

## The Economy of God

### **1: St Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against the Heresies*, 3.22.3:**

Hence also was Adam himself termed by Paul ‘the type of the one to come’ [Rom 5:14], because the Word, the Fashioner of all things, prefigured in him the future economy relating to the Son of God on behalf of the human race, God having predetermined the first, the animated human that is, such that he should be saved by the spiritual [one]; for, since the Saviour pre-exists, it was necessary that the one to be saved should also exist, so that the Saviour should not be without purpose.

### **2: Genesis 45: 5–7**

And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors.

### **3: Acts 2:23**

This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hand of lawless men.

### **4: Behr, *Mystery of Christ*, 143:**

If, as is sometimes said, the “self” of each person is their own past told from the perspective of the present, and that past acting in the present, then the encounter with Christ provides a new, and yet eternal, vantage point from which to narrate one’s own past: we are invited to see our own past retold as our own “salvation history.” In this, nothing is forgotten or left aside, as being somehow worthy only of being left behind, something that we would prefer to forget as too shameful or painful, but which even as “forgotten” continues to work negatively in our present. Rather everything is encompassed within his economy: standing in the light of Christ, we can see him as having led us through our whole past, preparing us to encounter him. He alone knows the reason why he has led each of us on our particular path, for we still walk by faith, not by sight (2 Cor 5.7). But it is a faith that all things are in the hands of Christ, and that “in everything God works for good with those who love him” (Rom 8.28).

### **5: St Isaac of Syria, *Ascetical Homilies*, 74:**

It is a spiritual gift of God to be able to perceive one’s own sins.

### **6: St Isaac of Syria, *Ascetical Homilies*, 64:**

The one who is conscious of his sins is greater than the one who profits the world by the sight of his countenance. The one who sighs over his soul for but one hour is greater than the one who raises the dead by his prayer while dwelling among human beings. The one who is deemed worthy to see himself is greater than the one who is deemed worthy to see the angels, for the latter has communion through his bodily eyes, but the former through the eyes of his soul.

### **7: St John of Damascus, *Sticheron for Aposticha*, Friday Vespers, tone 8 (& funeral service):**

I weep and I wail when I think upon death, and behold our beauty, fashioned after the image of God, lying in the tomb, disfigured, dishonored, bereft of form. O marvel! What is this mystery which befalls us? Why have we been given over unto corruption, and why have we been wedded to death? Of a truth, as it is written, by the command of God, who gives the departed rest.

### **8: St Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (*Cosmic Mystery of Christ* [SVS Press], 134):**

When willingly submitting to the condemnation imposed on our passibility [that is, our passive subjection to suffering], he turned that very passibility into an instrument for eradicating sin and the death which is its consequence.

### **9: St Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (*Cosmic Mystery*, 136):**

Death, once it has ceased having pleasure as its birth-mother—that pleasure for which death itself became the natural punishment—clearly becomes the father of everlasting life.

**10: St Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 61 (*Cosmic Mystery*, 137, 140):**

[Christ has] converted the use of death [so that] the baptized acquires the use of death to condemn sin, which in turn mystically leads that person to divine and unending life.

**11: St Irenaeus *Against the Heresies* 3.20.1-2:**

God, therefore, was long-suffering when the human being defaulted, foreseeing that victory which should be granted to him through the Word. For when strength was made perfect in weakness [cf. 2 Cor. 12:9], [the Word] showed the kindness and transcendent power of God. For **just as** he did bear Jonah to be swallowed up by the whale, not that he should be swallowed up and perish altogether, but **so that**, having been cast out again, he might be more subject to God and might glorify him the more who had conferred upon him such an un hoped-for salvation and brought a firm repentance to the Ninevites, that they might convert to the Lord who delivered them from death when they were struck with awe by that sign that had been wrought on Jonah ... **so also**, from the beginning, God did bear the human being to be swallowed up by the great whale, who was the author of the transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed, but arranging in advance the finding of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word, through the 'sign of Jonah' [Matt. 12:39-40], for those who held the same opinion as Jonah regarding the Lord, and who confessed, and said, 'I am a servant of the Lord, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who made the sea and the dry land' (Jonah 1.9), **so that** the human being, receiving an un hoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat, 'I cried to the Lord my God in my affliction, and he heard me from the belly of hell' [Jonah 2:2], and that he might always continue glorifying God, and giving thanks without ceasing for that salvation which he had obtained from him, 'that no flesh should glory in the Lord's presence' [1 Cor. 1:29], nor should the human being ever adopt an opposite opinion with regard to God, supposing that the incorruptibility which surrounds him is his own by nature, nor, by not holding the truth, should boast with empty superciliousness, as if he were by nature like to God.

Such then was the patience of God, that the human being, passing through all things and acquiring knowledge of death, then attaining to the resurrection from the dead, and learning by experience from whence he has been delivered, may thus always give thanks to the Lord, having received from him the gift of incorruptibility, and may love him the more, for 'he to whom more is forgiven, loves more' (cf. Luke 7:42-3), and may himself know how mortal and weak he is, but also understand that God is so immortal and powerful as to bestow immortality on the mortal and eternity on the temporal, and that he may also know the other powers of God made manifest in himself, and, being taught by them, may think of God in accordance with the greatness of God. For the glory of the human being is God, while the vessel of the workings of God, and of all his wisdom and power is the human being.

**12: St Paul, 1 Cor. 15:35-54:**

[35] But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" [36] You foolish man! **What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.** [37] And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. [38] But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. [39] For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, ...

[42] So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. [43] It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. [44] It is sown an animated body [σῶμα ψυχικόν; RSV 'physical body'], it is raised a spiritual body [σῶμα πνευματικόν]. If there is a animated body [RSV 'physical body'], there is also a spiritual body. [45] Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living soul [ψυχὴν ζῶσαν; RSV 'living being?']"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. [46] But it is not the spiritual which is first but the animated [RSV 'physical'], and then the spiritual. [47] The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. [48] As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven.

[49] Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. [50] I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. [51] Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, [52] in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. [53] For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. [54] When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory."

### **13: Irenaeus, Haer 5.1.3:**

... **just as**, from the beginning [*ab initio*] of our formation [*plasmationis*] in Adam, the breath of life from God, having been united [*unita*] to the handiwork [*plasmati*], animated [*animavit*] the human being and showed him to be a rational being, **so also**, at the end [*in fine*], the Word of the Father and the Spirit of God, having become united [*adunitus*] with the ancient substance of the formation [*plasmationis*] of Adam, rendered [*effecit*] the human being living [*viventem*] and perfect, bearing the perfect Father, **in order that just as** in the animated we all die, **so also** in the spiritual we may all be vivified [*vivificemur*]. For never at any time did Adam escape the Hands of God, to whom the Father speaking, said, ‘Let us make the human being in our image, after our likeness’ [Gen. 1:26]. And for this reason at the end [*fine*], ‘not by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man’ [John 1:13], but by the good pleasure of the Father, his Hands perfected a living human being [*vivum perfecerunt hominem*], in order that Adam might become in the image and likeness of God.

### **14: Irenaeus, Haer. 5.12.1–2:**

Thus that former life is expelled, because it was not given by the Spirit, but by the breath. [12.2] For the breath of life, which also rendered the human animated, is one thing, and the vivifying Spirit another, which also caused him to become spiritual. And for this reason Isaiah said, *Thus says the LORD, who made heaven and established it, who founded the earth and the things therein, and gave breath to the people upon it, and Spirit to those walking upon it*; thus telling us that breath is indeed given in common to all people upon earth, but that the Spirit is theirs alone who tread down earthly desires. And therefore Isaiah himself, distinguishing the things already mentioned, again exclaims, “*For the Spirit shall go forth from Me, and I have made every breath.*” Thus does he attribute the Spirit as particular to God which in the last times He pours forth upon the human race by the adoption of sons; but [he shows] that breath was common throughout the creation, and points it out as something created. Now what has been made is a different thing from him who makes it. The breath, then, is temporal, but the Spirit eternal. The breath, too, increases [in strength] for a short period, and continues for a certain time; after that it takes its departure, leaving its former abode destitute of breath. But when the Spirit pervades the human within and without, inasmuch as it continues there, it never leaves him. *But that is not first which is spiritual*, says the apostle, speaking this as if with reference to us human beings; *but that is first which is animated, afterwards that which is spiritual*, in accordance with reason. For it was necessary [*oportuerat*] that, first, a human being should be fashioned, and that what was fashioned should receive the soul; afterwards that it should thus receive the communion of the Spirit. Wherefore also *the first Adam was made by the Lord a living soul, the second Adam a quickening spirit*.

### **15: Haer. 5.8.1**

For now we receive a certain portion of the Spirit towards perfection and preparation for incorruptibility, being slowly accustomed to contain and to bear God, which the Apostle called ‘a pledge’, that is, a part of the honour which God has promised us, saying, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, ‘In him you also, having heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation and believing in him, have been sealed with the Holy Spirit of the promise, which is the pledge of our inheritance’ [Eph. 1:13-14]. This pledge, therefore, thus dwelling in us, renders us spiritual even now, and the mortal is swallowed up by immortality, for he declares, ‘you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells in you’ [Rom. 8:9], and this is not by a casting away of the flesh, but by the communion of the Spirit, for those to whom he was writing were not without flesh, but those who had received the Spirit of God, ‘in whom we cry Abba, Father’ [Rom. 8:15]. If then now, having the pledge, we cry ‘Abba, Father’, what shall it be when rising again we behold him face to face, when all the members shall burst forth in an exuberant hymn of exultation, glorifying him who raised them from the dead and gave them eternal life? For if the pledge, gathering the human being together into himself, makes him now say ‘Abba, Father’, what shall the full grace of the Spirit, which shall be given to human beings by God, effect? It will render us like unto him, and perfect the will of the Father: for it shall make the human being in the image and likeness of God.

### **16: Psalm 103/4:29-31:**

When you take away their breath they die and return to their dust; when you send forth your Spirit, they will be created [*κτισθήσονται*] and you renew the face of the ground. May the glory of the Lord endure forever and may the Lord rejoice in his works.

### **17: Letter of Barnabas 6.9:**

The human being is earth that suffers (ἄνθρωπος γὰρ γῆ ἐστὶν πάσχουσα)

### **18: St Ignatius of Antioch Letter to the Romans 4:**

Suffer me to be eaten by the beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God’s wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ. (*Rom 4*)

**19: St Irenaeus Against the Heresies 5.2.3:**

**Just** as the wood of the vine, planted in the earth, bore fruit in its own time, and the grain of wheat, falling into the earth and being decomposed, was raised up manifold by the Spirit of God who sustains all, then, by wisdom, they come to the use of human beings, and receiving the Word of God, become eucharist, which is the Body and Blood of Christ; **so also**, our bodies, nourished by it, having been placed in the earth and decomposing in it, shall rise in their time, when the Word of God bestows on them the resurrection to the glory of God the Father, who secures immortality for the mortal and bountifully bestows incorruptibility on the corruptible [cf. 1 Cor. 15:53], because the power of God is made perfect in weakness [cf. 2 Cor. 12:9], **in order that** we may never become puffed up, as if we had life from ourselves, nor exalted against God, entertaining ungrateful thoughts, but learning by experience that it is from his excellence, and not from our own nature, that we have eternal continuance, that we should neither undervalue the true glory of God nor be ignorant of our own nature, but should know what God can do and what benefits the human, and that we should never mistake the true understanding of things as they are, that is, of God and the human being. (*haer.* 5.2.3)

**20: Haer. 4.38.3:**

By this order and such rhythms and such a movement the created and fashioned human becomes in the image and likeness of the uncreated God: the Father planning everything well and commanding, the Son executing and performing, and the Spirit nourishing and increasing, and the human being making progress day by day and ascending towards perfection, that is, approaching the Uncreated One. For the Uncreated is perfect, and this is God.

Now, it was first necessary for the human being to be created;

and having been created, to increase;

and having increased, to become an adult;

and having become an adult, to multiply;

and having multiplied, to become strong;

and having been strengthened, to be glorified;

and being glorified, to see his Master;

for God is He who is yet to be seen, and the vision of God produces incorruptibility, and ‘incorruptibility renders one close to God’ [Wis. 6:19].

**21: Haer. 4.39.2-3:**

How then will you be a god, when you are not yet made human? How perfect, when only recently begun? How immortal, when in mortal nature you did not obey the Creator? It is necessary for you first to hold the rank of human, and then to participate in the glory of God. For you do not create God, but God creates you. If, then, you are the work of God, await the Hand of God, who does everything at the appropriate time, the appropriate time for you, who are being made. Offer to him your heart, soft and pliable, and retain the shape with which the Fashioner shaped you, having in yourself his Water, lest you turn dry and lose the imprint of his fingers. By guarding this conformation, you will ascend to perfection; the mud in you will be concealed by the art of God. his Hand created your substance; it will gild you, inside and out, with pure gold and silver, and so adorn you that the King himself will desire your beauty. But if, becoming hardened, you reject His art and being ungrateful towards him, because he made you a human being, ungrateful, that is, towards God, you have lost at once both his art and life. For to create is the characteristic of the goodness of God; to be created is characteristic of the nature of the human. If, therefore, you offer to him what is yours, that is, faith in him and subjection, you will receive his art and become a perfect work of God. But if you do not believe in him, and flee from his Hands, the cause of imperfection will be in you who did not obey, and not in him who called you. For he sent messengers to call people to the feast; but those who did not obey deprived themselves of his royal banquet. (cf. Matt. 22:3)

**22: Haer. 5.16.2:**

For in times long past it was said the human being was made in the image of God, but it was not shown [to be so]; for the Word was as yet invisible, after whose image the human was created; and because of this he easily lost the likeness. When, however, the Word of God became flesh, he confirmed both of these: for he both showed forth the image truly, himself becoming that which was his image, and he re-established the likeness in a sure manner, by co-assimilating [συνεξομοίωσας] the human being to the invisible Father through the Word become visible.

**23: Haer. 5.28.4**

And therefore throughout all time, the human being, formed at the beginning by the Hands of God, that is, by the Son and the Spirit, becomes after the image and likeness of God: the chaff, that is, the apostasy, being cast away, while the wheat, that is, those who bear as fruit faith in God, being gathered into the granary. And therefore tribulation is necessary for those who are being saved, that, in a certain way, having been threshed and kneaded together, through endurance, with the Word of God, and baked in the fire, they may be suitable for the banquet of the King, as one of ours said, when condemned to the wild beasts because of his testimony [μαρτυρία] to God: ‘I am the wheat of Christ, and I am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found [to be] pure bread of God’.

**24: Haer. 5.36.3**

And in all these things, and by them all, one and the same God the Father is shown, fashioning the human being and promising the inheritance of the earth to the fathers, giving it<sup>1</sup> in the resurrection of the just and fulfilling the promises in the kingdom of his Son, then bestowing paternally those things which neither the eye has seen, nor the ear has heard, nor has [the thought] arisen within the heart of the human being.<sup>2</sup> And there is one Son, who accomplished the Father’s will, and there is one human race, in which the mysteries of God are wrought, ‘which the angels desire to see’ [1 Pet. 1:12], not being able to search out the wisdom of God, through which his handiwork, conformed and incorporated with the Son, is perfected—that his Offspring, the First-begotten Word, should descend to the creature, that is, to the handiwork, and be borne by it, and, again, [that] the creature should bear the Word and ascend to him, passing beyond the angels and becoming in the image and likeness of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Following the Armenian, with Rousseau, rather than the Latin *eduxit illam*.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 2:9. As to what is bestowed ‘paternally’ at this point, Irenaeus does not speculate. Undaunted, Orbe (*Teologia*, 3, 628-33, 646-51) analyzes this statement in terms of the vision of God with corporeal eyes. *haer.* 4.20.5, with its threefold modes of seeing God (*propheticæ, adoptivæ, paternaliter*), might suggest that there is a vision of God directly, but it is also qualified by Irenaeus’ assertion that God has manifested himself in (and only in) Christ, who preserves the visibility of the Father so that we might always have something towards which we can advance, and it is ‘incorruption for eternal life that comes to us from seeing God’. Likewise in *haer.* 5.36, he does not speak so much of seeing God directly, but rather of flourishing in incorruptibility and holding ever-new converse with God.