



Christian Ethical Response to Business Management Among Churches in Oyo State, Nigeria

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Abstract

A number of academic researchers have been carried out on the importance of Christian ethics. However, this paper examines the Christian ethical response to business management among the churches in Oyo State of Nigeria. In view of the 21st century needs for integrity in Business Management, in spite of the various unethical attitudes and corruption, and for which the church cannot be exonerated due to her overwhelming responsibilities for charity and infrastructural development. The onus of this paper therefore is the considerations placed on the business enterprises by the church, namely the Education Sector; Money Market/Shares, Business Centres; Guest Houses; Bookstores; Agric Sectors; Cooperative Society and Aids; and Estate Investment. The method adopted for this paper is historical; the historical method considers the history and processes used among the Church's Business Enterprises in Oyo State. The finding shows that, over the years, it has been difficult for churches to meet the needs of their members owing to lack of adequate funds and the drive for customers and economic gains. There is need for enlightenment for Church leaders to improve their financial base without compromising ethical values. This template would serve as a means of educating and guiding Church into taking positive steps to investment and management, and help Churches to generate more income. It would as well guide churches in upholding Godly fear in their businesses. Conclusively the church officers (Treasurer/Accounts Staff) including the Pastors should be given the opportunity to attend Seminars, Workshop and Conferences in order to be updated on how church ethical business can be managed. Churches must seek the proper counsel and guidance of the professionals on any business investment drive they want to embark on, so as to avoid bad businesses; Churches must



see the ethical business drive as biblical and churches must, as matter of policy, earmark an agreed sum of money in their budget. It is recommended therefore that, Churches should imbibe ethical values in their business, remembering that Christ's name must be honoured with ethical principles.

Keywords: Christian Ethics, Business Management, Investment, Ethical Values, Budget, Professional, Oyo State

Introduction

The word ethics is derived from the Greek word *ethos*, which in common Greek use had two meanings: habit or custom and ordinance or law. Both of these dimensions are mentioned in the New Testament. For example, it is commonly translated "custom" in Acts 25:16 (it was not the Roman tradition to give up any one), while it is translated as "morals" or "character" in 1 Corinthians 15:33 ("Bad company ruins good morals", NIV). Ethics and morality are two terms that frequently used interchangeably. Ethics may be defined as the study or science of moral principles that guide or influence human actions. "Ethics is the methodical study of norms of right and wrong, fairness and injustice, virtue and vice, the goal of implementing those values in the reality of our lives," explains Dennis Hollinger. Christian ethics are standards or right and wrong based on Christian teaching of Jesus Christ, the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament apostles. They serve as guide for Christians on the way that they should live. Christian ethical living is concerned with arranging Christian actions in every circumstance of life in accordance with our shared Christian religious convictions.

The majority of businesses are affected with ethical issues. Their managers in the public and private sectors, whether in a small business or as the chief financial officer (CFO) of a multinational firm, encounter ethical difficulties in their work lives as they try to meet their work lives as they try to meet their commitments, grow earnings, or promote the institution. Religious groups are frequently subjected to those wholesome practices. Ethical issues can take various forms, and entrepreneurs may require assistance to resolve complicated and difficult disputes. Business Managers or Accountants may also treat



ethical dilemmas as “business decisions” and not utilize their professional code to assess potential courses of action.

As noted in John Lewis thesis (2013), the CGMA (Chartered Global Management Accountants), the survey reported on Business Ethics shows the trends, pressure points, and ethical gaps within some organizations. The keys findings of the CGMA survey include:

1. **Business Challenge 1 – Ethical Culture:** According to the survey, firms that provide both declaration of ethical ideals and a code of ethics, as well as relevant training, hotlines, and incentives, such as performance-based prizes, have increased by 10% to 15% since 2008. In comparison to 2008, corporate leadership appears to have had a less active reaction in examining and accepting responsibility for ethical performance, as evidenced by a large drop in the number of corporate executives who had official responsibility for ethics. This adds to the evidence that there is a disconnectedness between corporate leadership’s rhetoric on ethical concerns and reality. A weaker “tone from the top” can have major consequences for an organization’s overall ethical operational culture.
2. **Business Challenge 2 – Accounting for Entries:** According to the survey, the number of organizations collecting and reporting ethical data has increased by about 20%. Although the majority of management accountants believe it is critical to collect and evaluate ethical data, one in five say, their company will not do so in the near future.
3. **Business Challenge 3 – Ethical Dilemmas and Pressures:** Despite increased ethical norms and training, companies are under more pressure to operate unethically. The pressures are more visible in emerging markets.

The need to act in the public good is a distinguishing element of the accounting profession, and professional ethics compels accountants to self-regulate their behaviour in accordance with the code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the code) of the International Ethics Standards Board for Accountants (IESBA). Members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC) must follow ethical standards that are at least as stringent as those established in the code. Scenarios such as self-interest, self-review, advocacy, familiarity, and intimidation are all examples of situations that might risk values. Understanding and being aware of these variables will aid in determining which basic values are impacted by a scenario and why



(Christopher Aroid, 2021 Ethics, Technology and Professional Accountant in the Digital Age).

It is practically clear that the church in the 21st century has been more involved in various business enterprises than any other time in the past. To this end so much views has been held about the church's involvement. Some people have blamed some churches for not been fair, just and equitable in their business enterprise. Some church denominations who have ventured into having schools have been blamed and castigated for over-charging parents in the education of their children and wards, particularly those who have private universities and other tertiary institutions. The same could be said of church's involvement in over-pricing or branding of articles and facilities in hotels, guest houses, supermarkets and others. Therefore, it has become very important to ethically investigate the ethical values of churches in business enterprise. It is critical to situate one's approach to Christian ethics within a broader grasp of various approaches to ethics and moral reasoning. (Abela, A.V; and Murphy, P.E). Three techniques are frequently noted—Command, Consequences and Character are the simplest ways to define them (Catholic Church Catechist, 2003)

Theoretical Framework

The theory of Utilitarianism, 1789, Jeremy Bentham published his book “An Introduction to the principles of Morals and Legislation”, centred on individual utility and welfare, utilitarianism builds on the notion that any action which increases the overall welfare in the society is good, and any action that decreases welfare is bad. By this notion Utilitarianism's focus lies with its outcomes and pays little attention to how these outcomes are shaped by broader philosophical consideration, which also translates into a theory of justice or to put in a simple way, utilitarian norm suggest that resources or benefit should be distributed in a way that maximizes overall social welfare or happiness rather than focusing on individual fairness or equality as propounded by John Rawls' “theory about justice and fairness”. It is unfortunate that many a time the church as a whole sadly fails. As an institution, the church does not uphold values of justice, fairness and equity always. The members of the church need to supplement their *karma* (deeds) with *dharma* (harmony with the world) and *netter* (ethics)



Literature Review

Ethical Principles in Church Business

In Godly Businesses, Christian ethics in business and economic management is essential. It refers to the socio-economic life that began with the arrival of Christianity as a revitalized continuation of Jewish values, in both intellectual and practical advancements (Charles 1998), several Christian thinkers, notably from the thirteenth century, have made substantial contributions to business ethics centuries before the contemporary movement of business ethics (Mêlé 2013; Schlag 2013). Theologians from the School of Salamanca, such as Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolommeo de las camas, provided a robust defence of universal human rights in the sixteenth century, with consequences for labour (Hoffmann-Holland 2009). Some authors from this school of thought worked on business and finance moral concerns, such as how to conduct business in a Christian ethical manner. They mainly followed Thomas Aquinas, who incorporated the moral natural law- at least its core principles – into a virtue – based moral framework. Morality on contracts, financial transactions, just pricing and market morality, and other topics were covered in scholastic doctrine (Chafuen 1986; Mele 1999, 2016; Azevedo Aves and Moreira 2010, 2013). Scholasticism is still alive and well, and it may contribute significantly to the realm corporate ethics.

Ethical Business

Ethical means relating to moral principles or associating with what is right or standard. Ethical is being in accordance with the rules or standard for right conduct, practice or behaviour. In Christianity context we say businesses that are support by Bible ideologies, principles and beliefs. We can then confidently say that Christian Ethical Businesses are those businesses that do not negate the ideologies, practices and beliefs of the Christian faith. That is Business that is biblical, Business that we cannot be ashamed of doing. Basically, we are saying business that church as religious organization can do or participate in to bring profit to her, to support her statutory tithes and offering in order to do more in the area of evangelism and administration of the church. Businesses can be in large or small scale depending on the available capital and projection for development.



Business That Churches Can Venture Into

Here are some ethical businesses that churches can venture into after proper consultation and field work that is, (i) Printing Press (ii) Fuel or Gas-Station (iii) Educational Sector (iv) Event Hall Rent age (v) Microfinance Bank (vi) Parking Space (vii) Health Sector (viii) Money Market/Shares (ix) Business Centre (x) Guest House (xi) Book Stores (xii) Agricultural Sectors (xiii) Cooperative Societal Investment (xiv) Property and Estate Management.

The Concept of Unethical Business

It is opposite of ethical business, that is, unethical business are types of businesses that a Christian or a church cannot be involved in because they are against the ideologies practices and beliefs system of the Christian faith. The business opportunities are as mentioned below, but not limited to this list: (i) Gambling (ii) Betting/Lotto (iii) Brothel/Prostitute (iv) Sale of Alcoholic Drink (v) Human Trafficking (vi) Sales of Cigarette or Tobacco (vii) Beer Parlour (viii) Sales of Bleaching Cream (ix) Educational “Special Centres” (x) Sale of Pirated Books/Ware.

Sourcing For Fund

Once a business opportunity is identified, scrutinized and ready to be launched into, we then talk of sourcing for capital to take off. The following are identified methods of sourcing for capital to start business opportunities:

- (a) Internally generated revenue of the church
- (b) Appeal to members for donations or free will giving
- (c) Contribution through a corporate saving outfit
- (d) Grant from members
- (e) Partnership with legitimate means of sourcing for fund to start the business.

Advantages that the Churches (in Oyo State) will Derive from Ethical Response to Business Management

1. The church will build integrity around herself within and without.
2. The church will have more funds to carry out her social functions and administrative works.



3. The church will be serving humanities through the provision of affordable business outfit.
4. The church will be able to pay her assessment as at when due.
5. The church workers i.e. clergy and non-clergy will be paid their stipends and salaries promptly.
6. The church will become employer of labour thereby contributing to the gross domestic product of the Nation (GDP).
7. The church will have fund to carry out physical developments by means of infrastructure and other growths.
8. With adequate funding the church will be able to do outreach evangelism and care for the less- privilege and the poor in the church regularly.
9. The quality control would be well maintained in the business of the church.
10. The principle of check and balances would be upheld in the business management of the church.

Risk Factors in Businesses

In every business, according to Drunker (2008), there are always associated hazards. Risk in business is the possibility that a company will have lower than anticipated profits or experience loss rather than making a profit. Business Risk is influenced by many factors, which include sales volume anticipated, per-unit price, input cost, competition, climatic and government policies. Furthermore, business risks may arise due to natural causes like floods, storms, cyclones, earthquakes and such other convulsions of nature unplanned for which at times result in heavy loss of life, property and business capital. Other risk factors could be strategic risk, compliance risk, financial risk, operational risk, human error risks occur in a business, we now move to risk management in order to resuscitate the ailing business, there are three types of risk management and what the professional use in overcoming the challenges posed by risk. The avoidance risks, strategic and unavoidable risks.

How God Invested in Human Being

Investment is an integral part of every business. The church of God over the years had been deprived of the benefits accrued from investment because of lack proper education on the subject of investment. "One of



the greatest challenges for Christianity in our day is for churches to walk with God through their witness". When a Christian organization allows God's presence and activity to be expressed, a watching world will be drawn to Him. The mind of God is that the church should declare the manifold wisdom of God here on earth, which means that the church needs to have impact in the lives of its members, and of course the society as a whole. When there is positive effect of the church in People's lives, it is then the purpose of God for the church can be established. God gives to man investment when He said, in Genesis 1:26-27, God says "Let us make man in our image in our likeness and let then rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over the entire creature and along the ground". So, God created man in his own image, in the "image of God, he created male and female, he created them." This reveals that God invested heavily in man, that should possess the same attribute like God and that human being is worthy honour and respected, not only that, God invested in man because man is the peak of God's creativity; and man was made rulers upon the rest of his creation because he was created in the image and of likeness of God. Accorded sovereignty was bestowed on him to declare the glory of God. Jesus Christ demonstrated the need for investment in the "Parable of the Talent" (Matthew 25:14) on the cost of their investments. The aim of a businessman or investor in any company is to gain profit on the money used to do the business or receive dividends on the numbers shares in the company at the end of every financial year. So, also, the servants three reports on the use of the talents and the judgment was given in proportion to the performance standard of the servants. The outcome of God's view on investment is revealed in the Old Testament likewise the perspective of Christ as regard investment is clearly understood in the New Testament which shows that a son cannot do anything other than what he sees his father doing. Make it your principle that you will do nothing without first asking for the direction of God. In the same vein, the church will no doubt gives account of how God's resources or money is been used. Those that bury God's resources instead of investing it will give account of their stewardship at the close of the age. The expectation of God is for the church to have impact on the lives of members and society at large, but how can the church have positive impact when its financial capacity is zero or below average? A Christian song reads, "The church is marching on and gate of hell will not overcome it". There things



challenging the church of God today, this can be likened to the gate of hell. Among such things are inability to get desired location, lack of fund, inability to carry out the Lord's mandate in mission and in evangelism just as a result of insufficient money. The church that the gate of hell will not overcome must be involved in business investment so as to take care of the members' spiritual and its financial strength. Whitehead said capital is essential to the start of any business. If the spiritual lives of members are good, definitely their pocket will be opened, which means the church will not suffer in order to finance her activities.

Most churches that complained about business drive have either, tried it or they have refused to follow as well as ask for divine and sound guidance as they invest with church funds, Planning is deciding in advance what to do, how to do it and when to do it". It is an intellectual process of determine a course of action. However, this paper will serve as an opener for most churches, since they will be reliably informed on the various strategies to be adopted as managers or stewards of God's resources. According to Schaller and Tidwell (1975), "The business management of the church is a continuing process." There are always new people to reach, new program to develop, procedures to perfect and more funds to be raised. Fund generated from successful business will no doubt provide avenues for solving some of the financial needs of the church and its members. A whole lot of financial problem, including unemployment among church's youth and other Christian members could be effectively solved if the churches engage in successful business investment. In organizing for action in providing funding for the work of the church, a stewardship committee will be selected and trained to give vital leadership in financial matter. Therefore, "the effectiveness of the church's work toward the building of God kingdom in the hearts of men is largely determined by the ability of those who hold positions of management and authority. Only through efficient functioning of the mechanics of the church can be preaching of the gospel and radiation of God's fear in human relations be achieved.

Old Testament Concept of Church Financing

Rev'd Father Joy Thomas is of the opinion that church in the Old Testament may be perceived as a process of development. David Botch observation that there are no church paradigms in the Old Testament



was sent by Hedland an illusion. God is the missionary in Old Testament beginning from creation. The concept of church revolves around the origin of sending even in the Old Testament. Both agree to the assertion that shows that there is no discontinuation between the Old Testament and New Testament. Since Botch accepts that there was a paradigm shift in the coming of Jesus Christ. Dubose in 1983 showed that there are about seven hundred pods. He Message in the Old Testament that there are some sending. Mission is the Biblical sending. Dubose argued that there are more sending texts in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. It was shown that the New Testament term “apostle” has Old Testament roots. To limit mission to the New Testament means depriving mission of its theological roots. The researcher sees this as marking missions to be a vagabond without father or mother.

New Testament of Church Financing

In the New Testament we find out that Jesus Christ was a missionary par excellent, along with his disciples. In 2 Corinthians 9:8 it is written “God is able to make all abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” Grace is the principles of underlying essence of the New Testament financing of mission work. According to Join Sutherland “grace (Chairs) was the principle of New Testament missionary work. This grace is predication on the fact that God is the owner and the creator of the Earth and all in it (Psalm 24:1; 50:12; Col. 1:16 Hagai 2:8) our major problem as humans is how to tap into the resources of God in godly manner. A method of fund raising tagged “friend raising fund” was notice in the New Testament by Sutherland, in this way the friends that we serve decide to become donors towards church work, this was observed in the Ministry of Jesus Christ and the twelve disciples whereby some women raised fund to support their missionary work (Mark 15:41, Luke 8:3). But should the motive of friendship be fund? No, should we serve people for fund? No. It should be observed that Paul did not do reputation to run his first or second Journey by the Holy Spirit. The believers simply committed Paul and Silas to the grace of God (Acts 15:26). Asking potential donors for gifts is not necessarily wrong, if it is done in good faith. Anything that is not done in good faith is sinful before God (Romans 14:23). Grace can be seen as charismata such as noticed in gifts of Pastors, Prophets (Ephesians 3:2) and the important gift is



contributing to God's work. (Ephesians 4:8) God's resources are unlimited and he distributes them as He will to those he wills. "God is able to make all grace abound to you having all you need". Paul says, "You will abound in every good work" (2 Corinthians 9:14) The Corinthians were admonished to excel in this grace of giving and receiving from God.

What Sutherland called Christian marketing should be avoided such as putting pressure on people to give or they be termed stingy, making people live up to church's expectation on a luncheon with envelopes of cheque in hand before they served food. Therefore, New Testament concept of financing the church is by grace, contentment, support, and advocacy prayer support, giving charity or generosity from all members, but most importantly by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ who first gave us without us knowing Him.

Conclusion

The main objective of this paper is to evaluate the Christian ethical values applied to the Business Enterprises among the churches in Oyo State. To shed more light on how the church or members of the church can be involved in business without compromising their faith in God, which of course will enhance the way of generating income for the financial strength of the church. It is enlightening opportunity for churches to properly manage God's resources.

The church must serve as eye opener by the spirit of God through divine guidance for divine location and maintaining the presence of God by having a team spirit with prudence management to fulfil God's purpose. Churches are admonished to go into businesses with calculated risks such as treasury bills and other money market instruments before going into the large scale business. There is a great need for churches to go into ethical business now to secure tomorrow. There is need to see tomorrow now by investing into the business for sustenance of the church. Membership is dwindling by death, old-age, relocation to new site, etc. the planning for the future is now.

Recommendations

The following recommendations should be considered by implementing faithfully and professionally, it will help our churches to increase and



diversify her source of revenue for more fund to carry out the church Evangelism and Administrative works.

- 1 Churches must see ethical investment drive as Biblical and of God.
- 2 Churches must as a matter of policy earmark an agreed and practical percentage of her annual income for ethical business purposes on yearly basis.
- 3 Churches must seek the proper counsel and guidance of professional on any business drive they want to embark on as to avoid bad businesses.
- 4 Churches must have a functioning and well constituted ethical business committee to be in charge of the church business portfolio
- 5 Churches embracing ethical business must do with sincerity of purpose and reality to play game according to the rules.
- 6 Churches going into ethical business investment must not cut corners. Churches going into investment must be determined and resonate to weather the storm.
- 7 Churches must see ethical business as a source of income generating venture and not as charitable organization
- 8 Churches in ethical business investment must not neglect the primary source of church funding i.e. tithes, offering, donations, freewill offering, harvest thanksgiving, etc. teaching and enlightening should be going on to balance our source.
- 9 Churches in ethical business must remember that Jesus Christ name must be honour and be marked to the world in an ethical means.
- 10 The churches that will want to continue to be in existence, relevant and up to date in our advanced technology world must as a matter of urgency start to invest ethically, no matter how small.

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