

Journal of Religion and Business Ethics

Special Issue on *Shalom in Business*

Special Issue Theme:

Peace is a theme in both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures (where it is called “shalom” and “eirene,” respectively); it has also been evocative for contemporary theology in multiple traditions, and has inspired Christian social action and renewal movements around the world (e.g., Wolterstorff, 2004). Christians eager to “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile” (Jeremiah, 29:7, NIV) and to claim the promise that “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9: NIV) often cherish the hope of shalom, and desire to live into it.

Its Biblical meaning is richer than its translated meaning in contemporary English, carrying denotations of both ordinary and extraordinary physiological and psychological wellbeing, safety from threats and deprivation, and equanimity of spirit that is both a transcendent gift and a virtue (Yoder, 1997). In the Prophetic literature of the Hebrew Scriptures, it represents a radical, saving provision for desperate people who have been deprived of their wellbeing and safety (Brueggemann, 1976; Yoder, 1997), yet in the Wisdom literature it also includes managerial virtues of thrift, diligence, self-control, and wisdom (Brueggemann, 1976). It is thought to entail peace with God, peace with other people, peace with oneself, and peace with the environment (Wolterstorff, 1983), on terms that are not only devoid of violence or exploitation, but are also replete with enjoyment and appreciation (Wolterstorff, 1983; Yoder, 1997). It represents the intent that God has for His creation, such that its culpable violation is thought in the Reformed tradition of Christianity to be sin itself (Plantinga, 1995); it “names that beautiful but elusive state of affairs in which, one might say, the sanctity of every human life finally occurs” (Gushee, 2012:65).

Shalom is a normative concept in Christian and Jewish ethics that has noteworthy potential to convene people in the pursuit of moral projects across otherwise-polarized boundaries. Its emphases on well-ordered and productive relationships, and on individual virtue, appeal to many conservatives, even as its emphasis on liberation from the exploitative relationships of structural sin appeals to many liberals. Its concern with tangible wellbeing lends it a practicality suited to business, even as its concerns with the sanctity of human life and with relationships characterized by enjoyment lend it an aspirational scope. Its concern with both the natural environment and with human wellbeing facilitates aligning those concerns rather than counterposing them. Its Biblical grounding provides common ground for readers of the Hebrew Scriptures, whether Christian or Jewish.

Indeed, business scholars have already written on potential implications of shalom for personally enacting Christian ethics in the workplace (Phillips & Phillips, 2021), on the Decalogue as an elaboration of shalom with business implications (Cafferky, 2014), and

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on shalom as a resonant theme for expression of one's identity as a Christian in the workplace (Cafferky, 2019). Shalom is commended as an orienting and motivating theme for responsible and empathetic business pedagogy (Smith, Steen, & VanderVeen, 2006), for entrepreneurship done with the goal of attracting converts to Christianity (Russell, 2010), and for criticizing that goal as too narrow to reflect divine intentions for Christian participation in business (Quatro, 2012). Shalom is invoked as commending technological innovations with an emphasis on value creation rather than value capture (Stansbury, 2018), and local ownership for culturally- and economically-sustainable tourism (Adeney, 2006).

While existing business scholarship on shalom has begun to engage its normative implications for business, considerable scope remains to elaborate it. One such opportunity could be the exploration of tensions within shalom, using business as a site for that exploration; for instance, the claims of a liberation justice for desperate people, together with the claims of ecological peace that sustains the integrity of ecosystems, might be demonstratively integrated with respect to an actual case of industrial- or real-estate or travel-and-leisure sustainability. A different such opportunity could be the rigorous development of normative and prescriptive implications for particular business practices in an array of economic and cultural contexts, thereby illustrating the points at which shalom is consistent with existing normative theories, disjunct from them, and perhaps even silent on matters that other theories address. These elaborations, besides establishing the utility of current understandings of shalom for business ethics, could also identify opportunities for its further interpretive, theological, and applied development.

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The Special Issue on Shalom in Business will further explore the implications of this rich Biblical and theological theme for business. Potential topics for exploration include but are not limited to:

1. What alternative methods of dispute resolution within an enterprise, or between an enterprise and its stakeholders, might a normative concept of shalom commend?
2. Does shalom offer normative resources for the pursuit of equity, diversity, and inclusion in an organization's employment, vendor, customer, or ownership relationships?
3. Can a normative understanding of shalom make a distinctive contribution to the Business for Peace movement (Fort, 2008 & 2015; United Nations Global Compact, 2013)?
4. Is shalom generative for a responsible approach to strategic human resource management?
5. Might shalom commend novel approaches to environmental, social, and governance (ESG) reporting, or to the use of ESG data?
6. Would an investor-relations paradigm informed by a normative conception of shalom differ meaningfully from existing paradigms?
7. Could vendor selection or site selection decisions be helpfully influenced by a normative conception of shalom?
8. How would a platform strategy informed by a normative conception of shalom differ from one that is not?
9. Should automation projects informed by a normative conception of shalom differ in their process or orientation from the customary implementation procedures or purposes?
10. Are there pedagogical practices that orient business students toward shalom in their thinking about business ethics, or the business functions?

Symposium:

Authors of potential special issue submissions are welcome to submit manuscript proposals to the double-blind peer-reviewed Cate and Sid Jansma Jr. Symposium on Shalom in Business, to be held at the Calvin University School of Business in Grand Rapids, Michigan, USA on October 13 and 14 of 2023. Participation in the Symposium is not a prerequisite for consideration of an author's work for the special issue, nor will papers presented at the Symposium be accorded any special consideration or advantage in the review process for the special issue. Please see the Symposium Call for Papers for details.

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Call for Proposals:

Authors are invited to write papers that explore the theme of shalom with respect to the range of business theories and practices, with meaningful implications for theory and practice, or for pedagogy.

Submissions should not include any author-identifying information; each submission should be accompanied by a cover page in a separate file including the submission name, author names and affiliations, and contact information for the corresponding author.

Submission of a manuscript for consideration in the special issue indicates acceptance of responsibility to review two manuscripts for the same special issue, and to submit completed manuscript reviews within six weeks of receipt of the draft manuscripts.

Please note that participation in the abovementioned Symposium is not a prerequisite for consideration of an author's work for the special issue, nor will papers presented at the Symposium be accorded any special consideration or advantage in the review process for the special issue.

Submissions are due on 1 January, 2024; editorial decisions are anticipated by 1 April; revisions will be due by 1 July, 2024. Publication of the special issue is anticipated in Fall 2024.

Please direct questions to Dr. Jason Stansbury, at Shalom_SI@calvin.edu.

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