer to live out their faith and helps them to learning and practice biblical wisdom. This invariably encompasses understanding, having needed skills, commitment, a sense of responsibility for others and judiciousness. Business can and should be a context for employee sanctification. It is one place in which the *Imago Dei* can be renovated leading one to the prospect of life everlasting.

In Eastern Orthodoxy, ethics must of necessity operate within a pro-life bias that honours and respects each person's life as a God-given gift that necessitates guarding, progress and augmentation. Orthodox Christian ethics for business is not a set of remote ethical principles but is then rather dependent on a sound Christian interpretation of reality as articulated in the relationship between God and the *Ekklesia*. Holy Scripture offers us spiritually sound principles based upon a sound understanding of reality that all life is created by God (Breck, 2003).



Orthodox ethics necessitates the use of reason to comprehend from Holy Scripture and patristic teachings the principles and descriptions that should guide all human action and bring about a spirit of *agape* in society (Calkins, 2000). The Christian working in any business, is obligated to merge a spiritual calling to live the abundance of divine resources within the business reality of resource limitation. Thus, managing the incongruity between abundance and limitation is the ethical challenge which is the basis of practical reflection on Christians and business (Chase, 2004). The key concern and interest of Orthodox ethics is not empirical science, but human salvation. Orthodoxy's theological slant is holistic drawing from a multiplicity of holy scriptures and teachings (Cotsonis, 1964). It asserts that faith devoid of a sacramental and ecclesial beginning can simply have no desired ethical stance. We are thus called to be discerning and study the Holy Scriptures, traditions and teachings in general of the faith and promote our holiness.

Orthodox believers are called to acknowledge, affirm, and respond positively to the uniqueness of each human being as their faith communicates invariable truths about both God and people. A Christian orthodox believer who considers the unconditional value of life, cannot be inconsiderate in the workplace or society, but needs to be benevolent and loving toward all other people. He or she cannot degrade the natural environment either and display a genuine caring for nature and society. There can be no notion of disregard for the plight of fellow human beings irrespective of creed, race or sexual or religious orientation. In the workplace and in business dealings the welfare of all stakeholders must be considered. Business leaders need to reconsider their many assumptions and opinions about religion and the nature of reality and how religion can bolster their operations.

Modernism accepts that knowledge, truth, how one should act and ethicality are founded in science and reason alone, but Orthodoxy for one, is based on the clear consideration that God is Our Lord and Master, and that we are mere mortal beings. Orthodoxy can teach us much about how to live in harmony with others and preserve our environment sustainably. The Orthodox faith affirm the inseparability of ethics and one's liturgical existence. One needs to live the faith in the body of Christ, and worship the Holy Trinity (Guroian, 2002). We cannot continue to strive exist in a society in which some exist only to serve themselves and are devoid of a social conscience and community spirit which is line with the Orthodox faiths striving for *Theosis* for its believers.

The limitations of the present study, as well as the areas of prospective research, have been taken into consideration. For one the author may have overemphasized the role of philosophy, and the mainstream of Orthodox theology which always claimed to rest on Scripture and may have to an extent used other disciplines in an auxiliary fashion. Any scholar thinking he or she is autonomous in understanding texts, runs the risk of engaging in furtive philosophizing of his or her own, thus inadvertently using the terminology of a philosophy presently in the mode short of grasping its thought entirely. Although the author's focus in this study is specifically on Orthodox Christian theology, general principles emerge, which may indeed have salience in the context of other global faiths and also the religious perspectives of other Christian denominations which could be a good basis for future studies on the theme of this article.

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