

*De Œconomiis Patrum:*

The Market Theology of the Early Church

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## **Abstract**

The topic of this paper explores the historic development of pre-classical economic doctrine, centering on the contributions made by the Church Fathers. While many in the economics profession neglect the contributions of pre-classical writers, a thorough study of the Patristic corpus reveals a persistent connection between modern ethical concerns for the uses of wealth within a moral-religious context. Utilizing primary literature to determine the actual economic claims made in context, this paper considers the legal and cultural framework in which the Fathers expanded the economic understanding of their world. Secondary literature used offers a historiographic examination of Patristic influence and evaluates the persistent claims of communism in the early Church. An Austrian framework is appropriated in assessing the positive value of these ecclesiastical contributions. Ultimately, this paper hopes to contribute towards the economic understanding of particularly Christian economics, a legacy begun in antiquity by these Greeks and Latins.

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## Introduction

The history of the early Christian Church is for many an unexciting study, replete with strange characters with stranger names that seem to resemble nothing of what modern Christians might expect from “Fathers of the Church.” Even such a term is indeed foreign for most Christians in the world, unless one is Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox; yet surprisingly for those Christians who express familiarity with the Patristic Writers, many moderns understand those writings from antiquity as either obtuse or irrelevant. Ranging from St. Clement, Archbishop of Rome in the first century A. D. to St. Isidore, Bishop of Seville in the sixth, the Fathers were not limited to merely arcane theologies in their writings, however.<sup>1</sup> While most Patristic literature is indeed theological, viz., writing against heresies, certain Fathers also wrote to their times, their cultures, and even to the grand matter of economics. Although the initial trend of the Fathers was one to reject worldly gain and gain material humility, the Fathers’ gradual embrace of the market elements of property and wealth coincided with the parallel development of Christendom, anticipating the future expansion of properly Christian economics.

## Communism as Catechesis?

Perhaps the most obvious issue to address is the view of the Fathers – and thereby the early Church – upon general labour and reward; certainly, the economic concerns of the Christian New Testament surface some debate from modern scholars, focusing on the Church’s communal nature in the Acts of the Apostles. While the texts from Acts<sup>2</sup> concerning the economic behavior

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<sup>1</sup> St. Isidore especially contributed much to preserving ancient knowledge through his *Etymologiae*, an etymological encyclopedia that contains all manner of things concerning how the ancients understood their world. Isidore also invented the full stop (period), semicolon, and colon. He is the patron saint of the internet, among other things.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37.

of the Church precede the earliest of the Ante-Nicene Fathers by approximately twenty years,<sup>3</sup> the contextual understanding does indeed inform a socio-economic premise with which the Fathers were to be familiar. Indeed, if one assumes the nature of the early Church anachronistically to be communism, such a foundational premise of normative theology in the early, Apostolic Church bottlenecks any positive view of the market and market activities for the early Fathers.

However, such a modern presupposition has serious flaw to it: while it is true that the early Christians sold their possessions and shared the proceeds, the Biblical texts are careful to note the Christians do so both willingly and only immediately. Rather than sell all their possessions, those Christians retained some degree of possession, e.g., physical property of a home to facilitate hospitality.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the account is of historically positive, not prescriptive or normative, behavior on the part of the early Church. Upon this hermeneutic, one may determine the early Church was not communist in even the loosest sense – yet if this issue of how the early Church viewed economic activity were limited to merely a matter of hermeneutic, the case would not be so easily closed; one can easily reason a different answer from the text than the one provided above. In this way, the context put forth by the early Fathers elucidates the matter.

In his first epistle to the Corinthian church, however, St. Clement of Rome utilizes the drama of a good and bad servant (or labourer), the former earning personal reward through hard and honest work while the latter has not even enough honor to face his employer.<sup>5</sup> Hardly a

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<sup>3</sup> This author assumes an early date (c. A. D. 65) for the writing of the Book of Acts by St. Luke the Evangelist, with St. Clement, Bishop of Rome being active between the late A. D. 80s and late 90s.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Acts 2:46, 5:1-11.

<sup>5</sup> Clement of Rome, “The First Epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, XXXIV” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, comp. A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 1, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), 14.

treatise on the mores of economic institutions or the value of diligent labour (a concept replete in the Tanakh), the use of this drama still impresses a dogmatic ambivalence, if not silent assent, to differences in quality of labour deserving differences in quantity of pay – not to mention the right of the employer so to choose such a difference. Certainly, from the first Church Father and Patriarch of the Roman See,<sup>6</sup> this offers substantial insight into a Church that, while hardly yet concerned with socio-economic didactics, was not hostile to labour and profit from general market activity – not even Tertullian, hostile to merchantry, denied the right of an individual to work for his own reward and keep such of his own accord.

### **Claimed as Communist**

Yet while many Fathers may have been too eschatologically focused<sup>7</sup> on an imminent return of the Christ to develop fully theologies and doctrines concerning Christians' socio-economic activities, such a concern did not mean that there was any necessary agreement among the churchmen; indeed, Abelard's *Sic et Non*, written approximately a millennium later, is entirely based on the inability of the Fathers to agree uniformly. Even as Clement expresses a normative acceptance with the employment and labour of his day – contrary to a sort of Messianic Communism which would later develop in the medieval period – he opines only one side to the complex analysis. Many proponents for the notion of communist Church Fathers often point to St. Basil of Caesarea, St. Ambrose of Milan, and St. Jerome of Stridon as quintessential examples of proto-communism within the early Church, and this claim is not without warrant: a

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<sup>6</sup> The five Episcopal Sees or Patriarchates of the ancient world being Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Jerusalem, and Rome. Of the five, only Rome was in the Western half of the Church, and thus had considerably more geography under its See than any of her eastern equals. This often connoted a degree of prestige afforded to the bishop of Rome unique to the office.

<sup>7</sup> While it is recognized that the Revelation of St. John the Divine toward the end of the first century A. D. (this author favors a date of the mid-to-late 90s) indicated a marked shift in how the early Church viewed the imminency of the Parousia, many of the Fathers still discussed and debated the nature of such a return, e.g., Justin Martyr as an advocate for a historic premillennialist eschatological interpretation or St. Augustine of Hippo supporting the amillennial position..

general familiarity with their writings conveys a certain quality some can interpret as communist ideals.

It is important to note that both Ambrose and Jerome preached and wrote in a time of the established *communitas fidelium*, while Basil lived between the ecumenical councils of Nicaea and Constantinople (A. D. 325 and 381, respectively). The social demographic of Basil thus not only shaped how he understood Christians to operate in society, but also how he viewed wealth often inextricably tied with the state: while born to aristocratic parents with properties across several provinces,<sup>8</sup> Basil himself reacted against this wealth and lived the life of ascetism, going as far as to be the founder of monasticism in Asia Minor.<sup>9</sup> “A fair sample of his opinion of the rich of his time is seen in the following words addressed to usurers: ‘You make a profit out of misfortune; you levy a tax upon tears; you strangle the naked; you heap blows upon the starving.’”<sup>10</sup> Yet in this and in other tautological passages does Basil not condemn the right of private ownership nor the reward accompanied by work, i.e., the profit. Rather, a strict contextual reading only renders Basil’s harsh critique against the wealthy to be one of how that wealth is used and maintained – not against wealth in and of itself – implying the issue to not be necessarily one of material gain. Usury was sinful only as it was a natural opportunity for abuse. From his disposition towards ascetism, Basil makes clear his personal convictions of material ownership – yet in this, those convictions remain personal, as he does not call Christians to follow his lead into monastic life, but merely to not abuse their ownership rights.

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<sup>8</sup> St. Gregory of Nyssa, brother to Basil, writes of his family’s pride in their wealth and ancestry, but does not share to what family these brothers descended from. It is likely that the Cappadocians, like many Church leaders in the fourth century AD, belonged to the curial class of the Roman aristocracy, rather than the senatorial class.

<sup>9</sup> Thomas A. Kopecek, “The Social Class of the Cappadocian Fathers,” *Church History* 42, no. 4 (December 1973): 453 and John A. Ryan, “Were the Church Fathers Communists?” *International Journal of Ethics* 14, no. 1 (October 1903): 27.

<sup>10</sup> John A. Ryan, “Were the Church Fathers Communists?” *International Journal of Ethics* 14, no. 1 (October 1903): 27

In the Roman world, the central legal tenet concerning property law might be summarized in that Latin maxim: *ius utendi fruendi et abutendi res sua quatenus juris ratio patitur*, or “Man’s authority of using, enjoying, and tossing his stuff to the extent of exclusion of every other person.”<sup>11</sup> Yet for the early Christian Church, this notion of property was a foreign one; rather than see the right of property as absolute, the Fathers explained the inherent right of ownership in two composite degrees: to the primary, ownership derives from the right of man “to subsist on the bounty of the earth,” and to the secondary, “the right of any individual to acquire, use, and dispose of a particular portion of the earth or its resources.”<sup>12</sup> A near-identical understanding of property and the responsibilities of use therein may be found in the Thomistic Scholastics, who themselves are assuredly not communist.<sup>13</sup> Rather, the early and medieval Church held that those with property must use it justly, and that those who abuse their own property to the exclusion of others act unjustly. Under this ecumenical context, it is clear that Basil neither spurned nor dismissed property or wealth; rather, “[Basil] maintains that [wealth] is good, since it may be made to serve good ends. This, indeed, is the central thought in all his utterances on wealth – that it should be rightly used.”<sup>14</sup> Indeed, this is in accordance with the foundation set by Clement of Rome: the rich are rich by the blessing of God, in order that they be a blessing for the people of God.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, while Basil certainly limited the uses of wealth and property in his episcopacy to that which would be just under a Christian moral schema, he hardly demanded a communal use of such among laity or priesthood, nor did he advocate for an abolition of that private ownership.

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<sup>11</sup> My translation.

<sup>12</sup> Ryan, “Were the Church Fathers Communist?” 29.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion on Scholastic economics, see Alejandro A. Chafuen, *Faith and Liberty: The Economic Thought of the Late Scholastics*, (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2003).

<sup>14</sup> Ryan, “Were the Church Fathers Communist?” 30.

<sup>15</sup> Clement of Rome, “First Epistle, XXXVIII,” in *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, 15.

Unlike Basil, however, the complexities peculiar to Ambrose's economics do not lie solely in a Christian ethic, but also in the synthesis with Roman law as expressed by the grand orator and statesman, M. Tullius Cicero. On the face of his argument, Ambrose so declares riches to be a hindrance to salvation, pursuit of material gain is the highest folly, and that wealth is unnecessary and should be despised; to those who do not find the proper use of their property, Ambrose prescribes only the severest punishments.<sup>16</sup> In this vein of denunciation, he is very similar to the Cappadocian Father examined prior – he does not promote communal ownership, nor does he denounce property itself in private hands. Ambrose even subscribes to a certain but qualified understanding of singular ownership to common and earthly bounty, saying: *Iustum est, igitur, ut si aliquid tibi privatum vindicas, saltem aliquid inde pauperibus aspergas*, or “It is lawful, therefore, that if you should claim for yourself something apart from the public, at least sprinkle something thence for the poor.”<sup>17</sup> Ambrose in his faculties did not seek to prohibit a social division via class, but rather sought that justice be equitable across the extant classes of his day. In this way, Ambrose reflects a natural understanding to ownership that is reflective of a classical Roman: in natural state, men own all things in common, that human action naturally begets private ownership.<sup>18</sup> Under this legal theory of ownership, is not unnatural for man to divide to property; yet it is not man's initial natural state, thus presenting a point of limitation to the extent of the Patristic understanding of the rights of property.

The biography of Ambrose also supports an understanding of his endorsing private property when used justly:

His gold and silver he handed over to the Church, but he committed his estates, with the exception of a life interest for his sister, to the management of his brother, Satyrus. Thus,

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<sup>16</sup> Ryan, “Were the Church Fathers Communist?” 32.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 33, my translation.

<sup>18</sup> M. Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis*, trans. Walter Miller, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975) 129, 131.

he saw fit to safeguard the property rights of his brother and sister, and to retain for himself the legal title to the greater part of his landed possessions.<sup>19</sup>

No advocate of communal ownership works to ensure a private capacity for land is maintained, thus compellingly demonstrating Ambrose to neither condemn nor even look down upon private property when it was used to benefit the needy in addition to, but not at the significant loss of, the claimant-owner.<sup>20</sup>

Jerome's, however, is a more complex view to properly articulate and understand, with comparison to his two Patristic predecessors. Indeed, he is known for his *carte blanche* condemnation of wealth, found in his commentary on the Prophet Jeremiah: *Omnis dives aut iniquis aut iniqui haeres*, or "All men of great wealth are either unjust or the heirs of an unjust one."<sup>21</sup> The critical Latin word here is *dives*, as the denotation exists as one who not only has property and wealth, but has more than enough to comfortably subsist. In this way, the articulation of Jerome's critique on wealth is more complex than a simple claim of communism would allow – Jerome does not, for instance, call for an abolition to property. Yet even more critically, this phrase does not belong to Jerome; rather, it was a common precept of his day, even as he expresses approval for it. The very adage presupposes private property, however, and determines only a culturally-qualified understanding of excess to be wrong.

Jerome denounces wealth as much as the wealthy, saying: wealth is borne of injustice, one only accumulates wealth through injury to another, and those who accept gifts of wealth become companions to thieves.<sup>22</sup> Yet just as this condemnation of wealth is so striking in

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<sup>19</sup> Ryan, "Were the Church Fathers Communist?" 35.

<sup>20</sup> Justice, not a peculiar sort of Messianic communism, was the concern of this Patristic bishop – something exceedingly reflected in the writings of his prized pupil and convert, St. Augustine, bishop of Hippo.

<sup>21</sup> Ryan, "Were the Church Fathers Communist?" 35, my translation.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* The writings are found in various letters or in Old Testament commentaries and summarized by Ryan. The extent of Jerome's hatred for wealth is palpable: he wrote to a widow in Gaul that entering the kingdom of Heaven was not difficult for the wealthy, but more accurately, impossible. Yet he does not speak to the right of property or wealth in and of itself, but the nature of wealth in his own day – these comments against wealth and the wealthy stem from a conscientious attempt to engage in social critique as much as theological development. Jerome speaks

ferocity and sheer magnitude of presence, it is not absolute; in parallel logic, Jerome seems to maintain there exist true benefits of wealth. In his commentary on Ecclesiastes, he notes it is better to be rich and wise than just wise; in an epistle to Salvinia, he writes that wealth is not a hinderance if wisely used; in his epistle to Hedibia (one of the very same where he denounces wealth), Jerome notes such:

Ananias and Saphira deserved the condemnation of the Apostle because they secretly kept back their property. 'Must he therefore be punished,' you will say, 'who will not give away his own'? By no means. They were punished because they were willing to lie to the Holy Ghost and sought vain glory by pretending they had renounced all things, while retaining the requisites of sustenance. In general (*alioquin*) one is free to give or not give.<sup>23</sup>

Evidently, there is a contradiction of market views in Jerome's work:<sup>24</sup> he would like to eat his economic cake and have it, too. Jerome contradicts himself on the moral nature of wealth and the wealthy, while also espousing the desire to protect those who have acquired wealth. Yet the two prolix positions Jerome presents are not necessarily dichotomous.<sup>25</sup> Rather, one can certainly maintain that a certain person's wealth is ill-gotten or so inherited from an ill-getter without subscribing to a philosophy which demands that property be relinquished. Indeed, in Jerome's model, the injury and harm done to others in pursuit of wealth was by no means a legal analysis, but a moral one. Therefore, his remarks against wealth remain morally didactic but hardly legally or praxeologically binding, and his remarks in favor remain centered on practical, Christian living in the world without becoming of it. Like Basil and Ambrose and the whole of the Patristic

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to his immediacy; therefore, the issues of property rights and general economic philosophy are beyond the scope of his harsh words. In essence, one could argue that Jerome never commented anything negative on wealth or markets as a whole, only applying criticism to specific instances of abuse limited to the context of his day.

<sup>23</sup> Murray N. Rothbard, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*, (Northampton, MA: Edward Elger, 1995) 33, and Ryan, "Were the Church Fathers Communist?" 38. Rothbard notes the first two claims of Jerome without citation, Ryan noting the same with citation and providing the third. Murray fails to offer these citations because of an unexpected death while he was completing his two-volume work – his own.

<sup>24</sup> In his survey of the Patristic literature on human will and Divine sovereignty, Jean Calvin notes that Jerome tries to please both sides of the argument, and contradicts himself too greatly for his position to hold authority. In this economic context, however, there appears to be a thin line of cogency to what Jerome was trying to express concerning wealth and property.

<sup>25</sup> In many cases, Jerome was much better in an analysis of Scripture than in much else, save perhaps language. His great failings rest in his own haughtiness and refusal to admit that he may be wrong about a certain position (which, to his credit, applied to very few recorded instances).

authority, Jerome did not condemn property as much as the pagan institutions of his day that allowed for abuses thereof – attempting a Procrustean incorporation of the Fathers to communism only serves as wishful thinking for Christian sycophants to Marxism, for such is an irregular connection most unnatural. As Alexander Gray elucidates on the whole of the matter:

If an alien and an intruder... may venture to utter a two-fold word of warning, it would be, firstly, that when any apparently communistic expression of opinions cited from one of the Fathers, enquiry should be made as to the context, not merely with a view to verifying whether a few words may not have disappeared from the beginning or end of the quotation, but also to ascertain how the quotation is related to the general argument, assuming that there is one; and secondly, such an isolated quotation should be checked against what the Father in question may have said elsewhere on the same subject.<sup>26</sup>

Private property, since the inception of the Church, has been permissible and licit, if not outright beneficial, per the Apostles, Fathers, and custom of the Church as revealed by Scripture. Perhaps the only thing the Fathers did uniformly agree upon was a resounding negative to any form of communism. Christianity was never the religion of just the downtrodden, nor would the Fathers ignore the purpose wealth has served in the Church and her mission since inception.<sup>27</sup>

## **Wealth and Faith Examined**

For many moderns of a more irenic nature, the claim of communism among the Fathers does seem rather unpalatable; yet this disposition still seeks to harmonize the New Testament views on wealth, merchantry, and Paul's vision for Christian community with the how the first few generations of Christians understood such, primarily through Patristic literature and exposition.

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<sup>26</sup> Alexander Gray, *The Socialist Tradition: Moses to Lenin*, (London, England: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1946) 43. Gray further convincingly argues that the Fathers of the Church do often use communist phraseology to express non-communist thought; yet these references, Gray contends, are rooted in Scripture's depiction of an ill-contented man of covetousness. He adds that such a belief in the equal holdings of man, to single out a specific argument of the Fathers, is rooted in a classical understanding of natural law.

<sup>27</sup> Here, the context of certain New Testament epistles – viz., Philippians – remains critical. The wealth of Christians in the city of Philippi was well-noted in the epistle, nor was this particular church singular in antiquity. Yet many Fathers, aware of this fact, will often cite how that wealth is used. This view found among certain ante-Nicene Fathers reflects the later position of Augustine that wealth is only a means, and that the ends achieved ultimately decide the morality of the matter. Certainly, this position of the Fathers, though not dominant in the early Patristic era, was not unique to Augustine, and one can see the influence of the great St. Ambrose upon his prized pupil.

Thus, there developed an early incorporation of asceticism into the Church.<sup>28</sup> While not an outright rejection of private property – the expectation of ascetism was only for those who swore the vows, and was hardly demanded from the general populous of believers – those who saw the ascetic life as holy implicitly communicated a viewed superiority (both socially and spiritually) of the bare life to an abundant one.<sup>29</sup> Private property, essential for individual economic action, thus became a developed cornerstone of the early Church’s social doctrine; this defense of private property lends itself to the Fathers later views on wealth and merchantry. As Christianity developed doctrinally, the cultic and heretical offshoots – viz., Gnosticism – of the religion embraced any separation from the material world. There was significant opposition to even the idea of money for these early Christians, orthodox and heretic alike.<sup>30</sup> Such, however, became quickly resolved issues, before even Clement of Rome.<sup>31</sup> Thus, the question of asceticism and property’s relationship in the early Church may seem like some distinct hostility existed, especially as Christianity expanded into the wealthier classes.

Indeed, many of the early Fathers saw the ascetic life as an escape from the debaucherous and pagan world around them; the Cappadocians themselves are considered the founders of ascetic orders in Anatolia. Basil and Gregory aside, a fourth-century contemporary of influence articulated a number of sermons and homilies upon the nature of wealth and poverty: St. John of the golden mouth, or John Chrysostom. Yet Chrysostom leaned upon a Greek philosophy of

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<sup>28</sup> While monastic life in the East was often well-regulated and centered in spiritual matters, the initial centuries of Christianity in the West saw a slightly different understanding to monastic vows. Anyone with enough land and property could declare themselves a “monk” of no particular conviction, often inviting their friends to join in on the fun. Thus, many landed estates became the first centers of monastic life in the West, albeit, loose in structure and typically serving as a sort of retreat or vacation. Until the *Rules of St. Benedict* of Nursia (A. D. 516), Western monasticism was not a matter of *ora et labora*; once Benedict established a more controlled structure to Western monasticism, however, ascetism became a routine to the monastic orders of the West, in parallel to the older, Eastern orders already regulated.

<sup>29</sup> Jerome himself lived the ascetic life, and such only added to his haughtiness; many scholars see this as part of the reason for the condescension to his younger contemporary, St. Augustine, in their correspondences.

<sup>30</sup> Edmondo F. Lupieri, “Business and Merchants Will Not Enter the Places of My Father: Early Christianity and Market Mentality,” Essay, In *The Monetization of the Market and Its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, (Chicago, IL: Loyola University Chicago, 2014) 379 – 387.

<sup>31</sup> St. Paul’s Prison Epistles indicate an acceptance of money in orthodox Christianity by the A. D. 50s. Before this, Jesus does not reject money as worldly, but warns of devotion to such as a chief end in itself.

wealth to establish sense concerning the parable of Lazarus and Dives, the center of his economic expressions.<sup>32</sup> Chrysostom does not define wealth or poverty as a measure of possessions, but in terms of desire: the rich man needs little, regardless of what he owns, whereas the poor man desires much, notwithstanding how much he may possess.<sup>33</sup> In this way, the qualities of holy asceticism are not associated with giving up material possession, but a relative aspect of satisfaction with what God has given to an individual.

Chrysostom refuses to condemn wealth, instead seeing it as an opportunity to bless others: almsgiving, in a word. Chrysostom views almsgiving (and thereby any trade which was not associated with idolatry) as itself a productive art, carrying positive connotation; in doing this, he expands an understanding of production to include anything under *praxis*.<sup>34</sup> Yet in disputation against the pagan philosophy and literature that has come before him, Chrysostom does not suggest that the state ought to repurpose wealth or that the rich are somehow immoral for their richness; rather, almsgiving is an exercise of ethics.<sup>35</sup> Since Chrysostom does not view riches in terms of material possession but with respect to material satisfaction, only the truly rich are capable of participating in this ethic, socio-economic class aside: only those who do not desire much would be willing to part with much, regardless of how much they owned. Thus, as material riches serve a purpose of supporting this ethic, they only become an opposition for Chrysostom and the larger Christian Church when linked to idolatry; this, then, is where the ascetic leads a holy life.

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<sup>32</sup> The Gospel according to St. Luke 16:19-31. This focus relies more upon the development of how the early Church viewed money in the Apostolic and beginnings of the Patristic eras. This analysis, true perhaps in principle, is encumbered from going any further by too heavy a reliance on Gnostic literature.

<sup>33</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, trans. Catherine P Roth, (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999) 40.

<sup>34</sup> Susanna Barsella, "'Ars' and Theology: Work, Salvation, and Social Doctrine in the Early Church Fathers," *Annali d'Italianistica* 32 (2014): 61, 62. In redefining economic action and ethic under the prescription of human action, Chrysostom logically offers a proto-praxeological understanding to economics. He does not, however, recognize the importance of this analysis, nor does he pursue the logical conclusions of his definitions; thus, there is simply not enough a corpus of material on the issue to determine if he properly anticipates the praxeological approach to economics.

<sup>35</sup> John Chrysostom, *On Wealth and Poverty*, 47-52.

Yet this distinction of holy life from worldliness for the Fathers was in many ways not even a matter of ascetics *qua* ascetics, but the clerical position ascetics would have maintained in the Church hierarchy.<sup>36</sup> The ascetic lifestyle as a rejection of material living is thus a product of this distinction, but in many ways, only in conjunction to the class distinctions offered by the early Fathers. Tertullian,<sup>37</sup> himself from an affluent North African family, centers the arguments of distinction between the laity and clergy: the propertied laity are a herd to be ruled over by the holy clergy.<sup>38</sup> In this way, it may be argued that there was an ascetic hostility indirectly related to markets and wealth, yet still present among those of a similar disposition to Tertullian.

However, such a reading of Tertullian is shallow and underdeveloped – not to mention, even as one may understand Tertullian, his legacy is a mixed one among proceeding Fathers. It is important to note that Tertullian did not only see the clergy as called to rule over the laity; it is not even enough to note that in his spiritual war against the pagan world, Tertullian denounced both money-making and merchantry as worldly endeavors.<sup>39</sup> Yet complexly, the same Tertullian emphasized land as the determining class-factor in the Church, both among laity and clergy – he places emphasis upon hierarchical prestige, typically tied with property and wealth, for issues within bishoprics. In this way, he merely reflects – perhaps implicitly supporting – the patron-client relationship of the Latin West.<sup>40</sup> Intensely, then, does his harshest and only consistent

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<sup>36</sup> Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012) 170, 173, 174. This analysis is reliant more so upon data from monks and ascetics of the Latin West than may have been found in the Greek East. However, despite this limit, such Latin monasticism was inspired and drew upon that which was found in the east. Thus, there is some certainty to this claim.

<sup>37</sup> Born in A. D. 160 to Carthaginian parents, died in A. D. 220, also in Carthage. This Father is not recognized as a saint in either Eastern or Western Christianity, though he is considered the Father of Latin Christianity and Western Theology. He was the first Father to write in Latin.

<sup>38</sup> David I. Rankin, “Class Distinction as a Way of Doing Church: The Early Fathers and the Christian Plebs,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 58, no. 3 (August 2004): 303, 304. The Latin terms used by Tertullian indicate not a sort of dominance by the clergy, but instead formulate a more pastoral authority. Still, however, Tertullian very much so emphasized the crook of the shepherd when extending authority over his sheep.

<sup>39</sup> Rothbard, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*, 33. Rothbard is incorrect to note, however, that Tertullian formed his own heretical sect. While it is true that Tertullian joined a group termed the Monatists (named after the founder, Monatus), he was never condemned as a heretic. Monatism, or New Prophecy, taught of new revelation from the Spirit, with certain sub-groups rejecting the Old Testament as relevant for Christians; it could be termed the Pentecostalism of antiquity, for a modern-day analogy. They even allowed for female presbyters.

<sup>40</sup> Rankin, “Class Distinction as a Way of Doing Church,” 304.

critique exist not against wealth or property, or even money; rather, his only meaningful critique is against merchantry itself.

This critique goes deeper than a concern for mere worldliness, to which certain authors limit their analyses – such is not necessarily incorrect; however, it implies several holes in Tertullian’s logic, then, towards related issues when continuing his argumentation. Rather than see merchantry as worldly in totality, Tertullian expressed spiritual concern for those Christian merchants that sold anything related to pagan practices: since Tertullian’s Roman Empire and his geographic *communitas fidelium* still represented the pagan practices of old, the connection between pagan rites and merchantry was a legitimate concern.<sup>41</sup> Thus, it remains unfair to claim that Tertullian was against merchantry in and of itself, for economic ideology or any other matter, etc. Rather, this expresses a spiritual concern for Christians operating in a pagan empire as emissaries of pagan goods for pagan purposes.<sup>42</sup> The economic concern for making or providing goods used in relation to idolatry leads one to conclude, however, that Tertullian expressed an early understanding of the interrelatedness of the markets for different goods: he writes that if one even provides a service relevant to making idols, one becomes complicit in idolatry.<sup>43</sup> One cannot rightly say without speculation that Tertullian was thus inherently against markets outside of the pagan purposes they served; Christendom was still a century away from conception, and it would not be for even nearly a century after Constantine that Christianity would become the official state religion of Rome under Emperor Theodosius the Great. Thus, the argument that Tertullian’s criticisms manifested in some hostility to markets in and of

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<sup>41</sup> Tertullian, “On Idolatry, XI” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, comp. A. Cleveland Coxe, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, Vol. 3, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950), 67, 68. Even the great St. Augustine of Hippo, himself a North African, had to contend with pagan practices in his community some fifty years after Constantine.

<sup>42</sup> For Apostolic and Biblical parallels to this issue, one may note the matter addressed by the holy Apostle St. Paul concerning the fitness of Christians eating meat sacrificed to idols in I Corinthians 8. Doubtless, Tertullian considered this text when writing *De Idolatria*.

<sup>43</sup> Tertullian, “On Idolatry, XI,” 68.

themselves falls flat in the placement of context, both textual and historical. It was not merchantry by definition that was evil for Tertullian, but that which the merchantry of his day supported: material and spiritual idolatry.

Tertullian as an expositor of the third century was indeed famous in North Africa, and well-known among his contemporaries. But his remarks were hardly in isolation; St. Clement of Alexandria is perhaps the earliest of the Fathers to issue a more comprehensive doctrine concerning socio-economic matters, setting the stage for the developments of the fourth and fifth centuries respectively.<sup>44</sup> Indeed, as Alexander Gray suggests, Clement fully believed in the equality of believers, as outlined by the holy Apostle St. Paul:

[Christianity] should be not merely the religion of the poor, but the religion of all. It is unnecessary to emphasise (sic) the importance, for the future of Christianity and of Europe, of Clement's pronouncement which made it clear beyond all doubt that Christianity knew no frontiers determined by station or rank in life.<sup>45</sup>

Yet this is not so much a break in spiritual focus or pattern for Clement as one may assume: just as other Fathers wrote to issues plaguing their *communitates fidelium*, Clement of Alexandria did his best to offer spiritual shepherding to his own – his congregants, however, had an unusually high concentration of wealth for churches in the early Patristic period. In his sermon *Quis Dives Salvetur?*<sup>46</sup> Clement explains that riches alone do not determine one's immorality, nor does their lack imply a certain degree of holiness:<sup>47</sup> after all, the poor are no more virtuous than the rich, nor does wealth limit the extent to which one can express

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<sup>44</sup> As archbishop of Alexandria in the second and into the third centuries, Clement was bishop of one of the wealthiest and most learned cities of the Roman Empire. Yet in contrast to a number of Fathers – viz. Tertullian – he did not alienate the wealthy; indeed, Clement rebuked the poorer Christians of his community for not showing the wealthy Christians respect. As the teacher to Origen, Clement ensured that even one of the kookiest Church Fathers did not stray to support communism. His later legacy towards economic matters remains a strong source of influence, and ensured early on in the Church that Christians of all socio-economic backgrounds would have equal standing.

<sup>45</sup> Gray, *The Socialist Tradition*, 47.

<sup>46</sup> This title may be understood as either *The Rich Man's Salvation* or *Who is the Rich Man Being Saved?*

<sup>47</sup> Gray, *The Socialist Tradition*, 48.

immorality. Giving away possessions or denying oneself material gain was therefore irrelevant: it did not matter how much one owned, since the heart was the central concern for Christian orthodoxy. Yet if one is wealthy, that believer is obligated then to almsgiving – it is in this tradition that Clement sets the standard in Christian practice not as a quantity given, but the quality of heart which accompanied the gift.<sup>48</sup> For Clement, and for all the later Fathers, almsgiving must be sincere, thus, not coerced by man, Church, or state. Almsgiving was the chief end of wealth in Christian hands. Beyond this, the brilliance of Clement exceeds the other Fathers especially concerning the nature of wealth within the Church: possessions are meant to be possessed and wealth is meant to be accumulated as a practice of natural law.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Clement cements a tradition of welcoming not only market principles of private property and ownership, nor only the barest practices of economic action, but even further accepts the practice of promoting that market behavior as conducive and proper to life, especially the Christian life. It is on this legacy that Augustine so inherited a fount of good economic principles.

### ***Œconomiae as Inheritance***

Augustine is the most developed of the Fathers, owing much to the inheritance begun with Clement of Rome and passed through many subsequent Patristics. For Augustine, the issues of merchantry and economics were a matter of social cohesion, and thus his focus in the market matters derived from a foundationally human approach otherwise foreign to most Fathers – such a Ciceronian approach was informed by the catholicity of Augustine’s faith. Augustine founded his own monastery, but he did not compel an equality of riches among the monks, nor did he impose social and economic equality upon them; rather, he very pointedly avoided the issue that

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<sup>48</sup> Eberhard F. Bruck, “Ethics vs. Law: St. Paul, the Fathers of the Church and the ‘Cheerful Giver’ in Roman Law,” *Traditio* 2 (1944): 106.

<sup>49</sup> Rothbard, *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*, 33.

drove Basil of Caesarea in his own monastic inclinations.<sup>50</sup> The merchant was not wicked for his merchantry any more so than the patrician was for his wealth. For Augustine, the doctrine of original sin meant that the people more than their professions were sinful.<sup>51</sup> This change in paradigm allowed for the Church to finally overcome a whole class of persons that were previously otherwise not accepted.<sup>52</sup> Indeed, Augustine himself posited much for the later Church to work with: in his *magnum opus*, *City of God*, Augustine presents a subjective theory of value foundationally equal to the much later Austrian view, less the marginal unit.<sup>53</sup> Man in himself was the arbiter of value, and as the principle agent to market activity, thus, Augustine implied an expanse to economic freedom. While hardly a *laissez-faire* capitalist, Augustine apportioned the function of the state to a necessary but limited role in market activities, following the Ciceronian tradition of only expecting the state to enforce contracts, prevent fraud, and adjudicate between parties. Only in the case of heretics did Augustine allot for a larger role of the state: like wielding a great bludgeon, Augustine utilized every power he could in crushing the Donatist heresy.<sup>54</sup> Yet this force of state did not apply to markets.

None of the Fathers have gone down in history as great economic theorists, and very few have gone down for contributing anything positive to the social science. Yet the economic issues that they address provide two essential benefits: that the economic issues dealt with today are no stranger to the human condition than they were nearly two thousand years ago, and that one can approach a cold and sometimes dismal science with moral warmth and care for the oppressed. It

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<sup>50</sup> Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, 175-177.

<sup>51</sup> A notable exception to Augustine's understanding would be prostitution, as the very profession is an expression of the individual's sin.

<sup>52</sup> The lack of acceptance for merchants may be due to the great influence of Plato upon the Fathers, as it became a well-established Christian principle by the third century that a labourer was worthy of his hire.

<sup>53</sup> Robert B Ekelund and Robert F. Hébert, *A History of Economic Theory & Method*, 6th ed, (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2014) 22.

<sup>54</sup> While it is true that the impetus for crushing his dogmatic enemies was doctrinal in nature, it would be incorrect to say that this was an instance of religious persecution and abuse of power. Rather, the actions of Augustine in using the state to crush his enemies may be analogous to any state's treatment of political traitors: not because they disagree with the state are they crushed, but because they threaten society. Like Queen Elizabeth I executing Roman Catholics during the period of the English Reformation, Augustine only crushed his opponents because they represented political danger to his community.

is through the Fathers that Christianity became a religion to foster market activity and economic success, and any attempt to link Christian socialism or communism with the Patristics remains fallacious. That Western inheritance cannot be overappreciated; it was not something sudden or unexpected, but the result of the *longue durée* and step-by-step improvements to the developing science. What began with St. Clement of Rome speaking to the value of good work and reward culminated in the synthesis of an openly pro-market social paradigm under St. Augustine that would last for a thousand years, in one form or another.

## Bibliography

Aiken, Charles F. "Library: The Doctrine of the Fathers of the Church on the Right of Private Property." *Library: The Doctrine of the Fathers of the Church on the Right of Private Property* | Catholic Culture. Accessed October 13, 2021.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=2944>.

Charles Aiken writes on the Fathers' various views on private property and the extent to which they developed the particular legal parameters thereof. Initially examining how the Gospel deals with the issue of wealth, he looks to how various Fathers understood those prescriptions from the Synoptics and John. With a heavy focus on a more social doctrine of private property, Aiken proves that certain Fathers held that private property demands charity, and argues that the Fathers agreed that voluntary poverty is the highest and purest form of holy charity. His analysis is selective of particular Fathers, and more often than not, Aiken offers his own commentary of particular Fathers more than he offers much historic or literary context. Nonetheless, he correctly identifies the essence of the Fathers' economic concerns.

Augustine, Aurelius. *De Civitate Dei contra Paganos*. Translated by George E. McCracken, William M. Green, David S. Wiesen, Philip Levine, Eva M. Sanford, and William Chase Greene. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972.

St. Augustine's *City of God* is his seminal work in which he defends Christianity against the pagans in the Roman Empire. Understandings of social cohesion and ideals can be

derived from this text, as well as several theological, political, and economic insights. Overall, the nature of the text is not one directly associated with economic analysis, and therefore, the use of this text offers very little raw material to work with relating directly to economic doctrine. However, several social phenomena are well documented, like the development of government. In this, the paradigm of Augustinian thought is revealed, for which one may compare such against the preceding Fathers and their operative socio-economic paradigms. Essentially, the little economic commentary this text offers aside, it reveals how novel Augustine's thoughts were compared to even fifty years before his writing.

Augustine, Aurelius, and John Chrysostom. *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: First Series*. Edited by Philip Schaff. Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886.

This collection of later Church Fathers provides primary source material in evaluating various Fathers and their remarks to wealth, property, and the like. The material provided is limited to Post-Nicene Fathers, during and after the development of Christendom, and therefore provides a great focus on Fathers writing in a more-Christian-than-not society.

Barsella, Susanna. "'Ars' and Theology: Work, Salvation, and Social Doctrine in the Early Church Fathers." *Annali d'Italianistica* 32 (2014): 53–72.

Susanna Barsella analyzes the function of the Greek and Hebraic traditions upon the early Church, offering commentary to how the various philosophies that influenced Christianity viewed labour. She also develops Aristotelian ethics and action as a lens through which to

understand the Greek Fathers. This critical analysis provides how the Greek Fathers especially viewed certain trades and professions as compared to others. In this way, such information provides a context to the developing view of working in the market for reward and the extent to which certain Fathers approved of this.

Brown, Peter. *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of*

*Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.

Peter Brown, professor emeritus of history at Princeton University, explains the historical development of wealth in the Church as Rome itself begins to decline, evaluating the years of late antiquity. This context is helpful in keeping the Fathers relative to the economic concerns of their period, but also establishes the historical actions they responded to or carried out concerning economic. The development of the newly rich Church also demonstrates a new form of charity in direct almsgiving, showing how novel the commandment to give to the poor was for the Roman world. More than anything, this text offers historical context for the Post-Nicene Fathers, and ensures they are understood in their context.

Bruck, Eberhard F. "Ethics vs. Law: St. Paul, the Fathers of the Church and the 'Cheerful Giver' in Roman Law." *Traditio* 2 (1944): 97–121.

This journal article demonstrates the careful relationship between ethical frameworks and the attempt to reflect such morality in legislation. Such analysis focuses mostly on figures beyond the Patristic writers, yet John Chrysostom is heavily featured. Such scholarship thus emphasizes the inherent spontaneity with which Christians were expected to give, and the Greek literary tradition behind cheerfulness in action. This article sufficiently

demonstrates the necessary lack of compulsion to giving, as viewed by Chrysostom, but is limited in the hermeneutical focus on St. Paul in the early Church, rather than how the Fathers understood St. Paul's writings.

Chrisman, Rodney D. "Can A Merchant Please God?: The Church's Historic Teaching on the Goodness of Just Commercial Activity as a Foundational Principle of Commercial Law Jurisprudence." *Liberty University Law Review* 6, no. 3 (December 2012): 453–94.

Rodney Chrisman evaluates the historic development of commercial law for the Church, providing a technical and legal analysis of the progression of the social doctrines of the Church. In this way, his article provides historical context, although no outright material relevant to this paper may be gleaned. Rather, the context he establishes for the various eras of the Church provides the points of paradigm shift, both before and after the Patristic age. Unfortunately, most of the commentary is done with a Revisionist lens that seeks to connect the United States' commercial jurisprudence with the Church during antiquity and the medieval period. As such, the commentary he offers is not without substantial hoopla for the capitalist economic doctrines of the developed West, and provides little appreciation for the painfully slow process itself that so produced the economic mindset.

Chrysostom, John. *On Wealth and Poverty*. Translated by Catherine P Roth. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999.

This text is a compilation of Chrysostom's sermons on the story of Lazarus and the Rich Man, providing a social dialectic to the commentary on wealth and property that he elucidates upon in other texts. As a primary document centering on the discussion of

wealth in a Christian schema, the raw material is priceless to the understanding of economic doctrine as the Church begins to be socially established.

Cicero, Marcus Tullius. *De Officiis*. Translated by Walter Miller. Loeb Classical Library. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975.

This text, though unconcerned with either the early Church or economic doctrine, offers the important legal presuppositions that the Western Fathers dealt with. As such, the important framework surrounding private property and the exercise of market activity can be traced to Cicero. For Ambrose and Augustine, the importance of understanding Cicero is critical in understanding the Patristic arguments they develop and support.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1950.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of St. Clement of Rome, St. Ignatius of Antioch, Justin Martyr, and St. Irenaeus. While this paper only evaluates the work of St. Clement, the focus of these writers is primarily a focus of Christian apologetics, and therefore offers limited insight into the socio-economic opinions of the Fathers.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 2. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of St. Clement of Alexandria. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into the primary bishop for economic change within the early Church.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 3. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of Tertullian. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into the primary Patristic for economic critique within the early Church, while also demonstrating his literary and exegetical focus. Most of the writings of Tertullian are on dogmatics, and therefore do not offer much insight into his economic philosophy, yet this text does showcase the document of particular interest, Tertullian's "On Idolatry."

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 4. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of Tertullian and Origen. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into the primary Patristic for economic critique within the early Church, while also offering primary material for the kookiest of the Fathers; overall, while this text does not offer much in terms of market theology, the works of the two Patristics insist the important of

the individual, and highlight the hermeneutic established by Clement of Alexandria. The historic context this compilation provides is thus essential.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 5. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of Hippolytus, Cyprian, and Novatian. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into primary source literature for economic analysis within the early Church; unfortunately, the material contained did not much offer that which other Patristics offer more freely and clearly.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 6. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of many minor Patristics. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into primary Patristic literature for economic analysis within the early Church; unfortunately, the material contained did not much offer that which other Patristics offer more freely and clearly.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 7. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of the obscure Lactantius and Victorinus. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into primary Patristic literature for economic analysis within the early Church; unfortunately, the material contained did not much offer that which other Patristics offer more freely and clearly.

Coxe, A. Cleveland. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Vol. 8. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the works of the pseudepigraphal and Gnostic authors of the Patristic age. Yet in addition to this, many extant Syriac texts are included, as well as the Decretals of later popes. Unfortunately, because of the unreliable nature of pseudo-epigraphy and the Gnostics, this information only provides historical context without offering material of direct influence upon the early Church. By the time of Nicaea, the New Testament was established, and no author of importance before Nicaea relies upon false texts. To the Decretals, the material is relevant, but beyond the historic underpinnings of this paper; the documents do show how the doctrine of the Church was shaped beyond the Patristic age, however, further cementing the importance of the Augustinian framework as a synthesis to the Fathers' economic doctrines.

Coxe, A. Cleveland, ed. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Vol. 9. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This text is not a composition of primary source documents, but serves as an appendix for those Patristic authors, as well as offering limited biographical data on certain Fathers. This text thus served as a springboard to find particular Fathers in the other volumes, and was an expedient resource to utilize in research.

Ekelund, Robert B., and Robert F. Hébert. *A History of Economic Theory & Method*. 6th ed. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2014.

Roberts Ekelund and Hébert provide a general survey of economic history from a neo-classical perspective. The text's portion on the Christian Fathers is sparingly brief, and conveys a number of patently untrue assumptions to the Father while it ignores them in their historic and literary context. With some historic insight to the development of particular doctrines, e.g., subjective value theory from St. Augustine, the text offers a starting place in research, but leaves much to be desired. Upon further research, one can safely conclude that many of the selected Fathers are ill-represented in this survey text.

Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomenus, Theodoret, et al. *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church: Second Series*. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. Buffalo, NY: Christians Literature Company, 1900.

This collection of later Church Fathers provides primary source material in evaluating various Fathers and their remarks to wealth, property, and the like. The material provided

is limited to Post-Nicene Fathers, during and after the development of Christendom, and therefore provides a great focus on Fathers writing in a more-Christian-than-not society. Many Fathers in this compilation do not address market matter, however this text still remains useful for historic context and understanding later writers reliant upon any text in this reference.

Gray, Alexander. *The Socialist Tradition: Moses to Lenin*. London, England: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1946.

Alexander Gray offers a survey of general economic history, yet with striking clarity and good humor; his focus of the Patristics is limited in scope, but the analysis provided for select Patristics provides a thorough and productive understanding of the important figures to the Patristic period. The centrality of focus he provides of St. Clement of Alexandria, especially, is particularly enjoyable to read while retaining scholarship. The only drawback is the lack of authors he otherwise consults in depth, notably lacking much on St. Augustine. This cannot be held strictly against him, as he does not claim to provide a comprehensive analysis, and to the work of other authors, many extant texts were discovered in the 1950s, close to a decade after publication. Thus, based upon the resources he had access to, Gray offers his reader a general understanding appropriate of the Fathers.

Kopecek, Thomas A. "The Social Class of the Cappadocian Fathers." *Church History* 42, no. 4 (December 1973): 453–66.

This article highlights the specific studies that go into analyzing the social background of the Cappadocian Fathers. To its point, it is effective for what it demonstrates, limited as it

is in scope. However, Kopecek offers his point quickly, and while this social background is not critical, such provides helpful background on influential Fathers.

Lupieri, Edmondo F. “Business and Merchants Will Not Enter the Places of My Father: Early Christianity and Market Mentality.” Essay. In *The Monetization of the Market and Its Impact on Religion, Politics, Law, and Ethics*, 379–413. Chicago, IL: Loyola University Chicago, 2014.

Edmondo Lupieri analyses the early Church and how the community dealt with money and wages for labour in the early period of the religion, especially. His analysis relies heavily upon early Gnostic texts, such as the Gospel according to Thomas, but the dogmatic suppositions he relies upon are consistent with the historical record. Indeed, his conclusions focus heavily upon the Hebraic world which Christianity emerged from, and the plethora of various materials he draws upon ensures the Gnostic influence is minimal with respect to the eschatological synthesis he provides.

Menzies, Allan, ed. *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Translations of the Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Vol. 10. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1951.

This compilation focuses on all extant Patristic literature pre-Nicaea, focusing mainly on the “recently discovered additions to early Christian literature.” This includes the Gnostic Gospel of St. Peter, several Apocalypses and Romances, a fuller addition to the works of Clement of Rome, and several commentaries by Origen. As such, this resource provides excellent insight into primary Patristic literature for economic analysis within the early Church; however, the apocalyptic texts were rejected by the Patristics and the romantic

pieces are for the most part outside of the timeframe of this paper. The additions to St. Clement of Rome, while helpful for context, only reinforce what the first volume of this collection provides, and the commentaries of Origen upon the Gospel according to St. Matthew the Evangelist and according to St. John the Divine only further cement the tradition established by St. Clement of Alexandria.

Rankin, David I. "Class Distinction as a Way of Doing Church: The Early Fathers and the Christian Plebs." *Vigiliae Christianae* 58, no. 3 (August 2004): 298–315.

David Ranking analyzes the extent to which Roman social and legal divisions impacted the pre-Nicene Fathers. Such a difference legal class allowed the Fathers to focus on different responsibilities for the clergy and laity alike, especially in matters of the authority of the bishop. He focuses particularly on the social roles of Clement and Hermas of Rome, Tertullian, and Cyprian of Carthage. The usefulness of his analysis is not rooted in economic analysis in and of itself, but how the class relationships within the Church played out under particular Fathers. This scholarship thus provides insight into the applied social doctrine of certain early Patristics.

Rothbard, Murray N. *Economic Thought Before Adam Smith*. Northampton, MA: Edward Elger, 1995.

Murray Rothbard provides a thoroughly brief analysis of Christian antiquity as an impetus of economic growth upon Western civilization. Under the praxeological, Austrian dynamic, Rothbard considered certain Fathers via brief snippet-quotes or general summary. He does not do so inaccurately, but unfortunately often without citation. While his general

analysis is helpful for synthesis, his commentary and prognosis of the Fathers both lack any contextual substance – rather than place the Fathers in their contexts or appreciate the prescriptive nature of their writings, Rothbard is dogmatically critical of anything that does not fall into full accordance with the Austrian school. In this way, Rothbard provides helpful and quick analysis to certain Fathers, but one must be wary of following his conclusions too closely.

Ryan, John A. “Were the Church Fathers Communists?” *International Journal of Ethics* 14, no. 1 (October 1903): 26–39.

John Ryan forcefully analyzes a modern and critical reading of the Fathers that incorporates them into a proto-communist paradigm, mainly the result of theological liberalism from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Yet Ryan convincingly defends particular Fathers, proving each held to certain degrees of private property in the least. This analysis is specific and particularly devoted to the singular subject of property rights, offering a general rebuttal to Marxist scholarship on the matter. What is perhaps most important to this piece is the particular emphasis on the explanation of property in antiquity, offering deeper historical context.