A Defense of Biblical Ethics in Business

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ABSTRACT: The application of biblical ethics in mainstream American business has long been displaced by more modern theories of ethics, such as utilitarianism and contractarianism. As the Enlightenment period introduced a greater focus on rationalism and individualism, business people began to find biblical ethics to be an unworkable approach to contemporary business problems. In this article, the authors will argue that biblical ethics is a viable tool to be used in resolving ethical issues in modern business settings. The authors will first provide a high-level overview of the history of biblical ethics as a model for businesses and consider why it fell into disuse. They will then examine the modern alternatives of utilitarianism and contractarianism and provide examples in which those theories failed to protect businesses from unethical behavior. The authors will then demonstrate the presence of these ethical alternatives within the Bible and defend biblical ethics as providing a more complete and reliable ethical source in the modern business setting. They will finally contend that the perceived complexity in applying biblical ethics to business problems is actually an opportunity for Christian business people to grow in sanctification.

KEYWORDS: biblical ethics, business ethics, utilitarianism, contractarianism

INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, businesses have needed some means of guiding their behavior to help them remain ethically sound. If for no other reason than to ensure their survival in a competitive marketplace, businesses had to at least meet the ethical expectations of justice in their social context. Otherwise, they would meet the fate Adam Smith described as waiting for those who failed those expectations: eventual exclusion from the market (Bragues, 2009). For centuries, in European and Occidental cultures, businesses were guided by biblical principles, some of which were enforced by law (e.g., Exodus 21:35; Exodus 22:1; Exodus 22:10; Leviticus 19:13; Leviticus 25:15).

Those days are over. In the modern American corporate climate, requiring biblical applications in a business environment can lead to federal claims of discrimination (USEEOC, 2017). In any event, biblical ethics, as a set of rules, would be seen as an old-fashioned and unworkable approach to business ethics (Lantos, 2002; Nelson et al., 2017). Businesses have instead adopted more modern, secular approaches to guide their activity, such as utilitarianism and contractarianism. Unfortunately, these modern approaches have proven insufficient to safeguard businesses and can even be detected in examples of modern ethical failures.

In this article, the authors argue that biblical ethics is a superior source for guiding business behavior. They will begin by briefly recounting the decline in biblical principles as a business tool. They will then explore two alternative ethical theories that have replaced biblical ethics. Using a series of well-known examples, they will argue that these alternative bases of ethical decision making, applied in isolation, have failed to protect businesses from ethical failure. They will then demonstrate that these theories can also be seen in Scripture and argue that biblical ethics provide the flexibility to apply different ethical approaches in different situations. They will finally contend that the complexity in applying biblical ethics in business, far from being a burden, is actually an opportunity for business people to wrestle with, and better understand, the mind of God.

ARTICLE

THE DECLINE OF BIBLICAL ETHICS IN BUSINESS

While business ethics as an academic discipline did not take recognizable form until the 1960s or 1970s, ethics in business finds its roots in the Bible and in biblical society (De George, 2015, 1987). Historically, biblical ethics centered on divine command theory, which established ethical parameters according to the commands of God (Evans, 2007). This theory represents a deontological, or rules-based, approach to ethics. Specific theocratic law is laid out in the Torah of the Jewish and Christian Scripture. Culturally, as God's chosen people, the nation of Israel's whole lifestyle was meant to satisfy the commands of God (Exodus 19:6). The application of divine command theory to business issues was a natural consequence of the culture, as all aspects of the society operated under the law given by God. For Israel, business ethics was indistinguishable from everyday standards of how to treat one another within a community. In Exodus 22, the Mosaic law of bailments in business (how to distribute liability when one party has possession of another party's property for business purposes) is presented in the same verses with the punishment for seducing virgins. This approach of basing business standards on divine commands persisted among the Jewish community into the first century (such as in the prohibition of harvesting on the Sabbath–Matthew 12:2).

Biblical Ethics in Pre-Modern Business

After Jesus's ministry on earth, Christianity spread throughout the Western world. Impacted nations began to mold their societies around belief in God's sovereignty over their lives, and the Bible provided a common standard for business relationships (De George, 2015). Divine command theory's impact on business could be seen in areas like usury laws, in the traditional sense of charging interest, which was seen as a violation of the command to "love thy neighbor" (Matthew 22:39) and a way to exploit the vulnerable (Mayyasi, 2017). In the 4th century, Christian councils reviled the practice of usury and, by 800 AD, Emperor Charlemagne had outlawed the practice. This approach gradually moderated and, by the time of the reformation, Martin Luther interpreted the passages cited to condemn interest as calls to generosity and held that "usurers sin only when their actions violate the do-unto-others principle" (Mayyasi, 2017). Shifts in biblical interpretations occurred, but God's scriptural commands remained the standard for ethics in much of the Western World until the general erosion in biblical confidence that began in the 17th century.

The Enlightenment Era Decline in Biblical Ethics

The Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries emphasized man's capacity to reason and to explain the natural world. The movement encouraged the criticism and restructuring of established social and political institutions of the time, which were believed to be unnecessarily shrouded in religious dogma and mystery and held in place by tradition (Bristow, 2017). Enlightenment thinkers like Baruch Spinoza destabilized religious and political beliefs by promoting the idea that the use of philosophical reason leads to the denial of God. Not all Enlightenment thinkers came to the same conclusion (Bristow, 2017). The highly influential John Locke believed in both God and rationality (Locke, 1689).

Nonetheless, the general societal shift in focus from divine standards and collective cooperation to individual freedoms and personal happiness proved inconsistent with some biblical assumptions. The Enlightenment did not wipe out the use of biblical ethics in business, but it did undermine its rationale. As late as the 1960s, professors of business preferred to address ethical issues through a lens of "social responsibility" rather than via its historical roots in the Bible (De George, 1987). Add to this new cultural trajectory the inevitable loss of rhetorical and logical categories for biblical truth as Christian faith waned in popularity, and it is not surprising that business people began to abandon biblical ethics. The combination of these factors created a business environment that invited ethical failure.

The 19th Century Vacuum of Business Ethics

From the Age of Enlightenment up to the latter half of the 19th century, *laissez-faire* was the favored mode of economic regulation in the US (Hill, n.d.). This was the period when the industrial revolution was changing the economic landscape, and the growing urban workforce suffered from poor working conditions, long hours, and meager compensation. Though the affliction of the working class was evident, "many defended *laissez-faire* economics as divinely sanctioned; God's 'hidden hand' governed these economic processes" (Smith, 2003, p. 313). Andrew Carnegie (1889) embodied the attitude of the "robber barons" of this period in his article "Wealth" when he said, "[W]hile the law [of competition] may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race because it ensures the survival of the fittest in every department." Carnegie (1889), went on to say that we must welcome inequality as not only necessary but essential for the future progress of mankind. Ironically, Carnegie was a devout Christian and philanthropist (Carnegie, 2006), but his benevolence was focused outside his business relationships. Carnegie's views reflected the zeitgeist of the Gilded Age; religion was a private affair, and business was business. Business ethics in the hyper-individual, free market society were determined by the bottom line instead of by biblical standards (Smith, 2003).

Christian ministerial elements within American society sought to stem this shift away from biblical business ethics. "Protestant leaders denounced the separation of Christian principles from business life, challenging parishioners to practice biblical and moral values faithfully in all activities" (Smith, 2003). These efforts ultimately failed and workers and customers had to revert to statutory and regulatory reform to improve business practices. The unethical corporate conduct of the Gilded Age opened society's eyes to the need for ethical standards in business, although biblical ethics never returned to its former strength (Ginsberg, 2017).

As biblical ethics fell into disuse, divine command theory, through which it had formerly been focused, would become increasingly viewed as too inflexible and limited in scope to apply to modern business situations (Lantos, 2002). The literal commands of Exodus 20 create clear ethical principles, but it can be difficult to see how those commandments and other Old Testament laws apply in modern business settings. Something about a Leviticus 19:19 law that prohibits the wearing of clothes made from both linen and wool is lost in translation when trying to formulate an ethical policy on electronic surveillance of employees. The inability to clearly apply divine commands in modern corporate settings may have contributed to biblical ethics being supplanted by alternative theories that are more readily applied to business problems.

The Modern Demand for Business Ethics

Ethical formation of some kind, however, continues to be a critical question in business (Abend, 2015). The negative impact caused by prominent business ethical failures of the late 20th century and early 21st century have contributed to the present social expectation that companies should be held to some ethical standard (Leone, 2015). As evidenced in Milton Friedman's (1970) famous New York Times article, "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase its Profits," modern western societies had bought into the view that capitalist economies were meant to serve no other purpose than to maximize individual preferences and self-interests efficiently (Hanson, 1999). Bekker (2011) contended "[Capitalist economies'] relative success may have engendered a belief that the market will encompass and serve human values without any socially directed agenda." Now, however, charitable giving, social responsibility, and community involvement are all expected of businesses. In some industries, specific codes of ethics are required by governmental fiat or as a requirement for licensure (see e.g., 17 CFR S. 204A-1 for registered investment advisors; CFA Institute, n.d. for certified financial analysts).

Business scandals in the recent past have also occasioned the expansion of law in order to promote ethical operations in business (Abend, 2015). For example, the ethical failures of Enron and WorldCom acted as the catalyst for the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (De George, 2015). Companies publish mission statements and core values meant to guide their behavior, but the mode of ethical framing is now divorced from divine commands. The question "What would God want me to do in this situation?" is difficult to standardize in a Christian-based company and difficult to even ask in secular corporate environments. The evidence of biblical ethics in business law has also waned. Blue laws, for example, have increasingly diminished in order for businesses to operate on Sundays (Dilloff, 1980).

There are a variety of ethical frameworks from which businesses can choose to operate today, but very few businesses would identify with, or even consider, biblical ethics. In the following sections, the authors argue that the dismissal of biblical ethics is short sighted. They will begin by identifying common alternatives to biblical ethics businesses use in making ethical decisions and then demonstrate that these theories, by themselves, can be inadequate. They will then demonstrate that biblical ethics may be found to include two of the most popular modern ethical alternatives: utilitarianism and contractarianism.

MODERN ALTERNATIVE ETHICAL THEORIES APPLIED BY BUSINESSES

The divine command theory, based on the biblical text, is only one of many different ethical theories (Cafferky, 2015). Modern businesses can choose from any of them to direct the company and guide how it operates. This article will elaborate on two of the more popular modern ethical theories: utilitarianism and contractarianism. Other ethical theories, such as virtue ethics, have been deployed as a basis for business ethics (Moriarty, 2021) but, for the sake of brevity, this article will focus on the two cited above.

Utilitarianism

Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that was embraced during the Enlightenment. At its core, it states that the morality of an act or rule is dependent upon its outcomes (Nathanson, n.d.). The idea of classic utilitarianism as a specific school of thought was articulated by Jeremy Bentham in his 1789 book, Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation (Mautner, n.d.). According to Bentham (1789), actions are considered "right" when they either promote happiness or pleasure but are "wrong" if the end result causes unhappiness or pain. John Stuart Mill furthered Bentham's work by making a distinction between quantitative and qualitative pleasures (Driver, 2014). Today, modern utilitarianism would support the act or rule of conduct that produces the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people.

Utilitarianism has firm representation as a business ethics norm. For example, in the pharmaceutical industry, placebos are used in the second phase of clinical trials to judge if an experimental drug is actually having the desired effect on patients (Junod, n.d.). Some participants in the trial are given the drug while others are given the placebo. This evidences a utilitarian approach to business ethics. It may be viewed as unethical to give a patient a placebo that the pharmaceutical company knows will not work, but the placebo trial ensures the tested drug will be truly effective for a larger number of future patients. The entire industry applies this utilitarian analysis to justify what might otherwise be considered unethical treatment of sick patients (U.S. Food & Drug Administration, 1998).

Contractarianism

Contractarianism is an ethical theory which holds that "moral norms derive their normative force from the idea of contract or mutual agreement" (Cudd & Eftekhari, 2018). One of the most notable theorists associated with contractarianism is Thomas Hobbes (Harrison, 2003). Hobbes thought that a self-interested individual would not enter into something that posed a threat to herself, and groups of rational individuals condemn actions that are potentially harmful to them (Cudd & Eftekhari, 2018). He believed that people were driven to act morally from a place of dependence on societal acceptance to efficiently maximize their own personal interests.

Harvard philosopher T. M. Scanlon states that, "An act is wrong if its performance under the circumstances would be disallowed by any set of principles for the general regulation of behaviour that no one could reasonably reject as a basis for informed, unforced, general agreement" (Scanlon, 1998, p. 153). According to Scanlon (1998), justification is used to discern the ethical standing of an action. A "right" action can be justified while a "wrong" action cannot. Contractarianism relies on the social norms that establish what society will permit.

A notable example of contractarianism in business is Warren Buffett's standard of ethics for Berkshire Hathaway. Buffet is committed to upholding the law by promoting basic standards of ethical and legal behavior (Berkshire Hathaway Inc., n.d.). When asked about these basic ethical standards, Warren Buffett replied:

> I want employees to ask themselves whether they are willing to have any contemplated act appear the next day on the front page of their local paper—to be read by their spouses, children and friends—with the reporting done by an informed and critical reporter. (Berkshire Hathaway Inc., n.d.)

Buffett's approach to Berkshire Hathaway's ethics relies solely on social norms and what society will endorse. Being guided by how one's actions would be perceived if they were on the front page of a newspaper is one way of applying contractarian ethics.

AN ARGUMENT FOR THE INADEQUACY OF MODERN ALTERNATIVES

One measure of the effectiveness of ethical theories used to guide businesses could be the absence of ethical failures by businesses employing those theories. Unfortunately, notable examples of corporate scandals testify to the deficiencies of modern business ethics. Alphabet Inc.'s subsidiary, Google, provides a potential example for the failure of utilitarianism. Google has a simple ethical credo: "Don't be evil" (Alphabet Investor Relations, 2020). While this provides a memorable statement for employees, it provides no real guidance for particular business decisions. Google's mission statement, however, is: "To organize the world's information and make it universally accessible and useful" (Google, n.d.). This indicates the company's dedication to the universal good, an element of utilitarianism. Then, in Google's product strategy, the observer sees the company's utilitarian ethics in its prioritization of the general good over harms done to a few. In 2018, Google debuted Dragonfly, a second attempt at entering the Chinese market, and planned to "launch a censored version of its search engine in China that [would] blacklist websites and search terms about human rights, democracy, religion, and peaceful protest" (Gallagher, 2018). International human rights organizations and investigative reporters spoke out against the project, the most notable objectors being "Googlers" themselves. An open letter to Google, signed by over 400 employees, condemned Dragonfly, stating, "Our opposition to Dragonfly is not about China: we object to technologies that aid the powerful in oppressing the vulnerable, wherever they may be" (Google Employees Against Dragonfly, 2018).

Google's plans to launch Dragonfly were ethical under utilitarianism. Google would be complicit in the Chinese government's suppression of information from its citizens and aid its expansion of surveillance powers to flag citizens that searched terms that threatened the state. However, the increased access to information (though censored) for a population of 1.39 billion could be justified as the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Google' actions, however, failed a contractarian test. It was confirmed in 2019, at a senate judiciary meeting by Google's vice president of public policy, Karan Bhatia, that the company only terminated the Dragonfly project in response to the overwhelming condemnation of the project in the United States (Sue, 2019). Google's failed attempts at entering the Chinese market exemplify how a utilitarian approach to business ethics, by itself, can prove inadequate as a means of directing business behavior.

Facebook would appear to operate on the basis of contractarian business ethics. Thomas Hobbes, the father of contractarianism, proposed that right acts are those which do not violate the free, rational agreements individuals have made (Cudd & Eftekhari, 2018). When joining Facebook, users agree to Facebook's terms of service and policies. Facebook's terms of service state, "You give us permission to use your name and profile picture and information about actions you have taken on Facebook next to or in connection with ads, offers, and other sponsored content that we display across our Products…" (Facebook, 2020B). However, users do not get to agree with *how* the data collected is used. Facebook's data policy relates what kind of third-party partners they share user information with, including "partners who use our analytics services," "advertisers," and "researchers and academics" (Facebook, 2020A).

In 2016, Facebook was involved in an ethical scandal when the FTC opened an investigation to determine how Cambridge Analytica, essentially a voter-profiling company, accessed data collected from over 50 million Facebook users. In 2014, a researcher named Aleksandr Kogan created a personality quiz app for Facebook. Only a few hundred thousand users downloaded the app but it gave open access not only to the information of users who downloaded the app, but, most importantly, to their friends. Instead of deleting that data, Kogan's app saved it to a private database and later sold that information, from 50 million Facebook users, to Cambridge Analytica which "used it to make 30 million 'psychographic' profiles about voters" (Meyer, 2018). Facebook did not breach its privacy contract in this situation as it attested that Kogan "gained access to this information in a legitimate way and through the proper channels," even though Kogan ultimately passed the information on to third parties in violation of Facebook rules (Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). However, fault was found with Facebook for failing to protect its users, who were seen in this situation as a vulnerable population, from third parties. As Robinson Meyer of the Atlantic (2018) put it:

> It's almost like Facebook was a local public library lending out massive hard drives of music, but warning people not to copy any of it to their home computer. When someone eventually did copy all that music—and got in trouble for it—isn't the hard-drive-dispensing public library responsible as well? (Meyer, 2018)

Although, in this circumstance, Facebook had not violated its contract with its users, users were still upset because the company violated a more fundamental—perhaps even Kantian—ethical standard of fairness that required it to care for its users at a level beyond what it agreed to do. The contractarian ethical approach the company used should have exonerated Facebook from accusations of being unethical since Facebook both notified and received the consent of its users to perform as it did. The public outrage over Facebook's collection of data indicates that contractarianism, applied by itself, may be an incomplete ethical model in business.

Another indication of the failure of modern ethical theory to guide business behavior is the continued expansion of statutes and regulations designed to protect vulnerable elements in the economy from business malfeasance. From 1998 to 2016, federal agencies, departments, and commissions issued 1,044 new "economically significant" rules in the United States (Crews, 2017). The depth and breadth of business regulation continuously promulgated in the United States supports the argument that the modern approaches to business ethics have failed to achieve the desired result. The Financial Institutions Reform, Recovery, and Enforcement Act (1989), the Sarbanes Oxley Act (2002), the Dodd-Frank Act (2010), the General Data Protection Regulation (2016), along with scores of less famous laws, exemplify the need to enact legislation and promulgate regulation to protect against the harms resulting when businesses experience ethical failure both here and abroad. "Regulations are indispensable to the proper function of economies and societies. They create the 'rules of the game' for citizens, business, government, and civil society" (Committee for Economic Development, 2017). If modern business ethics were adequate to control the behavior of business organizations, there would presumably be minimal harm and little need for further regulation. The constant stream of new rules for business, however, indicates that the ethics are insufficient.

These examples of corporate ethical failings demonstrate that the modern ethical alternatives to biblical ethics can be independently inadequate to guide the activities of businesses. Can biblical ethics provide a better source of guidance? The authors now argue that biblical ethics, far from being limited to the divine commands of Exodus 20, provide a range of theories under which to evaluate and guide business behavior. The answer to the failure of modern ethical theories in isolation may be found in a more nuanced understanding of biblical ethics in business. Rather than interpreting the ethical guidance of Scripture narrowly on the explicit divine commands contained therein, businesses could instead derive multiple opportunities for ethical guidance from the Bible. These opportunities include the two modern theories discussed above. In the following section, the authors demonstrate that each of these two modern theories are evident in the scriptural record.

MODERN ALTERNATIVE ETHICAL APPROACHES IN SCRIPTURE

The presence of modern alternatives to divine command ethics can be found throughout the Bible. Cafferky (2015) notes that while some modern ethical theories are opposed to Scripture, others have deep biblical roots. Utilitarianism, contractarianism, and other ethical approaches are evident in the New and Old Testaments.

Utilitarianism can be found in multiple places in Scripture (*But see* Mihai, 2018). A prime example of this theory can be found in the Gospel of John. After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11:44), the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together to discuss the threat that Jesus posed to their institutions. They expressed their concern: "If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation" (John 11:48). The high priest resolved the problem by suggesting that Jesus should be killed, stating, "It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish" (John 11:50). His proposal represents a clear application of utilitarian theory. Rather than condemning the ethics of the high priest, Scripture actually affirms his approach. The following verse states, "He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation" (John 11:51).

An Old Testament example of utilitarianism is from a story in 2 Samuel 20. A rebel named Sheba had taken refuge in the city of Abel. Joab, King David's military leader, laid siege to the city in order to flush Sheba out. The citizens of Abel knew from experience that the effects of siege warfare on a besieged city were horrific. With this knowledge in mind, a woman came forward to help the city avoid the inevitable suffering that was to come. She spoke with Joab, and he assured her that if she turned over Sheba, the army would depart from the city. "Then the woman went to all the people in her wisdom. And they cut off the head of Sheba, the son of Bichri, and threw it out to Joab" (2 Samuel 20:22 ESV). Joab and his men returned to Jerusalem once they had Sheba's head. This story exemplifies utilitarianism because the needs of the majority outweighed the needs of one man. Notably, the actions of the woman were counted as wise.

Contractarianism can also be found in Christian Scripture. Old Testament laws provided a social contract between the people and God. God gave Moses His Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, and they were later affirmed by the people of Israel. The Israelites in Exodus 24:7 say, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and we will be obedient." These commandments, and others stated throughout Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy, eventually acted as the foundation of the nation's cultural norms.

Acts 15 provides another example of contractarianism in Scripture. After Peter's visit to Antioch, other Jewish believers (some referred to as "Judaizers") came from Judea and began to preach to the Gentile believers. The message from the Judaizers was that, according to the law of Moses, the Gentiles could not be saved unless they were circumcised (Acts 15:1-5). These Judaizers did not deny that the Gentile brothers were believers and baptized in the Holy Spirit, but preached that their ultimate salvation was dependent on keeping the law of Moses (Horton, 1981). The Judaizing teachers derived their moral norms from Old Testament law and required adherence to it from everyone who joined the Jewish community. Although this requirement was lifted later in Acts 15, because it was integral to the social contract in ancient Jewish culture at the time of the New Testament, these Gentile believers accepted for a time that they were required to conform to the Mosaic Law and be circumcised.

The presence of modern ethical theories in Scripture shows that biblical morals can be more nuanced than quick and easy applications of divine commands. The criticism that modern business people leveled at divine command ethics is rational. It can be difficult to apply ancient laws to modern business situations. However, because biblical ethics captures these modern approaches along with divine commands and other ethical standards, it can provide a more comprehensive approach to ethics than slavishly applying any single modern theory.

THE GIFT OF STRUGGLING WITH BIBLICAL ETHICS

Determining all the benefits and burdens of a business decision, as required by utilitarianism, can be challenging, but it is at least an empirical question and presumably knowable. Reliable data regarding social expectations of business is not always available but, at least in retrospect, one can observe the media and judicial attention to one's decisions and draw conclusions by inference. By contrast, struggling with understanding the mind of God may seem daunting to busy managers. The struggle to align oneself with the ethical standards of a God whose "thoughts are higher" than our own (Isaiah 55:9) is understandably challenging. Those seeking a quick and easy approach to applying biblical ethics to business, in this article or elsewhere, will be disappointed. Some ethicists, notably Stanley Hauerwas, might contend that only through activity, such as the making of business decisions, can biblical ethics be developed. Business would provide business managers with the context in which Hauerwas (1991) would hold that ethics must be lived out.

Far from being a limitation of biblical ethics, however, the authors contend that it is a benefit. Modern business people famously complain that their business vocation consumes their time and attention such that they are unable to pursue deeper truths of God. Even weekly worship attendance is a challenge for some business people whose jobs make demands on them well above the standard Monday to Friday work week (Ball, n.d.). Could not the practice of biblical ethics in the workplace move their engagement with the truth of God to the very center of their workday? In addition to providing a greater chance of a more reliable ethical result, the application of biblical ethics in the workplace may become a source of sanctification.

When we approach biblical ethics in business as an opportunity to deepen our faith in the very middle of our business activity, the fact that the application of biblical ethics is challenging becomes a gift rather than a burden. Practicing ethics in the workplace should do more than help us tick boxes that provide an acceptable answer. It should help us grow ethical muscles so that our ethics in business become increasingly favorable (Cafferky, 2017). Given this developmental goal, the opportunity to wrestle with God's ethical truth is a privilege. It is a process through which one comes to a better understanding of the Lord.

CONCLUSION

Modern businesspeople long ago dismissed biblical ethics as too outmoded and complicated to guide business decisions. The two modern alternatives described herein, however, have not uniformly distinguished themselves as safeguarding businesses from ethical failure when applied in isolation. Some of the most famous ethical failures in modern business history occurred in companies using one or more of these alternative ethical approaches. The interminable expansion of business law as a means to exercise external control over business activity also bears evidence to the failure of modern business ethics to avoid harms.

Businesses need a more comprehensive approach to ethics that can help them make ethical decisions drawing from alternative theories. The authors have argued that Scripture may provide a more robust and nuanced approach to business ethics. Each of the two modern ethical approaches discussed can be seen in the Bible. Utilizing Scripture as a source for business ethics will allow businesses to capture those alternatives but also divine commands, other ethical approaches, and an opportunity for a meta-ethic as to when to apply one or the other. Development of this meta-ethic may be a critical topic for additional research and analysis (cf. Cafferky, 2015). Inherent in the authors' argument is the Augustinian assumption that all truth is God's truth and that He is uniquely qualified to set the standard of ethical behavior and may do so through means we may classify under different ethical theories. Future research may reveal alternative assumptions that would allow secular businesses to rely on Scripture without abandoning their neutrality on religious points of view.

The authors have also contended that the application of biblical ethics in business can be a source of sanctification for Christian business people, re-introducing faith into the middle of their workday. In this context, the very complexity of applying biblical ethics provides an opportunity for spiritual growth rather than a burden.

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