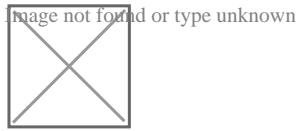


Relations between Church and Economy on a Moral and Theological Basis: the Example of the Monasteries (Dr. Nikolaos Koios, Content Coach of Pemptousia)

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It would be a mistake to believe that such a wide-ranging subject could be exhausted in an address of only a few lines. It's a theme on which many of the sources of our Holy Tradition have taken a position, which, indeed, often illumine it from a variety of angles. It's an issue which, historically, has occupied a prominent position in the dialogue between religion and politics. In various European societies and for different reasons, the question has often been posed in the 20th and 21st –centuries: why should the Church have property? The next question which readily springs to mind might be formulated as: does the Church have the right, morally and theologically, to own and manage financial wealth or not? If the answer's negative, we must say why. And if the answer's positive, we need to explain the conditions under which this may and should occur. It is within this framework of thinking that our presentation today will be set out.



The management of finances by the Church has often been underrated in terms of its moral and theological gravity, held to be superficial and subordinate. And yet it's of great importance, since it involves the direct implementation of the Gospel message in terms of social relations, which results in a direct impact on the shaping of history[1].

Our aim, therefore, is to examine, through the prism of dogma and morals, of the faith and life of the Church, the extent to which involvement in financial activities befits its character and essence. If we were to sum up the teaching of the Church on wealth in very general terms, we might notice a certain incompatibility. On the one hand, there is extensive condemnation of the desire for riches, yet, on the other, material goods are considered part of God's creation, "for our enjoyment and nourishment", and any Manichaean demonization of them is rejected[2]. As we shall see from our references hereafter, this incompatibility is more apparent than real and involves two views which are not so much mutually exclusive as mutually enriching[3].

Of necessity, we shall have recourse to historical evidence and events. The Christian Church is an institution with a history of two thousand years, one of continual social changes and adjustments. This means that, to reply, on the basis of Church history, to the question we posed at the beginning, we need to examine in detail all the individual phases of this long history, if we wish to be consistent in epistemological terms. But clearly this cannot be attempted here. In the first place, there isn't the time, and, in the second, history isn't my particular field of

knowledge. So, as we've already said, we shall deal with the theme on the basis of dogma and morality. Any historical features to which we shall refer will necessarily be selected with the aim of supporting the moral and theological discussion rather than attempting an exhaustive historical treatment. What I would like to do is to examine the issue by focusing on today's world. This means that we're obliged to choose as our example the institutional structure of the Church as it has survived until now, rather than some ancient aspects which are no longer valid.

(to be continued)

[1] Moskhos, 121.

[2] Nikolaïdis, 60

[3] Cf. Kalliakmanis, Εκκλησιαστική Περιουσία και Μισθοδοσία του κλήρου