

# The Attitude of the Orthodoxy to Economy

**Veneta Krusteva**

**Summary:** Each religion in a higher or a lower degree creates its own system of norms, rules and values referring to economy life of people and has attitude to essential categories of this sphere like work, wealth and poorness. That's why article examines how this categories are excepted in the main Orthodoxy's texts and in what light they have been presented to the believers. The conclusion is that Orthodoxy nor give priority to any economic system, neither encourages any kind of labour as better than the other. On its own both wealth and poorness are morally neutral and they are not judged. Main motive in each act of the believer has to be truly deference and faith in Jesus Christ and following his teaching for humbleness, love to near and mercy. Exactly here appears contradiction with domination norms of capitalistic economic system which on other side puts extremely hard trials and challenges in front of Orthodox today.

**Key words:** orthodoxy, economy, labour, wealth, poorness.

When considering such a question as the attitude of Orthodoxy to economic life, it is necessary to start with the prerequisite, obvious for every believer, that the world (which is material and spiritual at the same time) is created by God, who evaluates it as good: "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good...." (Genesis 1). As it can be also seen from the first article of the Symbol of Faith: "God is a creator of heaven and earth, of all visible and invisible things. Therefore: "because the Creator is kind in His nature, therefore everything He created – He created it in the best way, and never wishes to be the Creator of evil. And if there are in the man or the demon (because we do not know in nature evil just like that) any evil videlicet sin, contrary to God's will, this evil comes from either man, or from the devil" (16, 1984, p. 214-215). For Christians<sup>1</sup> the world is a gift of divine love – and it is our duty to accept and preserve this gift with love and gratitude, not just to use it.

A great number of texts in the New and the Old Testaments evidence the unacceptable of economic activities as such. Nevertheless, it is not forgotten in the two Testaments that Man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God, but also by bread. (Matthew 4: 4). Indeed, believers must be convinced that "your Father knoweth what

<sup>1</sup> Where we do not speak about a specific Christian confession, we have used principles and norms that are common for different confession in Christianity, as no matter how much Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and Catholicism may differ between themselves, they are all parts of Christian religion.

things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6: 8). Therefore they should take no thought about what they shall we eat or, what they shall drink or, wherewithal they shall be clothed. (Matthew 6: 31). What they should seek and await is "the kingdom of God, and his righteousness" (Matthew 6: 33).

As the Serbian clergyman Radovan Bigovitch observed, Orthodox Christians are part of the world, but "are not only of the world or for the world". (4, 2003, p. 287). Their true and only homeland is heaven. According to the Orthodox teaching, this world "lays in evil", and heaven on earth is impossible. However this, according to the Bible, does not engender escape from the world, but efforts towards this world not being turned into hell. The task of the Christian is to be in the world, but not to be of the world. To achieve their goals, Christians should use most of all evangelical methods.

Economic activity, in a certain sense, holds an intermediate position between the material and the spiritual: "on one hand, it related to this world and, therefore, is not to be specially studied from theological position; on the other hand, as Christianity becomes involved in it, it needs evaluation, which is a subject of theological discourse" (17, 2005, p. 10).

Orthodox Christianity does not have a specially developed and theologically based canonic economic ethics. Moreover: "there is no such thing as a social order, "appropriate" or "matching" the teachings of Orthodox church". (11, 2004, p. 69). According to Zarubina: "it is possible to talk about Orthodox economic ethics not as a specific developed concept, but as a combination of doctrine, rituals, and functional manifestations, and religious worldview as a whole" (10, 2001, p. 102). Therefore, in order to verify what is the attitude of Orthodoxy towards the economy,

we will observe how labour, wealth, and poverty – the three categories directly related to economic life – are presented and analyzed in Orthodox texts.

## On labour

The main characteristic of the Christian attitude to labour and to economic earthy goods consists in Christianity regarding earthy life, labour and economy as a suffering: "... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. (Genesis 3: 17-19). The Apostles themselves were "working with their own hands" (1 Corinthians 4: 12) and wre often "in weariness and painfulness" (2 Corinthians 11: 27). Jesus Christ Himself worked in a carpenter's shop and was born and raised in the family of the woodworker Josef. Thus, on one hand, labour represents a necessary condition for human existence and, on the other – it is a punishment imposed by the Lord because of the original sin of man.

The Christian attitude to labour, economy and earthy goods is based most of all on the acknowledgement of the material world as a good by God Himself – the Creator of the visible and the invisible. Orthodoxy calls for salvation of the world and not for salvation from the world. The Son of God and His disciples and followers did not adopt as a goal changing social reality with its injustice and inequalities between people. Their mission was to empower for "internal free maturing and renewal" (12, 2002, p. 133), to direct people towards "a permanent improvement and perfection of life". (15, 2004, p. 136). Jesus

Christ was not a social reformer – His mission was salvation of the soul. He proclaimed values that are the principle elements of building a good and just society, but He did not develop a program of social order and of organization of different types of labour.

Orthodox Christianity praises all types of labour – both physical and intellectual. For Orthodoxy, the labour on land is not lower or worse than bakery, construction works, or even intellectual creative work. Orthodox theologians define labour as “one of the most powerful and blessed means of salvation”. (14, 2004, p. 70).” Kirov said that labour is a right and obligation of every man. As the Patriarch Kiril also states: “labour is a mean, and one of the most justified means of satisfying the necessities of existence”. (15, 2004, p. 133) The theologian points out that, in parallel with labour for a living, the labour on understanding God, truth, and good, should be pursued, too.

The commandment to work is general in its character and is directed towards all Christians, irrespectively of their material status. The Saint Apostle Paul said categorically: “... if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2, Thessalonians 3: 10). But the commandment to work follows not so much from the fatal necessity of survival but also from the vocation of man to transform the world. Bringing forward personal interest as a main incentive of labour is unacceptable for Orthodoxy, because: “in selfishness and the egoistical promotion of self-interest through the severe struggle for survival or in the group, estate, or class interest or struggle, is the force of destruction, disorder and decline”. (15, 2004, p. 142-143). The value of labour in Orthodoxy is determined by the internal motivation coming from the heart, by spiritual life that cannot be measured by external means. And the usefulness of labour, as Koval notes (13), is

measured, above all, by its “usefulness for the soul”. The Saint Apostles encouraged believers to honest labour. Because the one who does not work becomes lazy and “idleness is the mother of all sins” (5, 2005, p. 143). If he makes his living by his own labour, a man can be useful for both himself and his fellow men. First, because working man is independent and second, because by the fruits of his won labour he can help those in need: “ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20: 34-35).

It follows from all the above that labour becomes a religious service performed for the love for God and the fellow man, directed towards improvement and education of the soul. This, according to Orthodox norms, is blessed labour. And labour performed for its own sake and being a mean for the satisfaction of different passions, pride, strive for power, is interpreted by Orthodoxy as vanity, deprived of sense and disastrous for the soul.

Despite the equal status of all types of labour, the internal spiritual labour is defined in Orthodoxy as supreme – the prayer, the exploit of contemplation. Therefore, the labour of the monk is acknowledged as supreme for, of labour. Koval even affirms that the monastic ideal defines a certain system of coordinates to Orthodox religious consciousness and determines the direction of its development. “The monastic ideal has served as a value model in Orthodoxy, as an ethical point of reference for any pious Christian” (13, 1994, p. 59). And the monastic ideal calls for the ascetic denial of the world. Evdokimov holds that the role of monastic practice in Orthodox Christianity is to be a maximal measure: “in

what monks do and announce the Christian must find the spiritual measure of his whole life". (8, 2006, p. 409).

One of the important consequences of such view is that "in Orthodoxy work is considered blessed and useful inasmuch as it serves supreme goals and assists the fulfillment of the main deed of man in his life – spiritual perfection" (13, 1994, p. 59). Any labour or good action acquire a sense in light of salvation only when they are performed "in the name of the Lord".

This is why the Orthodox Christian believes that also for misfortune in business, he should address his gratitude to the Saviour. Man is obliged to undertake everything depending on him, to achieve positive results, but in joy and unhappiness, he must praise the Creator and be thankful to Him. The situation of man should also be accepted with joy and gratitude, irrespectively of whether he is poor or rich. If the spirit of the believer is free from confinement to the earthy and the material, he can receive a benefit in the ethical sense from his position of subordinate, or from the goods owned by him. Because "poverty and wealth are for him equal means given upon God's discretion" (14, 2004, p. 73).

## On wealth

Among Christians in the first centuries, there are no special moral issues raised by the way, in which wealth is acquired. The emphasis is on labour – partly for the welfare of the community, and partly for idleness is a moral weakness and leads towards other bad qualities. "The fact that work can bring about wealth for personal use is never considered as a moral incentive for it" (23, 1940, p. 269). The method of acquiring wealth was considered moral inasmuch as it did not contradict the

attitude of love to the fellowman". Wealth and prosperity do not represent evidence for salvation or special spiritual grace as, for example, in protestant ethics. Even the opposite – economic activity represents, as called by Zarubina "a high risk zone", where mundane vanity, the pursuit of profit, the strong involvement in business gradually lead to forgetting spiritual virtues.

The main aspect influencing the attitude to property, wealth and its distribution among people in the New Testament is the idea that "the absolute right of property on the world in its real fullness is possessed by God as Creator, Redeemer, and Illuminator and Provider" (12, 2002, p. 143). God gave this wealth to all and, therefore, the more numerous are the people who enjoy it, and the closer we are to God's intentions, managing it, the more what we do is good.

According to Orthodox teachings, material wealth and poverty are, by themselves, ethically neutral and both can be useful or harmful. They become salutary or fatal by the force of the attitude of the man himself towards them. The poor who harbours hatred and malevolence is not blessed. Also the humble owner of wealth considering himself no more than a "steward" (Luke 16) of this wealth that belongs to the Creator and owning it in justice while spreading merciful attitude to the world through it cannot be considered as one of the wealthy men about whom the Saviour said that they cannot enter the Kingdom of God. Wealth can even be an instrument allowing to achieve piety. Material opulence is not a sin in itself, but it must be righteous in both the way of its acquisition and its use. Wealth itself is relative as shown by the New Testament parable on the two mites, which the widow threw in (Mark 12: 41-43). The subjective perception and evaluation plays a major role in this case.

Nevertheless, Orthodox theologians advise that the acquired material wealth be distributed among poor people instead of being put to circulation so that its owner would not fall into different temptations. Because wealth "makes the heart cruel and insensitive to the needs of the fellowmen" (17, 2005, p. 99).

According to the Russian theologian Simonov, the starting point referring to condemnation of wealth and property in the two Testaments can be found in the words of Christ: "woe unto you for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now for ye shall mourn and weep" (Luke 6: 24-25). And at the same time, it is again numerous texts from the two Testaments may be quoted as examples where wealth is not denied. Among the disciples and followers of Christ, there are people of great wealth. This shows, according to Simonov, that the two Testaments, despite the widespread view, do not contain condemnation of wealth in itself. They also offer evaluation criteria: "A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things." (Matthew 12: 35).

About those looking for wealth, Jesus said: "Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for the last days." (James 5: 1-3). Here, however, Orthodoxy does not condemn wealth, but only its unrighteous acquisition and unreasonable use, its worship as if it were God (2, 1993, p. 56), because further in the parable, we can read: "Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries

of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter" (James 5: 4-5).

It is the dishonest wealth, won by breaking ethical principles in human relationships, that is condemned. The unrighteous "devour widows' houses" (Matthew 23: 14), and unrighteous is he that "layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12: 21). Unrighteous are those of the rich who "loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12: 43) and focus on perishable "treasures upon earth", rather than on the eternal "treasures in heaven" (Matthew 6: 19), and those who rely more on their wealth than on God's mercy

It is in this reliance upon wealth where the problem lies. If this obstacle is overcome, then the salvation of the wealthy is quite real, because "the things which are impossible with men are possible with God." (Luke 18: 27).

But this possibility of salvation is conditioned by many circumstances, which separate the unrighteous from the righteous wealth. It is written in the Orthodox catechism that most people cannot use earthly goods without harm to their soul. This is why the Russian clergyman, Archimandrite Rafail (1), defines Christian life as "internal struggle of man for purity of thoughts, of desires", as a struggle with "the dark demonic world", the latter striving to subjugate man to its passions and bounties.

It is exactly for this peculiarity of human life that "man can find happiness only in God, only in God his true life begins. Here on earth there is no happiness, here is the life of a worm feeding on dust" (1, 2004, p. 121). These words eloquently express the attitude

of Orthodoxy to earthy goods and human attachment to them.

The Orthodox believer not owning any wealth has more advantages the one owning it. If a man has no material property towards which to direct his thoughts, "a place is made free for concentration, reflection, prayer and communion with God" (12, 2002, p. 150). Here, once again, we can see the huge importance that Orthodox Christianity attaches to prayer, to permanent internal prayer, which uniquely can attach man to God.

In Orthodoxy, the purpose of life must be the comprehension of the Saint Spirit. The material is not evil by its nature and the two Testaments, as we have observed, condemn not only the selfish use of property, but also the incorrect attitude towards it, the attachment to earthy goods, interpreting wealth and property as an end and not as a mean. Jesus denounced the abuse of wealth and its bad handling. The reasonable use of property, as we have seen, means refusal of selfish pleasure and its use for supreme goals: serving God and the fellowman; helping those in need; charity; economic, social, cultural and spiritual development of society as a whole. But witnessing the attachment of people to earthy goods, the Saviour found how difficult it was for a rich man to save his soul. In the parable about the greedy rich man, Jesus says: "thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God." (Luke 12: 20-21).

In other words, from the Orthodox point of view no earthy goods can become in themselves a dignified life purpose. No external goods can give a sense to life, because they are all temporary, accidental, and transitory. The highest and precious good for the Christian

is the kingdom of God (Matthew 13: 44-46), while life and anything earthy is: "a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away" (James 4: 14).

This shows, on one hand, that the unjust attitude to people and their exploitation is condemned first of all, not so much the wealth itself. Admitting, on the other, that it is difficult for a rich man to be able to abide to Lord commandments with a pure heart without caring for his property in the first place. This is why, in the parable of the rich young man Jesus says: "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark. 10: 23). And then adds "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark. 10: 25). Because, "the more material goods a man has, the more he is rich, the stronger he feels his spiritual poverty" (16, 1984, p. 143).

Orthodox attitude towards different forms of property is built on these grounds. Man can be also a prisoner of both private and public property, or he can be internally free from property, having a great treasure. "Orthodoxy does not raise the issue of ethically sanctioning private property as such" (13, 1994, p. 67). Nevertheless, the Orthodox theologians admit that in addition to the Church as spiritual communication and community, man is placed in a harsh reality and must comply with it in order to physically survive: "we cannot imagine our life without private property" said Exarch Stefan (9, 2004, p. 147).

However, wealth should not be used to oppress the poor or to acquire money by force, theft or deceit, but to assist those in need: "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth." (Luke 12: 33).

## On poverty

It is true that Jesus Christ did not condemn the rich, but valued higher those who owned nothing. This is to a high degree related to the understanding of the basis on which the distinction is made between rich and poor in the New Testament literature. As Dimitar Kirov considers, "those are poor who own no material goods and trust more in God, to Whom they relate both their spiritual and material life. The rich, on the other hand, possess great material power and, therefore, do not need the merciful interference of God. The poor prepare themselves for the spiritual world, and the rich let themselves be absorbed in luxury" (12, 2002, p. 151). It is said in the Testaments that the rich receive their prize here on earth, and the poor will receive it in heaven. The Saviour wished for man to free himself from the power of wealth and temptations of the world. The life of the Christian is incompatible with his commitment to wealth and earthly goods. This is why the poor are assigned by Jesus to be the future inhabitants of the Kingdom of Heaven. They are the ones who realize the Saviour's understanding of wealth, especially if they have chosen life in poverty of free will and have themselves renounced the mundane world and its bounties, because "Lord Jesus Christ already gave us all the wealth in His Revelation" (1, 2004, p. 89).

Admitting that property and wealth are ethically neutral in themselves, Orthodox consciousness sees in poverty not just social status, but something like supreme acknowledgement, supreme freedom. Education in the monastic ideal of common property, the special tribute to ascetic life of Orthodox saints build in the Orthodox religious consciousness more of respect to poverty, and opulence is represented as ethically dubious "Poverty in itself presupposes virtuousness, and wealth

presupposes sin" (13, 1994, p. 68). Because: "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (James 2: 5).

But poverty is not a prerequisite of or a guarantee for eternal life. Moreover, it is associated with a danger of some sins: "contempt and hatred towards the rich; protest against God, using dishonest means of improving the material status; despair" (5, 2005, p. 139-140). Nevertheless, the poor owns no money or estates, which could attach him to the earthly world and, in this way, his freedom in the Christian sense of the word – as possibility to free himself from sin, passions, and evil – is not limited. The Orthodox clergyman – the Branitza bishop Gerassim has a positive attitude to the qualities that poverty can teach us – "kindness and humility, mercifulness and responsiveness, lack of vanity and inuring in piety" (5, 2005, p. 139). "Therefore – as Kirov observes – true wealth is cultivated in material poverty. The true Christian is poor, but he enriches many people, he has nothing, but owns everything." (12, 2002, p. 153).

Poverty as an opposite to wealth, according to Simonov, has two essential characteristics. On one hand, it is preferred because Jesus Christ Himself lived in poverty. On the other hand, poverty represents an illusionary and subjective phenomenon.

Poverty, although is not in itself something good or bad, is recommended by the Saint Fathers "to be avoided when it has no spiritual meaning and the goal is not the explicit escape from outside circumstances" (17, 2005, p. 140). Both poverty and wealth engender many troubles. Poverty can be useful only in some specific cases:

1. when it is voluntary, i.e. renouncing earthy goods in the name of the Lord;
2. when it is a mean to educate the spirit;
3. when it leads to communion with God.

This is how the Russian clergyman summarizes the specific characteristics of Christian economic thinking in two main principles. On one hand, this is the concept of the educational significance of misery and poverty, because they teach to the righteous man the true faith and show him the correct path to follow. On the other hand, this is the concept of true wealth, which is given by the Lord. This is "the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering" (Romans 2: 4). It is about this wealth that the Apostle Paul wrote: "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things" (2 Corinthians 6: 10). In the presence of such wealth, life circumstances do not matter. Therefore, according to Simonov, the disciples of Christ glorify poverty and ascetism and everyone is ready to renounce on everything, because he knows that he will receive much more than he gives up renouncing earthy goods. Those, who are ready to accept this wealth are urged by Apostle Paul: "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12: 2).

Thus, the Saint Scripture invites people to follow Christ instead of pursuing money and those who are rich believers are faced with the especially difficult challenges to avoid temptations created by opulence.

Salvation in the Orthodoxy is reached not on the basis of personal skills in the occupational field and independently of professional achievements or efforts spent on it. The most important for the salvation of a man, from

the Orthodox point of view, is the sincere respect for and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and following His teachings of humility and mercifullness toward all God's creatures. The Church calls believers to free themselves from strong links with the world and to rely fully on God in looking for a more perfect image of this world. The bishop Gerassim reminds us that in order to be free from dangers related to both wealth and poverty: "the Christian must remember the transitory character of wealth and the transitory character of earthy life" (5, 2005, p. 140).

## Conclusion

For the Orthodox religious consciousness, the most important divine nature and prevailing image of Jesus Christ is the image of the Son of God, resurrected from death. Accordingly, Orthodox religious consciousness is concentrated on the heavenly, the absolute and the eternal. It is where the strive towards the Kingdom of Heaven comes from. His superior vocation is contemplation and internal spiritual life: "And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you." (Luke 12: 29-31). Orthodoxy considers the earthy from the height of the heavenly, and solves earthy problems on the basis of the eternal: "For Orthodoxy, the most important thing is the spiritual, internal life of the person, its internal incentive. Orthodox ethics educates first of all the heart, and it is the heart in Orthodoxy that represents the mystic union of spiritual space, in which the innermost dialogue between man and God happens" (13, 1994, p. 57).



Asserting that the internal, the spiritual determines the external, Orthodoxy builds a certain value system, in which the spirit dominates over the material, the spiritual causes the carnal, the eternal determines the temporary and transient. In this way, man is not liberated from the external burden of the economic necessities, from the need to work, but accepts this burden internally for Lord, for Christian obedience.

As we have mentioned before, there is no explicit support for a certain type of economic system in the Bible. Moreover, the Old and the New Testament and the Epistles are devoid of any recommendations on economic policy. In reality, what we see in the New Testament is a total neglect of almost all that economists are interested in. The message of Christ is clear: believers must not direct their faith towards wealth or whatever other idols of this world. It is not appropriate to say that Orthodox ethics emphasizes any special form of economic organization as generally ethical. It does not include either the morality or the immorality of private property: "Christianity definitely does not support any special form of property as such. If the property is better held by the individual or by small groups ..... is a question of experience and common decision. But where Christian ethics steps in, what it demonstrates is that property is something secondary, not primordial, a mean and not an end" (23, 1940, p. 265). According to Widgery, Christian ethics does not raise the question of the "right" of an individual or of a small group of individuals to own natural resources, but it is opposed to their exploitation for individual or group selfishness when depriving others from access to those resources. This means economic goods produced through cooperation should be for social use and not for the material enrichment of a small group. People who now have a lot of money must understand that

not all in this world is for sale or purchase and that it is necessary for them to learn to live in both abundance and in the opposite, because "forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers" (Peter 1: 18)

The Christian incentive for economic activity is common welfare as an opposite to the selfish and personal motivation of the "economic man". This, as we have demonstrated above, does not include obligatory denial of private property. It can be justified on the basis of Christian experience as "contributing to the moral stability of individuals and providing opportunities of practicing their moral freedom" (23, 1940, p. 274). Indeed, the Christian has the duty to live in accordance with these principles. Any exploitation of human beings as means of selfish benefit is a sin. The believer must take into account simultaneously the physical and the moral or spiritual wellbeing and the first must be determined with reference to the second.

Orthodoxy, unlike Catholicism, is much less directly related to the economic aspect of life. As Koval observes, Orthodox clergymen never dealt with issues of "fair" or "legal" price, admissible profit rate, trade regulation, defining the classification of forms and types of labour, etc. – issues subject to scholastic discourse in catholic Europe. Orthodox theology "kept silence" on these issues for centuries. It even keeps a distance from economic problems. Orthodoxy is far from the ideas of Protestantism analyzed from the sociological point of view by Max Weber (7) that love for God and the fellowman is expressed by professional activity, that it is in professional excellence that man receives a reward in the world and that professional vocation is a direct expression of God's will.

Becoming convinced that a significant link exists between Protestantism and the rationalisation of modern capitalism, Weber tried to understand why other religious traditions produce different results. In his study on religion, Weber (6) wanted to demonstrate how religious beliefs condition the world, i.e. all those activities that are not directly a part of the social domain and what are the economic consequences of different religious definitions. This is how Weber arrives to the conclusion that "all true religions of salvation result in anti-capitalist ethos and social policy. Only two religious communities stay aside, having a totally different behaviour, although differing one from the other: Puritanism and Judaism" (6, 1992, p. 331).

Historically, capitalism came indeed too late in societies where Orthodoxy was the dominating religion. This took place approximately at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the attention paid by Weber to the question why capitalism could not develop initially in these societies, the sociologist did not make a full analysis of Orthodoxy in its relation to the economy – at least not at the scale such analysis was done in his studies on Protestantism and other religions. Andrew Buss (21) observed that in a few notes on Orthodox Christianity, Weber asserts that its culture is too mystically oriented and its interests are strongly directed to the outer world to be able to motivate people for economic initiative.

In Weber's terminology, mysticism is placed in opposition to ascetism. For him, ascetism is related to salvation through work and activity demonstrating religious value. In mysticism, Weber observes passive contemplation and silent reliance on God. Neither ascetism, nor mysticism approve, according to Weber, the world as it is. The ascetic person rejects the

irrational empirical character of the world, while at the same time asserting the rational activity in the world as a personal mean of becoming a God's instrument in building a world of beatitude. On the other hand, the mysticism going beyond this world considers action in the world as a temptation against which man must support the society of beatitude as a part of God. Therefore, actions are minimised in resignation with world routine practices. For the mystic person, a success that may be a culmination of actions within this world cannot be of any significance for salvation.

Eastern Orthodoxy as a "true religion of salvation" encourages such mystic attitude to life, and "when salvation in a given religion is characterised by mysticism, the normal consequence is a relative indifference to the world and humble acceptance of the given order" (21, 1989, p. 253). It is exactly this distancing from the social and economic sphere which is the cause for many philosophers and theologians to avoid talking about Orthodox economic ethics. However, according to Koval, Orthodoxy does not ignore economic problems, it just approaches them in a different way.

As Koval points out, Orthodox Christianity elevates labour and holds no disdain to economy, which means that the Christian ideal is not anti-economic (as it is for Buddhism, for example), but supraeconomic: "Christianity does not deny the economic, but it provides it with a spiritual and ethical orientation, make labour and any economic activity subordinate to supreme goals, transforming them into a religious service" (13, 1994, p. 56). In this way, labour and the whole economic process acquire inner sense, placed higher than ordinary labour and higher than the economy as such, becoming a mean to perfection and inspiration of the world and man.

Commenting the words of Jesus to the Pharisees: "law, judgement, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23: 23), Simonov also points out that indeed the reproach is not to economic activity per se, but to its incorrect interpretation – the focus and reliance only on this activity. Because this economic determinism, as Simonov names it, leads to a cruel moral and psychic dependency on the world, it deforms the value system and man is placed totally in captivity of everyday problems. The economic activity cannot be the only and sufficient goal for the Christian, for "what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16: 26). Therefore, the heart of the Christian should not be at no time encumbered by "surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life" (Luke 21: 34). "All human goals must be subjected to one common goal of human existence – excellence or similarity to God" (15, 2004, p. 141). For Christian consciousness, it is the internal and eternal that is important, and not what is external, changing and temporary. For this, it is not important what is the job that you have, the important is who performs it, "because the less prestigious and most heavy job may be performed by a saint man, and the one who accepts the honours of the world may be the last nullity" (13, 1994, p. 69).

In Protestantism, as Weber has demonstrated, success is a sign of someone being chosen by God, which is assigned on the basis of a divine arbitrary act, incomprehensible for man, and in Orthodox ethic, success is awarded to man. But Orthodoxy considers that success is given not for reasonable mundane virtue, but for devotion and spirituality. Therefore, Orthodox clergymen advise that "the ethical education of the Christian be built upon contemplation of the ideal – God, growing by the levels of

the nine Beatitudes, explained in the New Testament" (14, 2004, p. 58). The messages in the New Testament say that bounties of the earthy world may express higher value than economic ones, namely to be used to show esteem to God (Matthew 26: 7-12). Irrespectively of whether actions may be in detriment to a certain group of people, in the first place and as main motivation must be the esteem and respect for Jesus Christ.

Therefore, capitalism as "an imperfect system, built by sinful, just as any other social organisation" (19, 2002, p. 40) has too many contradictions with orthodox norms. Moreover, this lifestyle and way of thinking, imposed by modern culture is, according to orthodox clergymen, "dangerous and risky for the whole world" (4, 2003, p. 255). As Bandow observes (19), the market, irrespectively of how successful it may be, is not everything. It provides individuals with multiple opportunities, but neither teaches virtues, nor does it prevent poverty. And, although capitalism encourages certain good qualities outlined by Christian Teachers like, for example – thrift and hard work – it also multiplies temptations. This is why Bandow concludes that "capitalism is totally incompatible with Christian faith" (19, 2002, p. 41). "Market economy (or capitalism, which includes the same) is considered as the morally repelling expression of mercilessness and greed" (20, 2005, p. 442). This mercilessness is in sharp contrast with Christian altruism, which – according to Metropolitan Kussev (14) – is the only basis for social welfare.

As Johnston also observes (22), economists act in the narrow limits of the "fact", focusing only on "natural laws" and on how things work on the material; level. This, however, is not enough and inappropriate from the Christian prospective. But the capitalist economic system does not end here – it imposes as

something unavoidable and even imperative today the individualism, the materialism, and the permanent growth in production of goods and services: "There is one main goal – growth in production of "ommodities" – all kinds of "commodities". There is no other goal that matters, neither the economic wellbeing of all people, nor the health of the individual or society, nor environmental inviolability. Just the accumulation of economic growth» (22, 2002, p. 21). Today, in the capitalist conditions we live in, money are no more means of satisfying our basic needs, they become an ideal or, as Bigovitch says, they are "the embodiment of power" (4, 2003, p. 200). According to orthodox clergymen, the economy is important, but "ordering of social life" can be performed by love for "the fellowmen and humanity, by mercy and self-sacrifice" (9, 2004, p. 152). However, in today's "productive-consumption" civilization, the principle of maximum production and maximum consumption means "there is nothing above individual happiness, freedom, usefulness, and rights, no external authority" (4, 2003, p. 56). If we use the words of Bandow, we can say that "the free market and the capitalist system are characterised not only by the lack of spirituality, but also by anti-spiritual point of view" (19, 2002, p. 48).

Radovan Bigovitch admits that Orthodoxy is in exile in the modern world, it is left without any Orthodox culture or external Orthodox environment. But in its impotence, the author can see the power of the Orthodox faith, because "the whole concept of the world, God, and man" is preserved in it "and uncovers the secrets hidden behind the curtains of this world" (4, 2003, p. 299).

## Literature

1. Archimandrite Rafail, *Orthodoxy and modernism*, Svetagora, Aton, 2004.
2. Afanasiev, E., On some Orthodox principles of market economy formation, *Economic Issues*, 1993, 8, 54-59.
3. *The Bible or the Saint Scripture of the Old and the New Testatment*, Synodical editing house, S., 1992.
4. Bigovitch, R., *Church and society*, Omophor, S., 2003.
5. Branitza bishop Gerassim, *Orthodox Synodical ethics*, Synodical editing house, S., 2005.
6. Weber, M. *Sociology of Power. Sociology of Religion*. University editing house "St. Kliment Ohridski", S., 1992.
7. Weber, M., *Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism*, Prosveta, S., 2004.
8. Evdokimov, P., *Orthodoxy*, Omophor, S., 2006.
9. Exarch Stefan I., Shavelski, G., The Social problem in the light of Orthodoxy, In: Gugov, G. Ed., *Orthodox conservatism*, p. , 2004.
10. Zarubina, N., The Orthodox entrepreneur in the mirror of Russian culture, *Social sciences of modernity*, 2001, 5, 100-112.
11. Kapriev, G., Two traumatic subjects, Orthodoxy facing nationalism and liberalism. *Christianity and culture*, 2004, 1, 56-75.
12. Kirov, D., *Theology of social life*, Association "Citizen", S., 2002.

13. Koval, T., The labour ethics of Orthodoxy, *Russian civilization* 1994, 55-70.
14. Metropolitan Metody Kushev, Education in the spirit of Christianity or Atheism, In: Gugov, G. Ed., *Orthodox conservatism*, P., 2004.
15. Patriarche Kiril, The man and his labour, In: Gugov, G. Ed., *Orthodox conservatism*, P., 2004.
16. *Orthodox catechism and Message of Eastern Patriarches on Orthodox faith*, 1984.
17. Simonov, V., *Church-society-economy*, Nauka, M., 2005.
18. The New Testament of our Lord Jesus Christ, Synodical editing house, S., 2004.
19. Bandow, D., Capitalism and Christianity: The Uneasy Partnership? *International Journal on World Peace*, 2002, Volume: 19, Issue: 3, 39-50.
20. Berger, p. , Orthodoxy and Global Pluralism. *Demokratizatsiya* 13, 2005, 3, 437-447.
21. Buss, A., The Economic ethics of Russian-Orthodox Christianity: Part I. *International sociology* 4, 1989, 3, 235-258.
22. Johnston, C., A Christian critique of economics, *Buddhist-Christian Studies*, University of Hawaii Press, 2002, p. 17 +
23. Widgey, A., *Christian Ethics in History and Modern Life*, Round Table Press, NY, 1940. ~~IA~~