

CORPORATE CATHOLIC RESPONSIBILITY: A THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the search for a new vision of business management and corporate responsibility in companies, by applying the principles of the Catholic Social Teaching, and thus overcome the mercantile vision that dichotomizes the mission of for-profit and not-for-profit companies. It points out the need to rethink a new role for companies within society. As a solution, a theological perspective on business is offered, which enables the development of a business philosophy to overcome the problems and deficiencies detected in the application of management models known to date. Corporate Catholic Responsibility represents a new corporate vision that takes the common good as its fundamental reason. It is a new approach that takes into account the integral reality of man and argues that the corporate responsibility of the company should not be limited to the social sphere.

Key words: Corporate Catholic Responsibility, Catholic Social Teaching, Common Good, Performance.

1. Introduction

In a changing global environment, new and very difficult challenges for the economy, and for society as a whole, are looming, demanding new paradigms and strategies in favor of organizational performance and the common good. The etymology of the word responsibility is anchored in the terms re- (return to) and spondere (commit). Ultimately, sponsus (husband, bridegroom) is grounded in spondere. It follows that «to be responsible for a thing is to be bound to that thing by ties analogous to those that bind husband and wife». As a result of said commitment, each part of marriage should reciprocate to another one, which is why responsibility transgresses moral and legal obligations, and it is directed towards what man loves.¹ Along these lines, corporate responsibility, in the broadest sense of the term, is closely linked to religion to the extent that some experts consider that religion and its multiple theological contributions originated Corporate Social Responsibility.² In fact, prior to 1960, the main activity in the study of business ethics was carried out by the Catholic Social Teaching (hereafter CST) through social encyclicals, and also by some authors in the Protestant tradition.³

To date, the results obtained in the field of study linking religion and CSR has been contradictory. Particularly, the significant effects of religious piety in managers honesty and risk aversion, depends on the strength level of piety.⁴ However, CST offers a wealth of literature that addresses social issues as well as the ethical and social need for responsible corporate behaviour.⁵ The rationale of this article is to delve deeper into the application of CST in the business world, especially in the field of corporate responsibility. Based on the assumption that CSR improves the competitiveness of companies,⁶ all entrepreneurs could benefit from the contributions of CST in this regard. In fact, there is already work pointing to a significant contribution of CST to competitiveness and sustainability.⁷ Additionally, CSR is considered a form of

¹ Cfr. Gustave THIBON; José Antonio MILLÁN, *El equilibrio y la armonía*. Barcelona: Ediciones Rialp, 1978.

² Cfr. Dominik VAN AAEKEN; Florian BUCHNER, «Religion and CSR: A Systematic Literature Review». *Journal of Business Economics*, vol. 90, 2020, pp. 917-945.

³ Richard T. DE GEORGE, «The status of business ethics: Past and future». *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 6, 1987, pp. 201-211.

⁴ Cfr. Pattanaporn CHATJUTHAMARD-KITSABUNMARATA; Pornsit JIRAPORN; Shenghui TONG, «Does religious piety inspire corporate social responsibility (CSR)? Evidence from historical religious identification». *Applied Economics Letters*, vol. 21/16, 2014, pp. 1128-1133.

⁵ Cfr. Martin CALKINS, «Recovering religion's prophetic voice for business ethics». *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 23, 2000, pp. 339-352.

⁶ Cfr. Carmelo REVERTE; Juan Gabriel CEGARRA-NAVARRO; Eduardo GÓMEZ MELERO, «The influence of corporate social responsibility practices on organizational performance: evidence from Eco-Responsible Spanish firms». *Journal of Cleaner Production*, vol. 112, 2016, pp. 2870-2884.

⁷ Cfr. Martijn CREMERS, «What corporate governance can learn from catholic social teaching». *Journal of Business*