

**«SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND
THE MARKET ECONOMY»**

BY
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1. Theology of the Creation

«Creation» is a term which Christian Theology found from the beginning to be convenient in order to express its world view for the *kosmos* (=world), the result of certain personal cause. The Greek term for the creation is *demiourgia* (=creation) or *ktisis* (=construction).

According to Orthodox tradition, the incarnation of God Himself found within the creation. Man within the christological scrutiny of creation did not comprehend his relationship with the *kosmos* as one of mastery, since Christ Himself *«always had the very nature of God. But he did not think that by force he should try to become equal with God. Instead, of his own free will he gave it all up. And took the nature of a servant. He was born like man, he appeared in human likeness. He was humbled and walked the path of obedience to death – his death on the cross»* (Phil., 2:6-8). Christ comes into the *kosmos* to serve, not to be served (Matt., 20:28). In this way, it is proven once more that **mastery** does not mean **indifference** but **responsibility** and offering, that is,

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respect for man and the natural environment. The opposite would be equal to the violation of everything good by man, since the good is not positioned in the term of exchange and according to Abba Makarios nothing good can be «*polluted or obscured*» (PG Migne, 34:616). The kosmos is a blessing and gift from God toward man, who in turn returns it to The Creator Himself.

The Church always approaches the ecological problem within the perspective of the *eschata*. According to the Apostle Paul, the *ktisis* was created by the Logos, the second person of the Holy Trinity, the Son of God: «*He existed before all things, and in union with him all things have their proper place*» (Col., 1:17). The meaning of the creation is revealed to man with the «completion» of everything by means of Christ (Eph., 1:10). We could say that in the end, «*Christian ecology*» is inseparable from God's within the reality that the *kosmos* has as its destination to participate in the glory and the eternal kingdom with the salvation of man.

The above approach towards the creation of the *kosmos* consists of a different proposal from the side of Orthodox tradition, and adopts a new ethical behaviour of man towards the creation. This behaviour is necessary, if not indispensable, in order for man to realize that his life consists of a spreading or extension of the Logos for the survival of the *kosmos* itself as the «*image of God*».

2. «Liturgical ecology»?

Within the framework of the church community «*doxology*» and «*creation*» do not have two contradictory meanings. The purpose of creation is directly connected with the Church, where nature finds its true meaning. **The Orthodox Church dogma of the Holy Trinity consists mainly of social dogma** (Fedotov). The co-existence of the three persons of the Holy Trinity determines not only the co-existence of humans in society, but also in the natural environment. As the relationship of the Holy Trinity is not a manifestation of need but of completion, so the co-existence of man with nature is a manifestation of indifferent love.

All of nature, the entire *kosmos*, becomes acceptable and sacred by the same Creator. Time and material are referred to God, who came to the *kosmos* «*to fill the whole universe with his presence*» (Eph., 4:10).

Orthodox tradition embraces man every moment of his life «*for seasonable weather; for an abundance of the fruits of the earth; and for*

peaceful times» (Divine Liturgy-Ektenia of Peace). It prays for «*peaceful times*», the avoidance of dryness, drought, sickness, hunger, earthquakes (Mikron Euhologion-Orthodox Prayer Book). The blessing of the waters (Theophany) expresses the love of the Church for the world and asks for its transfiguration (metamorphosis). The *ktisis*, in this way, is liberated from its slavery to decay, in which it is found, and in continuation consists of an inseparable piece of freedom «*to share the glorious freedom of the children of God*» (Rom., 8:21).

This liturgical experience imparts to man his role as *prince* and *priest* of creation. What does this specific role mean for man? **Priesthood** means that man uses the *ktisis* as something which is destined for God. His Eminence Metropolitan of Pergamon notes that when man becomes «*priest of creation*», he himself becomes the co-creator. When we speak about «*priesthood*», he continues, «*we speak about a broader existing behaviour, which consists of all human energies that belong to the conscience and even unconscience manifestations of man*». (King's Theological Review, 12-13 (1989 and 1990).

In this way, man does not consist only of an inseparable part of creation, but also as the «*king*» of creation. Saint Gregory Nazianzen describes the role of man as «*king of all*» in the following way: «*the word of God (...) places man on earth, (...) overseer of the visible world, initiated in the mysteries of the invisible world, king of the earthly, subject of the kingdom above, earthly and heavenly, temporary and immortal, in the midst of grandeur and humility*» (PG 49:114).

Man, created «*in the image*» of God, is called to serve with responsibility the creation no matter that its magnitude may be. Here the true meaning of kingdom is found, as expressed in the act of love of the King of kings, of Christ, who «*began to wash the disciples' feet*» (John, 13:4-5). This expression of the kingdom of man, as an act of service toward nature, is experienced with the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and in particular, in the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil. The priest, during the duration that the Magnificat (Hymn to the Theotokos) are chanted, inaudibly says: «*(...) Be mindful, Lord, of those who offered You these Gifts, and those for whom they were offered and those through whom they were offered and - for what purposes - they were offered (...). Be mindful of those who travel by sea. Accompany those who suffer. Support the orphans. Liberate the captives. Heal the afflicted (...).*»

How can we analyze the ecological terms «*degrade*» and «*clean product*», which refer to the splitting of nature, the death of life, the «*unclean*» way of life? If re-cycling is a means of sensitivity against the destruction of the natural

environment, this conception certainly creates new moral problems from the moment that man begins to interrupt the cyclic flow of the *ktisis*. Today the view that all things, even man, can by «re-cycled» is becoming accepted. Human intrusion in the natural environment is in antithesis with the «cyclic» life of a world that brings death. Life can become new only through death, and the mystery of life is the only «product» that cannot be «recycled».

Every Spring nature prophesizes what is coming: the conquering of death from the vitality of life. The «pascha of nature» leads us to the Christian Pascha (=Easter). Just as Winter leads us to Spring, in the same way the period of Great Lent and Passion Week leads us to the life of Holy Pascha. The melodist in order to approach the secular trait, from the fall of man until his recovery with the conquering of death, uses rich images of natural phenomena that accompany the two great events of the world: death and the end of the world (apocalypse). After the fall of Adam, humankind is led out of Paradise and the chaotic element is introduced into the world of Edem. With the crucifixion, the New Adam (=Jesus Christ) «brings again the *kosmos* to Paradise». In the resurrected person of Christ, the material creation comes again into the eternity of the new life.

Behind the ecological term «de-graded» quality of life, we find the theological term «perishable» creation, which is an object of death and decay. The ecologist forgets that the mark of decay is found throughout the entire universe. Recycling cannot be effective outside the Resurrection. The Resurrection is the only true «re-cycling» of life. The litany, with the procession of the holy icons, is not done only in difficult moments of unfavourable weather phenomena, but also for the protection of nature itself for peaceful times. The symbolic cycle that is formed with the exiting and returning to the church has a soteriological character and protects each thing from the deconic element found in it.

The ascetic treatment of the *kosmos* incites man to a doxological understanding, of the world. Many times, monks narrate various stories to describe, within the wisdom of nature, the virtues of Christian life. Even deprivation many times can become an enjoyment of the revelation of God, since man himself again places it in the hands of God (=we offer to You these Gifts from Your Gifts for all You have done for us). With this perspective, the practice and the restriction of «necessary need» is never identified with the discipline to some ecological program or with the creation of clean products that are friendly to the environment. All things are an extension of the ascetic and liturgical life if man and the result of knowledge of himself and knowledge of God.

All the above consist of a proposal for the review of the mentality of man towards nature. And the place where this change is realized is the Church. From the moment «*church conscience*» exists, automatically «*ecological conscience*» will co-exists.

3. Man as the «worker» and «overseer» of Creation

The ecological crisis offers today a new problematic, a new flexible ethic, that we could say is «outside» as far as man is concerned. In the human centered ethic, an environmental ethic is suggested, which can be divided into three categories:

* «*Shallow ecology*», that takes more interest in the manner and the symptoms of the ecological crisis and not the reasons that created them. In this case, the ecological crisis is faced one-sided, as a technical or financial problem.

* «*Deep ecology*» transforms the ecological problem to a moral, even religious one. Here the need for the bridging between the meaning of life with scientific knowledge and technology is featured.

* Among the above two viewpoints, we note that many persons emphasize the need for the development of «*new ecological thinking*» that combines directly in the form of the **neo-argicultural** or **neo-monasterial** movements.

The practice however, of ecological movements is found in the scrutiny of creation. The «*unity*» and the «*multitude*» of beings that characterize the Fathers' thinking, but also generally «*Christian ecology*» is theoretically unknown. On the other hand, romanticism, a basic element of most ecological organizations, attempts to feature our emotions as objective projections of «ego» on the creation.

But what is the relationship between «*part*» and «*whole*»? Here the word of the Apostle Paul is sound –with some changes– about the contentions happening in Corinth: «*Let me put it this way: each one of you says something different. One says 'I am with Paul'; another 'I am with Apollo', another 'I am with Peter'; and another 'I am with Christ'. Christ has been split up into groups!*» (I Cor., 1:12). We could say: I am for the carreta-carreta, I am for the white bear, I am for fish, I am for birds. Do you **care** for the natural environment? The answer is negative. The theology of the Orthodox Church believes that if a piece of the world is taken away then the wholeness of creation is destroyed. God created the oekoumene as a unified whole. Each

part's contribution is irreplaceable for the completion of the whole. The «*parts exist in the whole of nature and the whole of nature in e parts*» (PG 91:1189D), writes Saint Maximos the Confessor. The connection, but also the difference of all the parts of the natural environment marks the harmonic relationship of all things into one unity, where the term of the 4th Ecumenical Synod of Chalcedon (451) is completely substantiated. That is, in the unity of nature the differences and the substances of the parts are kept «*unconfused, unaltered, indivisible, unpartitioned*».

No part of the world can be understood by itself without its relationship with the other. The creation and the salvation of the world is whole and collective. *Let us know*, writes Abba Makarios, *that the entire ktisis is accommodated by God. He made the sky, the earth, the animals, the reptiles, the wild beasts, that we see, but we ignore their number. What man can know more than the Creator Himself (...)*? (PG 34:561).

4. The new ideology of the development

The ideology of development is considered today one of the basic reasons for the ecological crisis. Continuous increasing consumer demands, and an unbridled form of development have created new needs that sustain and increase the ecological crisis.

The non balanced development mainly affects human principles and displays competition, oppression, aggressiveness, alienation, and social inequality. These have direct effects on the ecological crisis and are expressed with over-productivity, that finds its moral pedestal in the **neo liberal** market, feeding the ideology of competition and easy profits. In front of the one-sided confrontation in the protection of the natural environment, the Orthodox Church is being called to answer practically, and to assist in this new challenge or even to participate, in its own way, in the efforts of non-governmental or other environmental organizations.

Today's political comprehends as rational the development, stressing the competition and the exploitation of the prolific sources. With science, man adopted knowledge, but he could not cultivate in man features of «*frugality*» and of the «*sacred*» communication with the natural environment. The violent invasion of the «*development mentality*» in traditional societies transformed them from agricultural to manufacturing, while in many cases it altered the cultural peculiarities. Social structures and principles were overshadowed

from the moment the meaning of progress was identified with the increase of production and consumerism.

If in the past, the deterioration of the earth had purely a local character, or was restricted to the depilation and over exploitation, today it has been proven that the eco-system is not able to meet excessive production. Societies, from the moment they abandon «*balance*» and «*frugality*» in order to catch up with the fast rhythm of development, are led into the destruction of the natural environment.

The recommended model of development of the West in areas under development have led whole societies into distress. Wealth is not used to heal the needs of the poor resulting in «*that underdevelopment and poverty follow development, while unemployment and poverty add to the degrading of the natural environment*». The result is the exploitation of peoples, marginalization and an increase in social conflicts.

The logic of over exploitation is considered by the Church as **hubris** (=abuse) and **sin**. The theological position on the subject is as follows: In a humane society where some «*have more of the necessities and others are poor or deprived, that is have less of the necessities*», the reason for this social inequality «*is due to the reprehensible moral desire of the greedy, who do not have a real need for the share of the deprived*» (Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomaios, 1998).

Noteworthy is the theological confronting of the problem that comes to a direct relationship with the modern form of universalism in the market. And that because the problem today is not centered on the lack of goods, but on their over-production. The problem sets out «*by bad-antideontological-human behaviour and not from the natural lack of goods*». Development and universalism are called today to take on a «*human face*».

As the markets of products, services and financial capitals become international, then more difficulties are created in economical development, which the poorer countries and areas will sustain, given that a universal politic constitutes an utopia for the immediate future. Because that which has begun as a monetary crisis has broadened into a «*moral illness*» in developed societies. The world has become more and more polarised even among countries, but also in their interiors, the danger of social inequality has increased and become a threat for national stability.

But what is the basic reason for the problem? For the Orthodox Church the reason for the problem is found in extreme materialism (=love for material goods) of the modern world. Poverty is not a result of a lack of goods, but «*a*

predatory exploitation of certain sources, that is, an unequal distribution that leads unbearably to the ecological crisis». This problematic is shared by the President of the Forum of Davos (1999), Professor Claus Swamp, who notes that the pressure for a continuous increasing productivity and profiteering with the aim to face the mega-competitiveness in the universalized market, sweeps every other «stabilizing (=balancing) or restricted factor», and transforms «the acidic social confrontations of the past, which are magnified to an international level».

The new international «*monetary architecture*», that is discussed more and more, demands a cohesive and collective approach, with a sensitivity toward the inter-connection freedoms of development. If we do not adopt, says James Woulferson, such an approach, «*in examining both sides of the coin, the new international monetary architecture is in danger of becoming a house built on sand*» (*International Herald Tribune*, 5.5.1999, p. 45).

5. An Orthodox perspective on the new market economy

The threats of the modern economy could be describes as follows:

a) **economical instability.** The theory that international trade increases the living level is true only when investments are used profitably and trading is not uneven. If not, we become witnesses of crises that pull entire Countries to a withering, no matter that the center of decision making is found far away.

b) **the instability of civilization and society.** Citizens are vulnerable when facing any type of threat. Even though the meeting in Seattle of the World Trade Organization did not bring results, it revealed how everyone is troubled by the uncertainty of universalism. On the other hand, it revealed that we are found in front of a new form of collectiveness different from the traditional model. The resistance of the people in «Seattle proved that we are in front of other forms of collective action. The Groups, even though unrelated with one another and without any hierarchy, or specific ideology, created a new national «public stand» with new perimeters. We do not know yet the power but certainly, according to the studies of Sociologists and Political Studies, this mass reaction will have a direct negative effect on democracy in the near future. The reasons that poverty is «produced» by modern economy are many. The struggle to defeat poverty cannot remain in the traditional logic of simple financial aid – mercy – but to be supported mainly with a different ethos, that is, to become «*servant and manager of same slaves (boundsmans)*» (*Maximos the Confessor*).

The future of the planet is not a simple matter in the framework of the new liberal economy. Development, authority, marginalization lead to a new characterizes modern economy is based on competition «win-lose», that in turn is supported by violence and aggression.

But what is the position of Orthodoxy vis-à-vis all of this? Returning to sources of the Fathers, we find a significant bibliography relative to the subjects of poverty and wealth, mainly in facing economical social problems and contemporary individualism based on the principle of dignity. We must emphasize at this point that social teachings have their roots in the creation of Church, and consist of the substance of Christian knowledge itself.

That is why in the first catechism text of the «*Teachings of the Twelve Apostles*», during the second century, there are not many references for the interpretation of wealth, since all good belong to the rich and to the poor; therefore, there is enough for both the rich and the poor (PG 1:820).

Saint Gregory of Nyssa for the first time puts **mercy** in the center of interpersonal relationships between the rich and the poor. The nature of mercy here consists of the basis of social dogma, that will lead the Fathers to the most important positions about economy. No one should be fearful of being rich or poor, says Saint John Chrysostom, since in the community of Christians everything functions based on justice (PG 60:97).

Criticism by many that the theology of the Fathers does not permit owning of personal property, and even that it is a sin, is incorrect. The study of the texts of the Latin as well as the Greek Fathers do not allow any room towards that direction. Gregory the Theologian writes about the «nes city» – the Basiliada – that above all is the spirit of human dignity commanded and supported by the correct use of goods, in other words a sincere relationship of man with the natural environment and fellow man (PG 46:461D-462ABC).

6. In conclusion: dilemma or pseudo-dilemma?

«*Do for others what you want them to do for you*» (Matt., 7:12). That biblical principle consists of the basis of functioning of a «re-evaluating» way of life that serves man. The «Cain Syndrome» (win-lose) is an existing danger on the social level and places conditions of ethical wavering on man himself. It creates intraverted persons filled with nostalgia to win and allowing no room for failure.