

Charity and the Two Economies

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At the outset my hope is that the reader will already see some connection between the terms of my title, between ‘charity’ and ‘economy’.¹ If not, it is probably because in our own culture, the term ‘charity’ has been reduced so as to be a synonym of what used to be called ‘almsgiving’. For us, charity usually means the donation of money either directly to an individual one encounters on the street or to an organization, cause, endowment, scholarship fund, or special collection. In this sense, there is only a rather loose connection between charity and economy. In an abstract way, both involve the transfer of money, and indeed “charitable giving” has a fixed place in our modern economy, as it is the principal means of sustenance for mendicants and non-profits, just as it is an accounting necessity for businesses and wealthy individuals.

A Christian will recognize that along with this usage of the term ‘charity’ there is a specifically Christian one of wider scope that refers to the supreme virtue and is synonymous with love, pity, or compassion in English, agape in Koine Greek, caritas in Latin, pietà in Italian. Though wider in scope, this sense of the term does not seem to be any more closely connected with economy; probably, the point of contact between charity in this sense and economy will be thought to pass through the narrower sense of charity as almsgiving. This is a mistake. And it is here my purpose to highlight and correct it in a way that I hope will make a special appeal to Orthodox Christians.

I intend to give an argument from Orthodox theology for the proposition that the motivations for promoting social welfare directly are at the same time motivations for promoting it indirectly through righteous living or what we might call “true economy”; in fact it is characteristic of righteous or true economy that it promotes social

¹ The title is inspired by an essay of Wendell Berry, “Two Economies” in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays of Wendell Berry*, ed. Normal Wirzba (Washington D.C: Counterpoint, 2002).

welfare; and, in fact, does so very much indirectly through a social responsibility that originates in ecological responsibility² and is executed by economic decisions.

Consider first the divine law, as presented in the Old Testament scriptures. Among the many hundreds of laws, there is the category of laws that have to do with social relationships in the covenant community. Not only does the Lord command his people to love their neighbor, but to make certain concrete provisions of charity towards them, especially towards the widow, the orphan, and the sojourner—who we might contemporize by calling “the homeless”. In so commanding, the Lord requests that Israel practice at the level of its own economy what he himself demonstrably does in his divine economy, to care for and minister to the needs of creatures.³ Many of these requested provisions are charitable in a manner that is indirect; they are not all concerned merely with tithing the first fruits of the harvest,⁴ but with economic practices that promote the fertility of the land with which the Jews—as all nations—are in mutual dependence but which they do not possess, so that harvests will continue.⁵ We know that there was to be a five-year waiting period for tree fruit,⁶ that breeding female animals were not to be hunted,⁷ that tilled land, vineyards, and orchards were to be rested

² As with moral responsibility generally, these are conditions to be satisfied only by persons. Despite current fashion, it is a category mistake to talk of socially or ecologically responsible institutions or states.

³ It is one of the major lessons of the Old Testament that righteousness is not a birthright or even defined by one’s character or accomplishments but something that comes about through a man’s being pleasing to God in his ever-changing relationship with him. This is a matter of having fear and trust enough in his wisdom do what he wills. Yet much of the content of what he wills is economic conditions for human communities. Man’s relationship with God is always immediate, but it extends to other men in its receptive scope and influence. Putting this together, we can say that aspects of human economy that resemble the divine economy are clues to its righteousness and to ours when we participate in them.

⁴ Lev 23: 9-14, Deut 26:5-10

⁵ The Lord, himself, makes the connection between preservation of the conditions of fertility and the welfare of the community. Preserved fertility is ensured by caring for the land as a husband cares for a spouse with whom he is in mutual dependence. “The Sabbath of the land shall provide food for you” (Lev 25:6).

⁶ Lev 19:23-25

⁷ Deut 22:6-7

every seven years,⁸ along with a remittance of all debts and a release of all slaves,⁹ while every fiftieth year the land itself was to be returned to its original owner.¹⁰ All such provisions serve to emphasize the covenantal nature of the promised land; it follows that all wealth, or the product of the land, was similarly covenantal, not to be accumulated as if possessed, but enjoyed through sharing and sacrificial thanksgiving.

It is clear that the covenant laws are crafted so as to turn the various Hebrew social groups into a community, their unity brought about by being graciously appointed to find pleasure in the Lord's sight by trusting in the wisdom of his laws, trusting in his divine economy by learning themselves to take pleasure in doing their Lord's will. The bond of the covenantal community, the mark of its faith, is the status of those who are least among it. The Lord declares to his people¹¹ that if his laws are kept, no one will be poor. The connection between the content of the laws and the condition of poverty is neither accidental nor inscrutable. Poverty results from radical inequality in the distribution of land resources and the wealth produced from them. But in the covenant community land cannot be purchased, only leased for a generation.¹² Excessive amounts of land cannot be leased because money cannot be borrowed except on the basis of strict need.¹³ Nor can leases become too expensive, since rents are to be charged according to their use value, which is capped by the year of jubilee;¹⁴ similarly, no one can charge too much for his products, because prices are regulated by the numbers of years that remain until the sabbatical year on the seller's land lease.¹⁵ No one can become rich through war since war is either unholy or what is taken in it belongs to the Lord.¹⁶ And finally,

⁸ Lev 25:1-5

⁹ Deut 15:1-18

¹⁰ Lev 25:8-12

¹¹ Deut 15:4-6

¹² "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine" (Lev 25:23).

¹³ Deut 15:4-10

¹⁴ Lev 27:16-17

¹⁵ Lev 25:14-16

¹⁶ Jos 6:17-19

no one can become rich through charging interest on loans to gentiles since this is forbidden.¹⁷ These laws serve to balance the distribution of resources; together with the social laws that call for direct forms of charity such as tithing and labor assistance, they ensure that poverty is only possible if the covenant is broken.

Certainly the Old Testament scriptures abound with these and other moral injunctions for righteous living. As modern Orthodox Christians, however, we may feel removed from these injunctions not only by their date and cultural alterity,¹⁸ but on certain (dubious) theological grounds. With Galatians 2:16 in mind, we may easily deemphasize their importance and are content with the contrast this attitude poses to Calvinist error.¹⁹ But this is to forget Romans 2 and 7²⁰ and to give in to the heresy of antinomianism, or the belief that because of the Christian dispensation, compliance with the moral law is no longer required of us. Like any compelling lie, the heresy is partially true. What is true is that through the incarnation of Christ, God has revealed a new relationship between himself and man, one that, through grace, transcends the letter of the moral law; in so doing, the incarnation reveals the Spirit of the law, that the end or satisfaction of the law is simply the condition experienced by someone who has decided fully and with pure motive to participate with loving praise in the dispensation itself, the work of gift-making and thanksgiving between all persons. Just as smoke is not the cause but a sign of fire, so obedience to the law is not the cause of salvation, but a sure sign of being saved.²¹

¹⁷ In addressing the need for direct charity, the Lord has already commanded lending freely and without interest to the poor, as well as selling to him at no profit (Lev. 25:36-37).

¹⁸ I have heard it remarked that scholars are of the opinion that these economic laws were never practiced by the Jews themselves. There is at least evidence for this in the Scriptures themselves, which goes on to chronicle the precipitous downfall of Israel, as a result of their transgression. Far from sanctioning our own dismissal of these laws, the fate of Israel is a credit to their wisdom.

¹⁹ Here I mean the doctrine of justification through works.

²⁰ Not to mention Mt 5:17-20.

²¹ It is similarly true that love for one's neighbor cannot be the cause of one's love for God, since the former is not possible without the latter; though love for one's neighbor is a sure sign of one's love for God. In application to our own case, since we neither love God nor our neighbor, it is helpful to note that in a manner parallel to the larger relation between salvation and law obedience, attempts to love one's neighbor (say, by forgiving his offense) motivated by a desire to please God can reciprocally strengthen one's love for both.

We cannot, then, dismiss the continued relevance of divine law in guiding us into the deified state that was the law's original purpose. And we know that the law—old and new—enjoins us to practice charity towards our neighbor. But we should also know that as we progress in this practice, as our love deepens and our capacity for it expands, so too does our conception of neighbor. Eventually, it comes to include our enemies; the Samaritan was charitable to the highway victim despite the latter's being Judean. But charity and neighborhood do not stop there. In fullness they extend to all persons, most of whom we will never meet in this world because of their distance from us in space and time. In his *Unspoken Sermons*, George Macdonald talks about the progressive deepening of the moral law within the structure of the Gospel teachings. In the first formulation, which repeats the Old Testament law,²² we are commanded to love our neighbor as our self;²³ then we are told to love our enemies;²⁴ finally we are taught to love one another "as I have loved you",²⁵ that is to say, with the highest love whereby one is willing to lay down one's life for one's enemies. But Christ not only laid down his life for his enemies, he laid down his life for us, that is, for people he had never met in his time on earth, never known with his human intellect. By doing so, he instituted the promise of our intellect overcoming the bounds of earthly life so as to know, by name and face, the full community of souls in the next. The moral law, therefore, enjoins us to show charity to those whom we have never met and this is perhaps the hardest kind of charity, harder than charity towards enemies, which is already harder than charity towards those we like or regard as friends.

The reason charity to the unknown is so hard is that it demands faith in the next life. Even charity to one's enemies can offer an earthly reward. But charity to the unknown, in places and times you cannot reach, can only be meaningful if, like you, those people and those times

²² Lev 19:18

²³ Mt 22:39

²⁴ Lk 6:27

²⁵ Jn 13:34

are drawn to a source of permanence beyond themselves. You cannot care about history in a personal way or the fate of the human race after you and everybody you know are dead unless you have a vision of eternity, in which every passing quality of the cosmos, down to the last detail, is preserved and invigorated.

How, then, does one practice charity to the unknown? Do not the very limitations that make so many unknown to us also keep us from being able to care for them? There would be no injunction unless it were possible to fulfill it. If we reflect, we notice that the created world is ordered so that human beings and the rest of creation are fixed in a network of mutual receptivities and influences. Our everyday acts of living, no matter how subtle, are preconditioned by the status of nature and the lives of other people (at a bare minimum, the lives of our parents); and every act of living either directly alters the state nature is in and the lives of others, or contains such an influence that unfolds through several intermediary effects. Collectively, we call these acts of living 'economy'. We can practice the deepest form of charity through economy if we understand the created order by which these effects are transmitted and, so understanding, organize our patterns of interacting with that order so that every good produced and service performed becomes a transformation of the raw gifts of creation into a eucharistic antitype, an offering to God of his own gifts mingled with human labor, on behalf of all and for all, so that he may be in all and all in him.

The natural as well as the social preconditions and influences of how we take our living in the world are determined by what we call "laws of nature" and their logical consequences. They determine the order and sequential pattern of what we will experience given the choices we make. The interpretation we give to these patterns of experience is that of an external physical world, complete with the individual essences of everything from trees and rocks to water and wine. In this way, the laws of nature, or better, the "laws of experience", are regular and universal; they hold across time and space, as well as across scale. For example, the law of nature we call the "law of gravitation" is a regularity holding not only for the fall of the rock that I drop, but for the

fall of the moon towards the earth and the fall of the earth towards the sun. The order of the natural laws encompasses ascending scales not only individually but collectively, so that the laws of perspective apply to individual experience, holding, that if I move farther away from an object it will appear smaller to me, while the laws of trade apply to collective social experience, holding that if a society exports only the goods with the lowest opportunity costs then it will increase the surplus of all goods and associated production profits. The laws of trade and the laws of perspective are not related as logical consequences but they are consistent with each other and encompassed within the coherent order of human experience. Human experience is ordered so that both sets of laws (and many others) pertain to it at the same time. In this way, the laws are mutually implicative—they “take each other into consideration”, so to speak.

Despite their regularity, however, the laws of nature that govern human experience, or what the Fathers called the *logoi* of creation, do not have the status of logical necessities. It is very easy for us to imagine their violation. I can easily imagine dropping a rock and finding that it floats up and away, that two billiard balls pass through each other instead of colliding, or that red and yellow should combine to make green instead of orange. In fact, the scriptures, with their descriptions of miracles, give us accounts of actual violations of the laws of nature, not merely imagined ones. The lesson to be learned is that the laws of nature are regular but arbitrary, rather than necessary. What a peculiar group of attributes is possessed by these laws! They are like a kind of riddle. They relate sets of possible experiences into sequences and are expressed as subjunctive conditionals, e.g. “if this set of experiences were to obtain, then this set of experiences would obtain”; and they are regular, universal, mutually implicative, and arbitrary. In the neo-Platonist tradition of the early Byzantine Fathers,²⁶ a particular answer began to develop in solution of this riddle. Interestingly, the most explicit statement of the answer is found in the early modern West. George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne, wrote that the patterns of

²⁶ See, e.g., Maximus the Confessor, *Gnostic Chapters* I.67, PG 90.1108B.

experience have the attributes they do precisely because they are a medium of communication—that is to say, a language—between God and men²⁷. The laws that govern the pattern of human experience and constitute what we interpret as the created world are regular, universal, mutually implicative and arbitrary because they are a language in which God speaks to us. This is an aspect of what is sometimes called natural revelation, that God makes himself and his purposes known to us through the operations of nature, the very content of experience, as well as through the connections between waking experiences that make them coherent and maximally consistent, helping us to separate them out from dream and fantasy.

On this view the order of creation down to the last law is merely the manifestation of what God wills with regard to human experience. That what we experience is regular and universal is a manifestation of his providence, since these features allow us to plan for the future and bring benefit into our lives by conforming our actions with what we expect. That the laws of nature are arbitrary is a clue to their utter dependence on divine volition; they have no authority, no source of necessity, on their own but utterly manifest the will of God. Their arbitrariness is also a clue to their status as instrument of communication. It is perhaps one of the functions of the miracles recorded in Scripture that they highlight the contingent regularity of experiential patterns. Just as the word ‘tree’, with its four letters and single syllable could easily refer to something that does not have leaves and roots,²⁸ so too day does not have to be followed by night or Spring by Summer.²⁹ Miracles make us aware of the amazing regularities which we normally take for granted but which, much more so than the miracles, call out for explanation.³⁰ Regularities in experience point to a governing power

²⁷ See *Alciphron*, Fourth Dialogue, X-XII. For a contemporary Orthodox affirmation, see Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), 17-23.

²⁸ Since the word bears no resemblance to its object and its referential connection with it is grounded in custom, and thus ultimately in the will of its speakers and their common knowledge of that will.

²⁹ Fantasy stories are a source of evidence for the coherence of these and other imagined possible alternatives to the actual created regularities.

³⁰ This point and its connection with natural theology have been made with great articulation by John Foster in *The Divine Lawmaker* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

beyond experience as their ground and sustaining cause; but the arbitrariness and mutual implicativity of the regularities points to the fact that this power must be free, providential and spiritual (that is, mental, possessing will and intellect), possessed of wise intentions, and indeed intentions that relate all of the physical world to human beings, in a manner very much like that in which a speaker relates words to objects by making his referential intentions known to his interlocutor.

The world is a visible language in which God speaks to us. One event of experience points to another that God wills to follow it, as a word points to the object it refers to. It is a familiar theme in the theology of the Church Fathers that persons, places, and events in Scripture are types of later ones. This is to say that certain events in the Old Testament are words spoken by the breath of God, which can only be understood when the later events they refer to come to pass and reveal their full meaning. God is the master of time and orders the events of history so that, through the gradual unfolding of events in the passage of time, human beings may be spoken to in a way that reveals the divine speaker and his intentions at the level of human experience. Of the many signs and miracles of scripture, some reveal not only God's purposes, but his purposes with respect to the very order of nature, the language with which he speaks to us. That is, some instances of God's supernatural speech through the language of experienced events are on the subject of that very language itself. One episode in particular is noteworthy in regard to our effort to understand how the created order is intended to transmit indirect influences of economic activity for the purpose of realizing a broad, systemic charity. This is the act, attested to in the Gospels,³¹ of Christ walking on the surface of the stormy Sea of Galilee. The miraculous episode is a sign that reveals two lessons to man: first, that the person of Christ not only possesses certain supernatural powers but that he is essentially supernatural because he is nature's author and all natural operations are utterly contingent on his will—this miracle directly relates him to elemental forces as their

³¹ Mt 14:25-33, *inter alia*.

sovereign,³² identifying him with the Lord praised in Psalm 103; and second, through the outstretched arms inviting Peter to meet him on the water's surface, that man himself, as the one for whom the natural order comes into being, is called to participate in the transcendence of that order.³³ This act speaks to the plan for man's deification, but in a very specific way: that man should be become deified and achieve nature-transcendence by using the supernatural language of nature-crafting to express his commitment to this plan with reverential thanks. Calling Peter to walk out across the white-capped lake tells us of an attribute possessed by the natural order that is new to our list and is one more indication of its status as means of communication: the order of the natural world is dynamically open-ended. It is meant to be used as a medium of communication between God and men, and being so used, to change in a manner that reflects the changes in the relationships between God and men. Between two long-time friends who have lived in the same region and community, their conversations with each other take place in a language that is quite different from other forms of communication, being full of mutually familiar names, of people, places, and events. So too with the language of the natural and social order, its words change to reflect the growing fraternity and familiarity among its speakers.

The open-endedness of the language of experienced events is already dynamic in that it is shaped by changes in the relationships it serves, since these relationships—between God and men and between men themselves—are always changing however subtly, at any given time becoming closer or more distanced. But the language has a special dynamism because of its purposive role in the divine economy. The new kingdom of Christ, the new age, the eschaton, is a kingdom that

³² The episode of the wedding feast at Cana (Jn 2:1-12), the first of the seven signs recorded in the Gospel of John, also teaches this lesson, because it reveals that Jesus can transmute the essences of created things. He can do this because he is the Logos, the unifying wisdom which directs the principles of created things, according to which each object, really a collection of sensible appearances, unfolds before human perception with the particular qualities and in the particular sequence that it does. It is by such principles, which ground the sensible qualities and their sequential presentation, that we identify a material object as this or that, as water or wine.

³³ Or to achieve what Staniloae calls "the defeat of this automatism of repetition..." (25).

will be fully present for us when heaven and earth have passed away; however, it will not simply replace heaven and earth after a clean break. Rather, the Holy Spirit is at work in this world now, and is gradually filling up our lives, consecrating the works of our hands and mouths as we invoke him to do so. With each consecration he folds us that much more into the new kingdom and makes the materials of our world that much more spiritualized.³⁴ This does not mean that earthly things somehow become airy or invisible—quite the opposite; it means that material things—of which our own bodies are our first foothold for influence—become more intimately known in their concrete, sensible particularity, that their status as gifts become marked with eucharistic blessings, as their place in the exchange of economic transactions becomes transparent, so that a meal, an article of clothing, a utensil, or a building, becomes something for which we can give thanks and praise, because we know where it comes from and we understand the delightful energy embodied in it. It is because the logoi of creation have been established as a medium of communication that is meant to be participated in and changed in this way by human beings that the potential exists for realizing the deepest kind of charity, the indirect charity which can overcome barriers of ignorance and distance in space and time, as a community organizes itself to receive and transmit charitable influence through the operations of the created world, effecting communities in different countries and different generations. In regard to this organization, the social consequences of the laws of nature as illumined by the covenant laws found in scripture are still relevant.

Our conference takes its title from the line spoken by the goats in the last judgment parable, “Lord, when did we see you hungry?”³⁵ Given the nature of the logoi of creation and their (potentially indirect) social consequences, one implication of the parable is that we may care for or harm another, cause them to be hungry or sick rather than well-

³⁴ On the theme of the open-endedness of nature in the dialogue between God and man, see Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, Volume II. The World: Creation and Deification (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2005), 45-65.

³⁵ Mt 25:44

fed, through unseen consequences of daily living. In the parable, the goats do not understand that judgment depends upon how their actions effected “the least of these”, those who seemed the least important. Who could seem less important than those who are unknown to us? The goats mistakenly believe that it is only charitable acts towards those they encounter that make a difference. But if a man lives such a life that he never encounters a person who is homeless or hungry and so is never put in a position where he must show charity to such a person, does this mean the he lives righteously by default? Does the rich man who wears a robe and feasts sumptuously all day meet his obligations towards his fellow man just because his mansion has insulated him from hearing the cries of Lazarus at his gate? No. Like the sinners of Sardis in the Book of Revelation, he is judged by what he failed to do.

Yet what accounts for the goats difficulty in understanding the transmissive network of unseen influences between nature and society? This is a problem of daily living, a problem of economic decisions.

The logoi of creation communicate divine intentions to man, inviting him to communicate with God through the same means. Their whole character reflects this end. The Christian call to charity in the deepest sense, charity to the unknown other, of which the goats are guilty of failure in the last judgment, is a call to economy. It is our human economy, our system of receiving, modifying, and redistributing divine gifts,³⁶ which has the potential either to reveal the giftly nature of what ends up in our homes, on our backs, and on our tables, or, instead, to conceal this giftly nature, rejecting it in favor of the lie that food is made in grocery stores, clothing in department stores, and that our places of work and our homes are just places where we make money and entertain ourselves. The last judgment parable is meant to scare us away from this lie, to entice us to practice charity by choosing modes of living that reveal the divinely created constraints on human wealth creation, and to use those constraints with an artifice directed at spiritualizing the conditions in which others practice their own modes

³⁶ Which we more commonly describe as our system of producing and distributing goods and services.

of charitable living, drawing ever larger spheres of people and places into our neighborhood, our domain of familiarity and fellowship.

This is so far something Man has failed to achieve. Until Man achieves it collectively he has not achieved it at all. We have what we call “economies”, of nations, regions, and towns, but these are not similar to, nor do they cooperate with, the divine economy. And this is their failure. All human economies depend upon, interact with, and ultimately determine the form of creation; therefore, human economy takes place within divine economy. Human activities of production and consumption are an exchange of human action with the raw inputs of land and resources, which are the divine gifts of creation, as well as with the conditions that determine their continuation, the physical, chemical and biological forces, the network pattern of influences and receptivities that the fathers called *logoi*, and which we have seen are a perceptible language in which God provides for and communicates his intentions to man. In producing and consuming we interact with these conditions and natural resources and so communicate our response; each act of daily living is significant in this regard. We know that nature is not a fortuitous aggregation of atoms in a void, nor some third entity independent of God and man, but rather part of the divine creation, the revelation of the divine Person to man. This means that all human interaction with nature, especially the activity that we call economic, is either consecrating or desecrating. If it is reverential and eucharistic, if it acknowledges the “truth” about nature, that nature does not belong to man, but that man, nature and all of creation belong to God, if it acknowledges the charismatic goodness of creation and responds to that goodness by making it into a work of loving sacrifice and praise, then it is a practice of true economy. Such interaction is true economy because it cooperates with divine economy, the ancient plan for man’s deification and the deification of nature through him. The world is set up so that man cannot help but interact with nature. Nature is both the dust from which he is made and the house of which he is called to be the *oikonomos*, the faithful steward, the intelligent governor. This relationship is part of the divine economy and therefore permanent. It is not severed or abolished by man’s failure to act in the right capacity.

It is not as if during man's struggles and conflicts that nature somehow lies waiting until he rises to the challenge only then becomes subject to his influences.³⁷ Because the purpose of nature is to serve as a medium of communication between God and man, it is a constant record of the status of that communication, a record of the status of man's spiritual condition, good or ill.³⁸

The word 'economy' has a rich tradition in Orthodoxy Christianity. Sometimes it is contrasted with theology, which is the study of God in himself, his attributes and nature considered on their own, while economy is the study of God's plan with respect to creation. But as a technical term of Orthodoxy, 'economy' is usually associated with the pastoral decisions of clergy. What distinguishes such decisions of "household management"³⁹ is that they are wise or judicious given a certain end. In this case, the ultimate end is the very same end as that of the divine economy, namely the deification of the created world. So understood, such economy is constitutive of the mystical life not only of the clerical members of the earthly church, but indeed of each individual member. Just as with the deepening of the conception of charity, the extended conception of household management pertaining to laity has its mode in "human economy" in the vulgar sense of the term, the way in which one takes one's living in the world and the systemic pattern of conditioning that such individual actions collectively bring about.

To focus on this notion of human economy from an Orthodox perspective is to consider economic actions—the buying and selling of goods and services, the application of labor, the use of land and

³⁷ This is most obvious with respect to the items in the natural environment we call "our bodies". As with every other thing in the environment, man's body is a temple of which he is the priest. When he sins, he desecrates nature; and when he desecrates nature he sins. This is a simple corollary to the concomitance that attends the relation between the deification of man and the world in divine economy.

³⁸ This is why, as Paul says in Romans 8:22, because of man's fall all creation fell with him and still groans in travail.

³⁹ As the Greek *oikonomia* is literally translated. In this form, we recognize its connection with the term 'ecology', which shares the same root word meaning "home". Ecology is what I referred to above as the order of the "home" (i.e., creation), the system of logoi, which determine the content and sequential pattern of what we may experience; economy is then the rule or governance of this home as exercised in the first place by God or secondarily by man.

resources—according to the revealed standard of righteousness and ultimately to assess their fitness with the divine plan of deification. As with hesychastic prayer, such a viewpoint deepens our understanding of theoria and spiritual striving because it makes concrete the manner in which the soul cooperates with divine energies; the viewpoint clarifies the fact that human economic decisions are always free responses to divine gift-giving that either are or are not eucharistic.

We know from Scripture that parallel to the true nature of righteousness and the manner of its revelation, in which self-righteousness is precluded, there is the contrast between ownership and stewardship in the way human beings relate to the resources of creation, land, energy, and their affordances. If the proper formula for righteousness precludes any possibility of self-righteousness on the part of a human being, so too does stewardship preclude ownership. In this way, economy as stewardship is seen to be the gracious counterpart to divine economy; as God gives freely of his energies for the purpose of man's deification—and the world through him—so man's deification is brought about through the seal of his own spiritualizing transmission of those energies, consecrating the raw inputs of creation, including his own body and mind, into concrete forms of theandric co-creation, realizing the hidden potentialities in the ancient divine economy. A lover delights in his love's pleasure, and it is for his good pleasure that the deified man returns the Lord's freely given lovingkindness with freely given lovingthanks.