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IVAN ZABAEV

## Humility in the Economic Ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church

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*Using a number of concepts from Weber's sociology of religion (economic ethics/ethos, typology of asceticism/mysticism, Weber's reception of Nietzsche's idea of resentment), the author addresses the economic ethos of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy. An analysis of "humility" (smirenje) — one of the key virtues of the contemporary economic ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church — is provided. The author builds a typology of various understandings of humility in Russian Orthodoxy today in connection with the economic practices of Orthodox actors. This article distinguishes seven types of humility. Each of the types may be associated with a vision of economics and social relations. They are grouped into two main clusters — humility associated with obedience to another person and humility not associated with such obedience. The author concludes that this key ethical category of Orthodoxy can denote very different types of relations and economic motivations. This, in turn, means that very different types can be preached at the same time, including those that have more or less productive and even possibly destructive ramifications. Examples are given that show that the fostering and development of some ethical ideas in social life can lead to ambiguous or problematic consequences.*

**Keywords:** Max Weber, humility, economic ethics, resentment, Orthodox Christianity.

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## Problem Statement: The Church and Economics

THE contemporary Russian Orthodox Church rarely gives statements on the subject of economics, and if it does, they are extremely vague: two comprehensive church documents (“The Basis of the Social Concept” [“Osnovy sotsial’noi kontseptsii” 2000] and “The Code of Moral Principles and Rules in Economic Management” [“Svod nravstvennykh printsipov” 2004]) in their economic part contain almost no reference to contemporary problems and reiterate general moral instructions. The only (or one of a few) exceptions was probably Patriarch Cyril’s speech in connection with microlending (“Patriarkh v parlamente” 2017). It seems that Orthodoxy does not see economics as one of its priority issues. Maybe this is as it ought to be; however, there seems to be a problem hiding behind this external calm insensitivity to economic issues. The problem lies in the thought formulated by the Russian philosopher and theologian Sergei Bulgakov a century ago: “Our time understands, feels, experiences the world as an economy, and human power is measured in terms of wealth” (Bulgakov 2000, 40). A hundred years have passed and the situation has somewhat changed, but some things have also remained the same. In the early 21st century, the famous Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben started his book, *Kingdom and Glory*, with the question, “why has power in the West assumed the form of *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men?”<sup>1</sup> In their texts, both Bulgakov and Agamben analyzed the connection between religion and economics. Their approaches are interesting and noteworthy, but the following question dominates today’s discussion of this connection: “How does the religion (of a country) promote or impede economic growth (of that particular country)?” Or a little more broadly, how does religion contribute to modernization? Despite all criticism, economic growth is considered almost a panacea in the modern world, the position taken by Agamben and Bulgakov as well.

It is almost impossible to understand the attitude of the Russian Orthodox Church toward problems of economic development using its official texts. It is difficult to assess the church’s real contribution to the economic development of today, and the current attempts to make such an assessment tend to consider Orthodoxy either as a less

1. Agamben 2011, xi. The work of G. Agamben focuses on the link between economics and *oikonomia*, and the word “*oikonomia*” in this quotation contains additional connotations.

“productive” denomination (for example, compared to other Christian denominations) or altogether unproductive (Guiso et al. 2006; Harrison 2014; Snegovaya 2010). In a world that is understood as an economy, the label of mismanagement, unproductiveness, or indifference to the economy virtually becomes “a death sentence.” The problem is not only that such an actor will sooner or later become the subject of reform (Harrison 2014, 265–66), but also that contemporary people whose whole existence is reduced to labor and consumption do not have an opportunity to join such a denomination or find their place in it.<sup>2</sup>

At the country level, the same question has a different emphasis: if we assume that Orthodoxy inhibits development, does it follow that it needs to be reformed, and if so, in which way? What exactly should be changed in the church and Orthodox culture, with which over 80 percent of the population associate themselves? This is a painful question, especially if it is formulated in the rigid form of a choice between either modernization and the effectiveness of the economy, or the preservation of Orthodoxy.

If the Orthodox Church itself does not state clearly its relation to the contemporary economy and does not tell the believer how he should behave toward it, is it possible to detect its “economic style” as reflected in the implicit, unintended consequences of the actions of the church and its representatives, and to understand in which direction it guides its followers?

This seems feasible, and the initial formulation of the question, which was *explicitly* employed by Sergei Bulgakov, Giorgio Agamben, and modernization research, may help us here, namely the method of analyzing this connection that was proposed by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the “Protestant Sects,” where Weber analyzed various institutional entities as the modes of *organizing the life* of American Protestants, which were more or less explicitly related to economic realities, in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber analyzed the unintended consequences of decisions in an area that was not explicitly associated with the economy. Weber’s argument was that in addition to the direct influ-

2. Regarding this point, see the elaboration of Weber’s argument, for example, in H. Arendt and Z. Bauman (Arendt 2000, 103–74; Bauman 2007).

3. On the influence of Weber’s argument on Bulgakov’s and Agamben’s treatment of the issue, see Bulgakov 1997a; Bulgakov 1997b; Agamben 2011, 3. On the application of Weber’s argument to religion and modernization, see, for example, Eisenstadt 1968; Delacroix and Nielsen 2001; Barro and McCleary 2003.

ence of religion on the economy through creating institutions or formulating economic doctrines (about the sinfulness of usury or something of the kind), there was a tacit way for such influence to occur. By forming the doctrine of salvation and organizing pastoral practice aimed at salvation in different ways, churches shape — each in its own way — the character of their followers, which ultimately manifests itself in all areas of human life — in economic life, in the family, and in politics.

Thus, it seems possible to apply Weber's conceptual framework to answer the question, "What is the economic ethos<sup>4</sup> of Orthodoxy?" — or at the very least to suggest a hypothesis, or indicate a direction in which the elaboration of hypotheses should be made. Yet, before proceeding to the initial development of such a hypothesis, it is worth summarizing a number of points that were important for Weber when he developed his ideas of "economic ethics," and that may be important in a similar analysis today. There are actually four such points: (1) which question the economic ethics of a denomination should answer; (2) how "goodness" is understood in the *Protestant Ethic*; (3) how the problems of freedom and wealth are related using the example of Protestant ethics, and (4) what might be the primary typology for different kinds of economic ethics.

(1) In order to understand Weber's thought in the *Protestant Ethic*, we should focus on the ethical side of Weber's text. In a number of other writings, Weber considered various channels through which Protestantism (or other denominations) might influence the economy (or other areas of life). However, in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber analyzed ethics, and this point is almost always underestimated by scholars. As is well known, ethics is the connection between the actions of a person (practices) and various goods and virtues; it is the means that can lead a person to goodness.<sup>5</sup> In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber used the concept of "ethics" quite rarely and nowhere gave it consistent explication or definition. He dwelled on it in some de-

4. The word "ethos," used by Weber, is interesting in itself. On the one hand, it denotes the ethics of a specific group or layer of the population, that is, the ethics attached to practices; on the other hand, it originates from the Greek "ethos," which means "character." Thus, it can be said that "ethos" represents ethics embodied in character (as opposed to, for example, ethics as a normative code). Later, this understanding will be elaborated by Weber's follower Alasdair MacIntyre, who introduced the notion of *virtue ethics* into the philosophical discussion.

5. See, for example, *Magna Moralia* (Aristotel' 1983, 296–374).

tail only once (Weber 2001, 54–56). By and large, for Weber’s Protestant, the questions of ethics are formulated as follows: “How can I be saved? What should I do to be saved?” After describing the answer that Protestants gave to these questions, Weber proceeded to the description of the *economic* ethics of Protestantism, mainly in the section “Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism,” where Weber quoted Richard Baxter:

And he [the specialized worker] will carry out his work in an orderly way while another remains in constant confusion, and his business knows neither time nor place . . . therefore is a certain calling *the best for everyone* (the author’s italics – I.Z.). (ibid., 107)

Considering the above fragment, the main question of economic ethics can be formulated as follows: “Does the economy have any meaning for salvation?” or in other words: “How do I need to carry out my economic activities in order to be saved?”

(2) In general terms, this is the question of Weber’s economic ethics, but the way the question was posed in the *Protestant Ethic* has another important aspect. When speaking of good, Aristotelian or Kantian ethics mean precisely goodness, that is, something good. On the one hand, Weber received his inspiration from both these thinkers, but, on the other hand, he also followed Nietzsche, and in addition, he seems to have added some of his personal pessimism to the whole picture. The fact is that calling, one of the main categories describing Protestant ethical teaching, according to Weber, is both a blessing and a curse. It is a curse in two respects. First, Calvinistic ethics are based on the idea that, along with those who are predestined for salvation, there are some (and they are the majority) who will be condemned. Interpreting the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, Weber wrote:

For everything of the flesh is separated from God by an unbridgeable gulf and deserves of Him only eternal death, in so far as He has not decreed otherwise for the glorification of His Majesty. We know only that a part of humanity is saved, the rest damned . . . (Ibid., 60)

By founding its ethic in the doctrine of predestination, it substituted for the spiritual aristocracy of monks outside of and above the world the spiritual aristocracy of the predestined saints of God within the world. It was an aristocracy which, with its *character indelebilis*, was divided from the eternally damned remainder of humanity by a more impassable

ble and in its invisibility more terrifying gulf, than separated the monk of the Middle Ages from the rest of the world about him. (Ibid., 74–75)

Secondly, according to Weber's interpretation of Protestant doctrine, calling in fact is always just a search for a calling. A person can never be sure that he has found his calling, that he has done everything he had to and can finally relax. At the end of the *Protestant Ethic*, the combination of these two components of calling leads to the appearance of the image of the steel armor/iron cage, which is the curse of the modern man (ibid., 123). Despite the fact that the followers of the theories of modernization preferred to see the factor of economic growth (= well-being = happiness) in Protestant ethics, the problem of the iron cage was noticed almost immediately after the appearance of T. Parsons's translation of the *Protestant Ethic*.

In other words, it is important to note the ambivalent nature of calling in Weber's ethical theory. A blessing still turns out to be something bad. The *Protestant Ethic* shows how, in order to achieve the highest good of salvation, people degenerated into *Berufsmenschen* and *Erwerbsmaschinen* — “people entrapped in professions” and “acquisitive machines” (ibid., 114). These are the final epithets of the *Protestant Ethic* in relation to the modern man. In this way Weber deciphered Nietzsche's “last people,” which the end of the *Protestant Ethic* alludes to (more on this below).

(3) But who are these *Berufsmenschen* and *Erwerbsmaschinen*? What does the Weberian theory arrive at here? And what does this give us in terms of elaborating on the problem of economic ethics (of denomination X)? The studies that perceived the *Protestant Ethic* in the framework of a rigid modernization paradigm reduced (and continue to do so) the argument of the *Protestant Ethic* to testing the hypothesis about the influence of Protestantism on economic growth (recorded first of all, though not exclusively, by the GDP) (Kapeliushnikov 2018). Sometimes, to develop this idea, they practically equate the spirit of capitalism with the thirst for profit. However, in doing so they lose a very important dimension of Weber's formulation of the problem — the problem of freedom, or “escape from freedom,” as one of the elements of the problem of economics. The fact is that two important components of the spirit of capitalism in Weber are *Beruf* (“profession” and “calling” simultaneously) and *Erwerb* (“acquisition”). Using these concepts, a dependent variable — the spirit of capitalism — is introduced into the *Protestant Ethic*, based on the example of Benjamin Franklin's text.

Among other things, Weber has shown that the modality of the attitude toward the world has changed from “want” to “must” in the process of searching for a calling (see the quotation below). A free man turns out to not be free. And it is not some external structure (primarily the state) that is to blame for this, but persistent attempts to implement one’s freedom. That is, the search for a calling. A person thinks only about how to actualize his calling, and everything that does not apply to this is considered unimportant; time spent on other activities unrelated to the calling is considered to be sinful. The person begins to see the world as something that needs to be acquired, obtained, and seized (*Erwerb*); the fullness of his life becomes sharply narrowed. This is a brief and metaphorical summary of the following part of Weber’s argument:

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling (*Berufsmensch*); we are forced to do so. [. . .] In Baxter’s view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the “saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.” But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage. [. . .] In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport. [. . .] No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: “Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.” (Weber 2001, 123–24)

If we return to the problem of economic ethics, it is important to note that the economic problem has its reverse side — the problem of freedom. In various forms, these issues are always side by side — whether it is Weber’s question about the lack of freedom of a free person, or the problem of restricting market freedom by the state.<sup>6</sup> The question of economic action is always the question of freedom.

6. In this context, see, for example, Hayek 1992; Fridman 2006. Concerning the problem of escape from freedom in the Nietzschean-Weberian framework, see Davydov 1978; Fromm 2015.

(4) Can the *Protestant Ethic* or Weber's other works give us any other guidelines for analyzing the economic ethics of Orthodoxy? In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber insisted that the ethics of calling is a unique phenomenon. Yet, it is very likely that this is not usual for Russian Orthodoxy, which is characterized by something else. Weber himself said in this respect:

There lives in the Orthodox Church a specific mysticism based on the East's unforgettable belief that brotherly love and charity . . . determine not only some social effects that are entirely incidental, but a knowledge of the meaning of the world, a mystical relationship to God.<sup>7</sup>

The term "mysticism" used by Weber is not a random word. In fact, the pairing of "asceticism–mysticism" defines the basic division of Weberian economic ethics. In Weber, mysticism and asceticism as rational methods of salvation are opposed to numerous relatively less rationalized religious techniques associated with orgies, magic, or rituals:

Wherever there is a belief in a transcendental god, all-powerful in contrast to his creatures, the goal of methodical sanctification can no longer be self-deification (in the sense in which the transcendental god is deified) and must become the acquisition of those religious qualities the god demands in men. The goal of sanctification becomes oriented to the world beyond and to ethics. The aim is no longer to possess god, for this cannot be done, but either to become his instrument or to be spiritually suffused by him. (Weber 1963, 159).

In Weber, mysticism is a typological concept;<sup>8</sup> he used this word for designating perceptive religiosity as opposed to the religiosity of action, passive religiosity as opposed to active religiosity, religiosity

7. Toennies et al. 1973, 144–45. In the twentieth century, this position was shared by a number of authors. See, for example, Müller-Armack 1981; Buss 1989.

8. Representatives of various denominations can easily say that there are both mystics and ascetics in their denominations. Weber did not question this. He singled out some elements of reality and then analyzed the reality focusing only on these elements. In other words, some denominations would reveal more of the type of behavior that Weber would call "mysticism," while other denominations would reveal more of what Weber would call "asceticism." Weber neglected the diversity of reality in order to analyze the causal connections between (in this case) asceticism-mysticism and something else.

in which confidence in salvation is recognized by a certain state as opposed to religiosity in which this confidence is recognized by the result of actions. Finally, if to an ascetic calling is of primary importance to salvation, humility is of equal importance to a mystic. In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber uses humility to describe mysticism:

In the place of the humble sinners to whom Luther promises grace if they trust themselves to God in penitent faith are bred those self-confident saints whom we can rediscover in the hard Puritan merchants of the heroic age of capitalism and in isolated instances down to the present. (Weber 2001, 67)

In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber often used the category of “humility” to describe the religiosity of Luther and Zinzendorf and distinguish it from the asceticism of the Calvinists and Puritans (ibid., 59, 68, 87).

This gives us a direction where we may look for the key category of economic ethics of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy. On the one hand, it may turn out that the humility of the Lutherans and humility of the Orthodox are different things; on the other hand, for constructing primary hypotheses, the distinction of “calling versus humility” may turn out to be sufficient. In addition, a number of empirical studies confirm that humility (and the associated categories), as revealed in the practices of Orthodox actors, plays an important (if not the most important) role in contemporary Orthodoxy (Zabaev 2015; Chirkov and Knorre 2015; Zabaev, Zueva, and Koloshenko 2015; Rusele 2011).

### **Interpretation of the Category of “Humility” and Social Relationships (Analysis of Discourses)**

If we assume that the ethics of contemporary Russian Orthodoxy is based on the category of humility, a number of new questions arise. What types, what variants of interpretation of this category can be distinguished in Orthodox discourse? And what type of social and economic relations will each such interpretation evoke or denote? A preliminary “typology of humility” will be offered in order to show the direction in which the formation of hypotheses in this area can move. The evidence will be presented as follows: first examples will be given of using the category of “humility” in pastoral and/or Patristic Orthodox literature, and in interviews collected during empir-

ical projects (in some cases we will point to other types of humility in the literature, including philosophy, fiction, management manuals, etc.). The second step will be to find the mode of actions in economic and/or social relations corresponding to this interpretation of “humility.”

Below we offer an overview of the meanings of humility, which can be identified from our sources taken together. Accordingly, it can be assumed that these meanings are associated with different practices of church life and social life that revolves around the church. Some of these practices are also associated with another concept, “obedience,” which describes both a type of activity (primarily in a monastery) and the corresponding attitude of a person toward other people (primarily, toward those who are more spiritually experienced). Often, humility is recognized from obedience, since obedience is much easier to see externally in following the instructions, orders, or decisions of another person. Possibly because of this, the variants of humility that imply the manifestation of obedience become more easily anchored in practice and culture.

A remark should be made in advance. The following overview of the types of humility will be based not only on the “correct” understanding of humility, which is transmitted through authoritative church sources, but also from the understanding that is shared by at least a part of the Orthodox community and is manifested in their behavior, which also finds support in specific interpretations of authoritative texts. Although the vulnerability of this position is clear, it seems that a similar tension between explicit ethics and implicit normativity behind real behavior is an important aspect of what Weber said in his *Protestant Ethic*.

## **(1) Humility associated with obedience to another person**

**A) Humility as submission** is a capability and willingness to obey (orders, decrees, indirect orders, or hints at an order).<sup>9</sup> Various de-

9. One more understanding of humility is humility as acceptance of humiliation, search for humiliation, finding something beneficial in humiliation, and sometimes even provoking others to humiliate you. Cf. “And in order to acquire humility, strive and force yourself to welcome all afflictions and tribulations with a loving embrace, as beloved sisters, and to flee all fame and honors, preferring to be unknown and scorned by everyone, and to receive no care or consolation from anyone but God. Convinced of its beneficence, establish firmly in your heart the thought that God is your only good and your sole refuge, and that all other things are but thorns, which will cause you mortal

scriptions of this understanding of humility surface in the discourse available on the Russian segment of the Internet, including those from the Patristic literature:

As a help to the others the great elder once pretended to get angry with him in church and ordered him out before the usual time. Now I knew that he was innocent of the charge laid against him by the pastor, and when we were alone I started to plead with the great man on behalf of the bursar. But this is what the wise man said: “Father, I too know he is innocent. But just as it would be a pity and indeed quite wrong to snatch bread from the mouth of a starving child, so too the director of souls does harm to himself and to the ascetic if he denies him frequent opportunities to gain crowns such as the superior thinks he deserves at each hour, through having to put up with insults, dishonor, contempt, and mockery.” (John Climacus 1982, 99–100)

The use of the verb “to humble” (to teach, instruct, punish) and references to humility in the process of organizing activities also apparently belongs to this type. The indication of the absence of humility in someone by a priest allows him to legitimately stop a certain activity:

Sometimes it happens that I would plan whom (“whom” refers to the priests from the deaneries) to give what and how much (food) from the warehouse; I estimate this based on what we have and what the situation in this or that parish is. And then one priest comes and asks me to give him more than I am giving. I refuse, he calls the Rector. . . . If I start arguing with him, he answers — “you are not humble” (laughing, as if she understands that this is nonsense). Then I have to give it, what can I do! (Interview, Research Project, “Organization of Social Work in the Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church,” female, age 50, parish social worker)

This understanding of humility has another important aspect. “Accusations” and “insults” described by St. John Climacus, among other things (and perhaps first of all) cultivate a feeling of guilt in a person who is the object of these accusations and admonitions. These spirit-

harm if introduced into your heart. If you happen to be put to shame by someone, do not grieve, but bear it with joy, convinced that then God is with you” (Nicodemus 1904, pt. 2, ch. 17, 72–73).

ual principles of the Holy Fathers are also reproduced in contemporary pastoral literature. For example:

A very important condition for constant abiding in humility is non-justification of oneself, of one's sinful manifestations. A humble person knows that any human truth being autonomous does not agree with the truth of God. This knowledge, in an almost theoretical way and not in a fully explicit form, is offered to a person who has just entered the path of life corresponding to Christian morality when he is asked "to repent," even if such person is only 7–8 years old. "Repent!" that is, acknowledge that you are guilty, which means that you are wrong. And so, the experience of one's own wrongness is revealed, gradually, half-consciously, to a person who is beginning to follow the paths of the right life. (Sveshnikov 2011)

The consequences of this understanding of humility in social relations have been previously pointed out by Boris Knorre (Chirkov and Knorre 2015). In our studies in the social work of the Russian Orthodox Church, we encountered examples of guilt as a driving force of volunteer action.<sup>10</sup> The average person — not an alcoholic, not a homeless person, not a drug addict, etc. — turns out to be guilty before alcoholics, the homeless, and others already by the very fact of their normalness, which becomes a kind of flaw. And the person's participation in the social work of the church serves as an eradication of this flaw.

**B) Dependent humility** is transferring the responsibility for oneself, for one's actions, to the person toward whom humility is "manifested." In Russian, the word "dependent" has different connotations, both negative (a person fit for work, who refuses to work) and purely social (economically dependent children, old people, etc.). Anthropologists have described the practices of dependency as extremely important for the formation of identity in a number of cultures (Ferguson 2013).

A similar modality exists in Orthodox communities, where "trust in the priest" lies at the heart of this attitude to life. The trust of young people of working age in the Orthodox priest today often entails certain consequences. It is associated with the adoption of a certain lifestyle, for example, creation of a family with many children. Large families require significant resources. In this situation, the family must somehow provide the appropriate income to its budget or its equiv-

10. It is likely that this is not specific only to Orthodox Christianity.

alent. A common practice is creating institutions that support large families in the community. These are various ways to circulate things in the community, such as joint purchases or deliveries at lower prices, family kindergartens, etc. (Vrublevskaia 2016). In other words, there emerges a kind of gift-exchange, extended in time, where humility and trust in the priest results in a set of mechanisms sustaining that trust as a return gift.

**C) Ressentimental humility.** The main characteristic of ressentimental humility, that is, humility proceeding from hidden offense, is the external acceptance of the will of another person accompanied by the desire to take revenge later or the desire for God to avenge.<sup>11</sup> Strictly speaking, this is not humility, and it is included in this list only because it is very often disguised as humility, has a lot of opportunities to be so disguised, and often can hardly be distinguished from this humility. Its features can also be observed in the typical position (mode of being) of priests/Orthodox persons, and even in the Gospels. The possibility for interpreting humility in this vein emerges not only from contemporary Orthodox discourse, where people use Orthodox prayers in various contexts, but also on the basis of the authoritative texts of the church:

Unto what wrath? To the wrath of God. Now since what the injured man desires most to see is, himself having the pleasure of revenge, this very thing he gives him in full measure, that if you dost not avenge

11. Max Scheler, who tried to counter Nietzsche's criticism by working out an opposition to Nietzsche's doctrine of ressentiment, wrote: "Among the types of human activity which have always played a role in history, the *soldier* is least subject to *ressentiment*. Nietzsche is right in pointing out that the *priest* is most exposed to this danger, though the conclusions about religious morality which he draws from this insight are inadmissible. It is true that the very requirements of his profession, quite apart from his individual or national temperament, expose the priest more than any other human type to the creeping poison of *ressentiment*. In principle he is not supported by secular power; indeed he affirms the fundamental weakness of such power. Yet, as the representative of a concrete institution, he is to be sharply distinguished from the *homo religiosus* — he is placed in the middle of party struggle. More than any other man, he is condemned to control his emotions (revenge, wrath, hatred) at least outwardly, for he must always represent the image and principle of 'peacefulness.' The typical 'priestly policy' of gaining victories through suffering rather than combat, or through the counterforces which the sight of the priest's suffering produces in men who believe that he unites them with God, is inspired by *ressentiment*. There is no trace of *ressentiment* in genuine martyrdom; only the false martyrdom of priestly policy is guided by it. This danger is completely avoided only when the priest and *homo religiosus* coincide" (Scheler 2010, 18–19). It seems that M. Scheler's statements concerning Catholicism prior to Vatican II can at least partially apply to Orthodoxy.

yourself, he means, God will be your avenger. Leave it then to Him to follow up your wrongs . . . And this he said both to humble the one by fear, and to make the other more ready-minded through hope of a recompense. For he that is wronged, when he is feeble, is not so much taken with any goods of his own as with the vengeance upon the person who has pained him. For there is nothing so sweet as to see an enemy chastised.<sup>12</sup>

It seems that the respondents speak precisely about this logic of relations in the interview:

[When I was working in an Orthodox organization] sometimes it would seem to me that everything around was covered with some kind of dark cloud. No one would ever say anything openly. Those most experienced in this respect always looked like good people. Yet it was never possible to say whether they were actually good, or had some very clever plan. In an Orthodox organization, the one who actively sticks his neck out loses. You must be silent, you must endure, you must humble yourself, you must wait. Anyone who does something makes mistakes. And these mistakes are collected. This is where opportunities appear. Opportunities to squeeze you out of the job. There is nothing you can do against this “good.” Only be kinder, more patient, more humble, only be able to wait more. Because the one who fights against good is evil. Therefore, one must wait . . . The humblest win. They save their reputation and some niche of their own or something, their own order of life. It seemed that I was living in a painting of Bosch. (Interview, Research Project “Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy,” male, age 41, Moscow)

**D) Humility as the use and receipt of power.** The main characteristic of this attitude is that the person who humbles himself understands that in this, he is giving something to the one before whom he humbles himself, and subsequently, in strict accordance with the logic of gift-giving, the person before whom he humbles himself should give

12. John Chrysostom 1889, 22. We need to correctly understand the use of such texts as the “Homily” of John Chrysostom in the current discussion. We do not insist that such texts directly affect contemporary actors, although this can also be the case. Yet it is not about *influence* — there is another important modality, the modality of *legitimation*. Thus, if one needs to defend the resentimental mode of action, authoritative texts that legitimize such a mode of action can be easily found in the Orthodox tradition. It should also be pointed out that such an attitude toward life is not specific to Orthodoxy. In this respect, see the above work of Max Scheler.

him a gift in return. In other words, the person who humbles himself receives some power over the person before whom he humbles himself, although outwardly this looks exactly the opposite. Christian doctrine would refuse to call this kind of attitude “humility,” but its prevalence in the church as a subtype of humility, or something disguised as humility, compels us to include it in the list. The difference between this type and dependent humility is that we are dealing here with conscious exploitation of humility, while in the case of the dependent type it is often sincere trust and voluntary submission of oneself in taking a dependent position.<sup>13</sup>

Similar practices are described by various Orthodox actors:

It also seemed absolutely disorganized; some basic things are not being observed, like a task is given with a deadline, but nobody cares if this deadline is overdue for months. It is somehow that bad. And yet, everyone knows that no one would reproach them, and for some reason people take advantage of that. That is, on the one hand, this is a very big plus that there is much more love in Orthodox organizations, much more of some kind of human attention, relationship to each other. But instead of being grateful for that, instead of appreciating that, a certain consumerism immediately emerges. And the person understands that well, I will not be fired anyway. The Orthodox do not like to fire people; everyone is used to this situation; they will humble themselves; everyone will endure my shortcomings. And everybody takes advantage of that. Somehow I painted everybody with the same brush, but I can see it in myself that I sometimes behave exactly in this same way. (Interview, Research Project “Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy,” female, age 33, Moscow)

## **(2) Humility not associated with obedience to another person**

**A) Humility as meekness, modesty, quietness, smallness, and tranquility** is probably the main theme that is manifested in the discourses. Priests during confession often give recommendations in accordance with this understanding: “Humble yourself!” This means something like, “Get over it! Don’t be angry!” Sometimes a special et-

13. A typical example described in the literature is Charles Dickens’s character Uriah Heep, who says the following: “‘People like to be above you,’ says father, ‘keep yourself down.’ I am very umble to the present moment, Master Copperfield, but I’ve got a little power!” (Dickens 1850).

ymology of the Russian word *smirenie* (“humility”) is given: *smirenie* means to be “s mirom” (“with peace”) (inside the soul and/or with other people).

A humble person humbles evil beginnings, impulses, habits, lusts, thoughts, feelings, and the senses of his soul up to their utter dying (through repentance), and they become increasingly ineffective: there is nothing left that can fight. But the sweet peace that reigns as a result awaits and desires more: it seeks to establish itself as a good positive state . . . Christianity began to spread so quickly because in the person of Christ people saw the embodiment of their aspirations — aspirations of a lost but recoverable inner peace. The person who humbles himself finds this peace in the measure of his capacities. (Sveshnikov 2011)

Such moral principles turn out to be also related in pastoral literature to recommendations regarding economic behavior:

When a person feels all the time that he has more money than others, it is very difficult for him to remain humble and modest. He is used to affording a lot of things, why cannot he afford this and that, and that? He starts to have a different worldview. And he stops noticing that at the time when he allows himself to luxuriate, there are many people in poverty nearby. He stops seeing them. Thus wealth can contribute to the development of moral blindness in a person, reduce the level of his moral feelings, ruin his conscience. (Vorob'ev 2007, 7)

In respect to social relations, this principle should be perceived as “being in peaceful relations with others, not quarreling, not taking offense, not taking revenge, continuing to communicate no matter what, being patient with another person.” Such an interpretation has different social consequences. On the one hand, scholars have noted the importance of the virtue of humility for the formation of a family (see, for example, Farrell et al. 2015). On the other hand, they have also observed that humility may prove to be a useless or even harmful virtue in the political sphere.

**B) Humility as a capacity to accept the perspective of another person**, put yourself in your opponent’s shoes, share his viewpoint, “take a wider look.” One more definition of this kind of humility is *humility as a lack of attention toward oneself, or shifting the focus from oneself to another person*. Such an understanding of humility can be found among Orthodox priests:

Humility is when the person's eyes are wide open. When a person is proud, he always looks at everything from his own, very narrow, point of view. People tell him:

- Listen, dear, the table is brown!

But he looks at the plate that is lying in front of him with one eye, while the second eye is closed:

- No! It's white!

Try to hear out another person! And if you see something narrowly, you should remember all the time that we all see like that! You should always try somehow to look from the side, wider. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," male, arch-priest, age 43, Moscow)

A similar understanding of humility can be observed in a number of communities where parishioners are connected by close communication. Thanks to this understanding of humility, which makes it possible to accept a different point of view and receive help from another person and not to trumpet your own independence, productive economic practices emerge in such communities: for example, avoiding debt overburdening, especially when it is impossible to repay a loan.<sup>14</sup> Below there are three excerpts from a single interview, showing the situation of one parishioner in connection with the problem of borrowing money:

But of course, I want to solve my problems on my own. [. . .] Maybe there is some lack of confidence in myself, what if . . . , but there is such a thing: well, I have to handle everything myself, I have to solve my problems with my own efforts. And at the same time, during these three years, the church, the parish have taught me that there is nothing shameful in saying, hey, guys, I have a problem, I would be very grateful if you help me solve it. [. . .] [*The parish*] *heals pride*. Why,

14. It is important to emphasize that humility here is in selective affinity with the pattern of gift exchange. This pattern is largely opposed to the pattern of market exchange and the corresponding concept of independent *homo economicus*, who maximizes his own usefulness. Marcel Mauss, the classic author of the gift theory, envisioned gift exchange as the sum of three types of transactions: to give a gift, to accept a gift, and to give a gift in response. Analyzing Mauss's concept, Grigorii Iudin wrote, "Mauss, apparently, was mistaken in the main thing, believing that the main anthropological transformation inherent in the market economy lies in undermining the third principle of the economy of gift-exchange — 'one needs to give an excessive gift in response.' In fact, modern utilitarianism gives the most striking blow to the second principle — 'one needs to accept the gift'" (Iudin 2015, 37–38).

why don't we want to ask for help? Because somebody told us, someone persuaded us, that we need to be absolutely successful, that everything always should be amazingly great, one hundred percent. (Interview, Research Project "Life in Debt: Social Significance of Debt Practices in the Life of Communities in Russia," female, age 37, journalist, Riazan)

People living in accordance with this type of humility turn out to not be prone to debt overburdening, since they may take a loan from their friends when necessary:

Now you can borrow, and now people say, you'd better take it — well, knowing some situations, they say: you'd better take [money] from me, you'd better ask me, you can return it later. But . . . Here, I say, there is one thing: I'm a small, but proud bird, yes.

Before becoming a part of the community, in case of financial need, the same respondent had not turned to friends, acquaintances, or family, but to credit services:

Once I [took] a bank loan, I was so crazy — we broke a thermometer at home, and the mercury spilled. We have a very old parquet floor, and [the mercury] got inside, and I could not do anything to get it out, it kept going inside. And I simply went crazy, I had to urgently buy a vacuum cleaner, but we did not have a vacuum cleaner. I went and took a loan, and bought a vacuum cleaner. But I took the loan in "Home Credit," so in the end this vacuum cleaner cost me probably seventy thousand [rubles] instead of the three thousand that I paid for it.<sup>15</sup>

**C) Heroic humility** is humility toward God, acceptance of His will, and active search for His will. It differs from other types of humility in that it does not require mandatory obedience to another person. In this sense, it may resemble other types of valor in practices such as self-sufficiency, self-confidence, adherence to your vocation, etc.:

15. Practices from entirely different areas of life correlate with this understanding of humility. Thus, in his book *Good to Great: Why Some Companies Make the Leap and Others Don't*, J. Collins analyzed the behavior of directors of companies that made a big leap in the market. Through specifically not focusing on themselves, these people could adapt good ideas even from people who personally criticized them (Kollinz 2012, 39, 44, 53).

Alexander Nevsky was not humble, and even Alexander Vasil'evich Suvorov was not humble?! The person who goes to give his life realizing that there is something higher, even compared to his life, was this not humility? Humility can be defined as peace with God, always, even in the most extreme situations, when you are being beaten or when you are beating, you need to be humble and do the will of God, not losing peace with God. [. . .] Humility. . . The Lord is humble, but what about when he was expelling the merchants from the temple, was he not humble? We often perceive humility as a certain lack of will and passive submission to external circumstances. They offend me, but I endure it. For what reason? Do not endure what is not to be endured, but only with humility. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," male, archpriest, age 65, Moscow)

Such an understanding of humility is revealed in economic practices when a person has to perform some kind of work that for some reason is not close to his heart — he does not like it. In such cases, the ethos of humility helps the person to do the work, while the work, in turn, is perceived as strengthening this person in virtue:

I earned money by private taxi driving [. . .]. Such a Christian work . . . you truly humble yourself. . . For example, I could drive people to some event that was held in the vacation hotel where I once went for some corporate event way back when I was working as the head of a broadcasting station. I myself was in that role, lived in a luxurious suite — and now I come here as a simple cab driver. Well, it humbles one, it really does. The sign of that is that I had tears when I came there. After that, of course, any fear I had was completely gone. . . . Well, in the sense that the fear of building up a sort of career, social status, and in general, even the fear of some kind of physical death. Like, see, here is a girl of a delicate constitution, but she drives big men and is not afraid. At first I was afraid, but not anymore. (Interview, Research Project "Economic Ethics of Contemporary Russian Orthodoxy," female, age 34, Minsk)

## Conclusions

At the beginning of this text, we pointed out the unclear position of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning economics in the modern world. Moreover, since the modern world is perceived by contemporary people primarily as economics (or since such a perception is one of the main possible views), inattention to the economic formulation

of the question must inevitably create difficulties both for the church and for those who care about its instructions.

In order to analyze this situation, we proposed the use of Weber's method of analysis from his *Protestant Ethic*, which suggests focusing not on specific economic doctrines of the churches and not on specific economic institutions, but on unintended consequences of the salvation doctrine central to soteriological religions. It seems that in a situation of unclear economic doctrines and the (possibly) not fully developed economic institutions of the church, this approach makes it possible to analyze the direction in which the church directs her followers.

Using Weber's approach for analyzing contemporary reality, we have noticed that one of Weber's key concepts, the category of *Beruf*, can hardly be used today for analyzing the economic ethics of the Russian Orthodox Church. Both empirical research and Weber's conceptual constructions do not indicate that this category has ever been actively used by the Orthodox Church. However, in his *Sociology of Religion* (as in the *Protestant Ethic* and later in *Economy and Society* and *Economic Ethics of World Religions*), Weber built a typology of the relationship between religions and the world. At the most basic level, this typology is based on the dichotomy "asceticism-mysticism" and its corresponding pair of categories of economic ethics "calling-humility." The available empirical studies into contemporary Russian Orthodoxy suggest that the category of "humility" can be central both for the practical ethos of Orthodoxy in general, and for its economic ethics in particular.

It is worth recalling that the question of the relationship between religious ethics and economic growth, as a rule, has emphasized the importance of the category of calling for the development of a modern economy.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, according to a number of thinkers of the modern period, the ethics of humility (and obedience) turned out to be untimely or even harmful for people (see Davie 1999; Nitsche 1996; Bulgakov 1997a; Bulgakov 1997b). Weber himself presented the transition from Lutheranism to Calvinism in the *Protestant Ethic* also as a transition from the ethics of humility to the ethics of calling.

In this context, the study turned to a preliminary analysis of the category of humility, in which it may be possible to discover the key

16. See, for example, the development of the typology "work-career-calling," beginning in the sociology of religion of Robert Bellah and his colleagues, and further research in this direction (Bellah 1985).

to understanding the ethics of Orthodoxy in the way it reveals itself in the contemporary (Russian) Orthodox discourse. We tried to isolate different understandings of humility in connection with the specific way of organizing social relations and/or economic practice in a narrow sense (that is, in connection with “economic” exchange phenomena, microlending, informal economy/reciprocity/organization of networks for mutual help, etc.).

A preliminary typology of the understandings of humility and (possibly) of related practices and relationships has been worked out. It contains various understandings of humility. A special study is needed for clarifying their actual impact. Previously, we divided them into two types: practices related to obedience to another person, and practices not related to such obedience.

It may be assumed that fostering the ethos of humility in one or another version will have various consequences for the Orthodox Church and for society as a whole, including economic consequences.

Thus, summing up this study, it could be said once again that the problem of economic ethics of contemporary Orthodoxy has a number of interesting and important aspects, both in terms of ethics and economy. If it is true that humility is the key category (or one of the key categories) in the economic ethics of Orthodoxy, a number of important questions follow: in what specific form is this category implemented by the actors? With what economic practices and types of social relations is this ethical category, using the Weberian language, in selective affinity? What will be the results of this interconnection? These questions require a comprehensive program of both theoretical analysis and empirical surveys. At this stage, we would like to limit ourselves to a more modest task and only outline the direction in which the formation of hypotheses can proceed for the subsequent investigation of this problem.

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