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THE IMPACT OF GLOBALIZATION ON THE POSTMODERN SOCIAL RELIGIOSITY

Review
Article

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Abstract

As fundamental characteristic of the contemporaneity, globalization is a total social, cultural, religious and economical phenomenon, a contestant reality for all the values of the traditional culture so far. Due to a more and more ample and dense network through the interconnections and the interdependencies inside the new postmodern social life, from the perspective of the new approaches – political (A. Mc. Grew), sociological (S. Lash, J. Urry, M. Castells), cultural (S. Hall) or anthropological (J. Friedman), all the cultural and spiritual-religious distances around the world might be solved by provoking a religious crisis in the “global village/society” (Marshall McLuhan). Between globalization – an underlying social determinant of the postmodernity – and the manifested subjectivism of the religious beliefs and practices, an inseparable bi-univocal relation is in the process of formation.

GLOBALIZATION AND POSTMODERNITY FROM A CHRISTIAN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

As a result, among the multitude of interconnections, which is continuously opening for outside elements, *an original inseparable bi-univocal relation will be formed, inclusively in the field of the subjectivism manifested in the religious beliefs and practices* (John Tomlison, 2002, p.11). In this context, it may be launched the question on *how the phenomenon of post-modern globalization can redefine and recalibrate the dialogue between the major religions of the world*, starting from a political and economic conception which reduced the contemporary man to the temporal flux of *Production and Consume*.

Between globalization – an underlying social determinant of the postmodernity – and the manifest subjectivism of the religious beliefs and practices, an inseparable bi-univocal relation is in the process of formation. In these circumstances, Ioan I. Ică Jr., trying to identify the terms in the equation of the globalization, observed that, under the pressure of the postmodernity, the religious tends to reflect two completely different facts, through: 1. *The assumption of political and nationalist valences and identities, leading to a halving of the essential aim of religion by subjective factors, which can be easily instrumented for political and economic purpose;* 2. *The dissolution of the faith in sentimental and pious approaches, easy manipulable and ending in individualist-egocentric visions, rather sending the believers in the search of the personal happiness and fulfilment* (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2005, p. 695). Although, in fact, the *spiritual* objective of the postmodern globalization seems to be the reconstruction of the religious, *the re-theorization* of the religion that starts from the temptation – observed by Jurgen Habermas, who speaks of a *need to return to sacred, to religiousness*, in the same manner as Martin Riesebrodt wrote about the return of the religions in *the age of globalisation* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 236) – the reality and the constancy of these searches, fed by a detail too easily ignored, the same aspect described by Nikolai Berdiaev, that *the human is a natural being, with a supernatural vocation*, are altered by postmodernity through its political economic philosophy placed outside the divine revelation. Still, *the recent man* does not hesitate to search his religious ideal even in these times without knowing how to reach God. The man will search for the transcendent guide mark and its valuing as a source of his passage through the world or will place (back) the divinity at the origins of the moral-

ethical standards. He will proceed using the means and the methods accessible to his nature, affected by his limits, stranding in searches *that are no longer oriented toward community on the vertical axis of transcendent-immanent or the temporal axis past-future, but oriented individualist and strictly immanent on the horizontal axis of sense – nonsense, life-death, health-illness, self – non-self, imaginary – real* (Ioan I. Ică jr. 2005, p. 695). *This failureshows, once again, the consequences of the man's disobedience in front of the divinity*, even if inside his being lives something indestructible and significant, pushing him continuously toward his Creator, the synergic content of the authentic theophanies will limit the man's possibilities of finding the real religion. Thus, in spite of his character somehow deserving, the human effort in the divine direction is imperatively requiring a total connection to the unique criterion of the Truth: the divine-human Church established by the Saviour Jesus Christ. Overcoming the modernity and its hostility toward religion and religiosity - a possible attitude as long as the positivism and the scientism are used as answers to the necessity of believing, an intrinsic, even constitutive necessity of the humanity, the *recent man*, as in a *curvature of the historical time*(J. Baudrillard), rediscovers the past and reconsiders it (Ioan I. Ică jr. 2005, p. 694) because, unlike the completely unpredictable future, the past offers the anchor of a minimum set of certitudes. Entering this temporal curl, the postmodern man only affirms the *native-perennial dimension of the religiosity* (G. Schmitchen), so, in an obvious manner the age of the globalization and the isolation of the religious by social through secularisation, *does not mean at all the end of the religion* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 179). Moreover, because, *even declared dead, God remains the uncontrollable reference of the world* (H.-R. Patapievici, 2001 p. 87). In this context we may talk about *the chance of the religion in postmodernism and globalisation*, because the present *tends to deepen to new metaphysical and religious dimensions, which are significant and precious and with which we coexist in spirit*, even if there is a *systems of beliefs which is offering itself to the public for its consumption* (Marin Aiftică, 2001, p. 9). *The decisive term in this equation is the consumption*, in fact the idea of subordinating the religious to the market criteria, consecrated by individuals for whom the selling of goods and services is determinant. This idea is fundamental for the reality of the postmodern spirituality. Thus, postmodernity opens toward the religious thinking and practice, but toward the world of the traditional religions, but toward a universe of individual religiosity which is *diffuse, relativist, anonymous, syncretic and without*

ecclesial commitment (Valer Bel, 2005, p. 34) , where *the inclusivity language does not make differences between truth, opinion and error* (Gheorghe Petraru, 2005, p. 55). The post-modern globalisation will stimulate the interaction of the religious ideas, beliefs and practices, which, inevitably, will integrate in the multitude of connections that *feed the open character of the market society in its spiritual authentic Christian fundament*. A new reality grows, perfectly explainable in the context of the global inter-connections, with a paradox religiosity: 1. *On one hand, it is more and more strongly individualised and it is more diffuse, in the same time with the proliferation of the gnoseological and soteriological relativism, leading to division, distancing and separation inside the society*, 2. *On the other hand, it is more public and collective, transformed through the media in a subject for immense data fluxes circulated by the global society. The contemporary world – devised between ethnies, cultures and religions – is under the sign of the utopic erroneous globalisation* (Joseph Ratzinger, 2002), as if willing to regain, using only the means of the post-industrial society and of the technical-scientific revolution, without God, the initial condition of manifesting space for this nature – the human nature, carrying the indestructible seal of the divine face. *A global world, desiring its own autonomy, may report only to the immanent limits mapped by the institutionalisation of the modernity*, taking and transforming into fetish the political, economic, social and cultural values; a post-modern world to a global level, which will define its own axiological referential and will build them through the subordination of the elements corresponding to the content (John Tomlinson, 2002, p. 73) . In this context of globalisation, the religions assimilate the condition of *social actors*, being exposed to the inevitable interactions with the similar actors. Moreover, the annulment of the physical distances *through and by the virtual space* works together with the reality of a *global culture* fed by the external stimulation of the cultural and spiritual values and exchanges, because “any culture has an open character; it may receive, to assimilate [...] itself to other cultures something deserving attention” (Marin Aiftică, 2001 p. 73). Hence, *the religious beliefs are in the unprecedented situation of losing more and more their social traditional dimensions, especially related to ethnicity and civilisation*, which were previously defining, due to the following factors:

A). The present course of globalisation may be seen/interpreted as a determinant resultant of *geopolitics of the chaos* (Ioan I. Ică jr. 2005, p. 684) as a follow up of *the mutations appeared in the production and the consumption of material,*

cultural and spiritual goods after the passage to the post-industrial age. Through the treble technological, economic and social-political revolution, are substituted the two thinking paradigms of the modernity, starting from: 1. A clock mechanism of a society, where every piece is necessary and useful, and 2. the progress in education and an equality that leads to the decrease of ignorance, violence and inequities (Ioan I. Ică jr. 2005, p. 688). *The place of the Myth of the continuous Progress is taken by communication and mediatisation and the place of the social mechanism is taken by Market and consumption, invading the domains of the social life*. Even the religion and the culture are transformed in merchandise, obeying to the law of the Offer and Demand. The result of this new postmodern vision, *trying to impose a new type of society and to create another type of man, different from the Christian man* (Fukuyama, 1994) – *pure homo economicus* -, *is based fully on economy, in the totalitarianism of the market and the dictatorship of mass-media. This utopia fails into a socio-politico-religious leeway, through the reductionist encouragement of the economic efficiency, leading, in time, to the destruction of the social cohesion, the break-up of nations and the dissolution of culture and religion*. Living happens in the new conditions of the postmodernity, on a secularised background of *finding a real meaning of life. The culture becomes show and merchandise and the scientific culture cedes space for the absolute mediocrity of the mass culture* (Ioan I. Ică jr. 2005, p. 690). Based on our above observations, we affirm that there is an “objective” determinism in the appearance and the generalisation of the course toward globalisation, through production and consume, which become polycentric human activities, coagulated in transnational tentacle networks, *guided after the unique and defining moral support of the economical pragmatism and efficiency, having as supreme aim the financial profit*. Thus, *as a product of the post-industrial society and of the technical and scientific revolution, the globalisation is, in a sense, an inevitable stage in the evolution of the humanity to a historical scale. In the same time, it is irreversible* (Dumitru Popescu, p. 92/93), *because the production mode is in its fundament and cannot be taken out without the risk of a global social collapse*.

B). Aiming lucrative results, mostly economic, financial and technical-productive, *globalisation appears as lacking authentic spiritual and religious valences; in fact, its religious dimension could only be the one given by postmodernity*. It is no wonder that globalisation lacks *the vertical dimension, remaining in the limits of a horizontal phenomenon* (Dumitru Popescu, 2001, p. 86), little capable to

offer coherent and valid answers, from theological point of view, to the essential interrogations of the man. If it finds answers, as a consequence of the postmodern temptation of reconsidering the religious thinking and practice, *it will think, formulating and offering solutions with small chances to resist to pass the exams of Christian theological consistency and sustainability*

In these circumstances, the references of the “recent” man (H.R. Patapievici) suffer a radical transformation generated by the human society, because *the efficiency and the profit it is obsessed with could not be converted in anything else excepting a new form of Hedonism, one fed by utilitarianism (Benjamin Barber), consumes and individualism, leading to phenomena of spiritual alienation and alteration of the man.* The man tends to flatten his existence, to compress the vertical dimension and to annul the metaphysical opening, ending in not being *anthropos* anymore, while looking at the sky becomes an indifferent and strange act. The destructuring force of the globalisation proves to be huge; it presses, dissolutive and homogenous, on a man who, although living a world that is more transparent than it ever was, is, paradoxically in the situation of *being alone, constraint to the condition of absolute solitude by a society which, as the sociologist Thomas Luckmann observed, brings in front of everything the force of the individual/individualist motivation of the work, weakening the connections that transformed the man in a being inside a community* (Cătălin Raiu, 2012, pp. 15-16). Slave to the pervert triad, Ioan I. Ică Jr. called it, of the production, profit and consumption/ show/ communication (Ioan I Ică jr, 2005, p. 693), *the man living in the global world is in a major identity crisis, his existence manifesting under the spectrum of the efficiency converted into consumption – a fact which proves to be capable to establish a pseudo-culture/ global culture of postmodernity, lacking spirituality, with a pure utilitarian character and oriented unilaterally toward the material values* (Dumitru Popescu, 2003, p.87). The man of the global world abdicates from his authentic vocation willingly, replacing a life, which is the preamble to an eschatological destiny unique in the Universe in exchange of some temporary benefices and advantages, with a *delusive existence based on the commodity and the mediocrity of a life of consumption, which substitutes the real human identity through the refuse of the existential profoundness* (Adrian Lemeni, 2003, p. 444). This is *the image of a social man who absolutizes his present condition, because “modernity starts from the state of the man, to define him through the placement in this state [...], considered impossible to overcome”* (Anca Manolescu, 2011, p. 63). In the end, “the global remains inside the inner constitution of the creation” (Dumitru Popescu,

2003, p. 16), and it is not antagonist to the divine economy from the point of view of the form of social coagulation it proposes; in fact, *the history, between the Fall and the Eschaton, is the one altering the global as origin and final scope of the humanity, giving it dimensions and different reverberations to its authentic senses.* In other words, the globalisation we are living and perceiving as a universal mode of marginalization of the Church and of the faith, cannot be anything else but the deformed, dark shadow of the real unity of the humanity, the one that will rediscover the fundamental senses in Eschaton.

THE SOCIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE POSTMODERN SPIRITUALITY

If, from a formal point of view, globalization seems to be fully compatible with the Christian idea – which is universalist, too, *its content highlights the entirely human origins, because the contemporary individual found out, by himself and without reference to theology and belief, that the crossing of the ethnic, linguistic, cultural and spiritual frontiers facilitates the mercantile and individualist dominating purposes.*

Thus, the individual, sacrificing the real vocation, built a world around him/her and for him/her, with the ego as unique landmark, unique purpose and unique mean, as Nicolae Balca observed: “the ancient human was talking to the Cosmos; the medieval man was talking to God and the modern man talks to himself” (Nicolae Balca, 1936, p. 58). From the perspective of the last opinion, the social impact of these cultural evolutions belonging to postmodernism is disastrous for society, through the appearance of two main directions for the concentration if the social impact we research: 1. secularisation and 2. The endangering of the ecclesial community, the extreme fragmentation of the religious world.

The secularisation and the extreme fragmentation of the religious world

Constantly present in the discourse of the contemporary theologians, *secularisation is an undoubtable reality, which is more obvious, in France or Denmark, or more diffuse, as in USA and Great Britain.* Secularisation becomes the echo of those societies, which, as Olivier Clement observed: “keep an absolute silence when it comes to God”. In the Anglo-Saxon space, *the secularisation is assimilated to laicisation, both concepts defining the delimitation/separation, from a juridical and political point of view, between the religious and the social, between the sacred and the profane. In the French speaking space, secularisation and laicisation are complementary, not identical, concepts. Jean Bauberot highlights*

the fact that secularisation means “a progressive loss of the Church in its role and influence in society, a separation of the religious and ecclesial values in a social plane”, while laicization means “a conflict or a clear separation between the State and the Church or between the State and religion”. In other words, secularisation has a preponderantly social determination, while the laicization has a juridical content and, in the last instance, a political one. Independently from these matters, *secularisation describes the state of a society which, more or less, diminished its preoccupation with religion, manifesting a weaker interest for “holiness, for what is sacred”* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p.198). At a first glance, there are two fundamental causes of the secularisation

a. The specific constitutional/ legislative regulations, which establish the separation between state and church, the medieval Christian society – *societas christiana* being dissolved from an institutional point of view;

b. the mutations provoked on the religious consciousness of the individuals by modernity/postmodernity, the globalisation of the production of material and spiritual goods. Examining more attentively *the two formative vector, we will observe that, from a certain point, they are confounded, losing their axiological autonomy, because the profound origins of the secularisation are in the psycho-social impact of modernity, as Arnold Leon considered: secularisation “is not a process in the existential space, but one that unfolds in the human consciousness”, affecting the entire existence, more exactly “the horizon of the human reasoning in philosophy, science and culture”* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p.199). In these circumstances, modernity turned religion into “an almost anonymous component of the social mechanism” (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 201). From the institutional frame of the entire social life, religion regresses until became the appanage completely non-institutionalised of some segments of the society which, constantly discredited, *are confronting the acute risk of marginalization and isolation.* The pressure on the religious do not aim only its isolation and fragmentation, it aims also *the compromising of the specific way of thinking on which is based, because, in the end, any religious belief is related to its own set of values and guide marks, which are defined and managed cognitively and apologetically.* Thus, the postmodernity will cultivate the mistrust in these values with the final aim of replacing them, because *“the technical progress, the development, the production, the success, the image and the consumption etc. functions almost as a secular religious surrogate”.* It is no wonder that *in the contemporary West, God was replaced with money and consumption”* (Fr. W. Bracht) estranged from the Christian

anthropology and gnoseology, so “the recent man” claims loudly his autonomy in front of the Church and in front of the Eternal God. From a sociological perspective, the contemporary secularisation process presents the following main problems (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 200)

a. Are the corrosion of faith and the diminishing of the adhesion to religion – both observable and commensurable, possible to be interpreted as pertinent and objective factors for the “irreversible decline of the religion”!?

b. Obvious in the case of the western Christianity, does the respective type of conclusions remain valid to a global level? In other words: is the involution of the religious specific only to the western world?

c. Are modernity and postmodernity always connected to secularism? Is it possible for a society to be transparent for the values of the postmodernity and not secular in the same time?

The fact that all these interrogations do not permit answers without equivocal proves their complexity; indeed is no doubt that “modernity promotes the individualism and the primate of the sciences, in the detriment of religion and of the moral-religious values. There is also no doubt that “the estrangement of the man from God is correlated with the social and economic modernisation” (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 291), but, it is true in the same time that the same postmodernity generated totally different effects in Great Britain and USA, in Poland and the Czech Republic or in China and Japan, proving that, in the end, secularisation has a social determination, too, which is not far from the *ethos* of each nation. Without doubt, *secularisation is connected to postmodernity, accompanying it organically, even if will manifest more or less acute or more or less vehement.*

Thus, postmodernity implies the secularism, without a relation of proportionality between their incident points. I.e.: the recurrence of *Shintoism* is not almost at all contradictory with the clear modernity of the Japanese society; the influence of the Polish Catholicism is different from the French or Italian one. Opinions as that belonging to Claire Berlinski, according to whom “the secularisation of the European society might be a direct consequence of the domination of the modern science”, seems inadequate in countries as USA and Japan, which are powerfully connected to the technical and scientific revolution and remain away from the heavy effects of the European secularism (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p. 292). From a singular perspective and point of view, *secularisation has a certain legitimate character, derived from the complex character of the social life, which “imposed inevitably the separation and the*

specialisation of the social and cultural fields” (Ioan. I. Ică. Jr., 2005, p. 690). Still, the objective and justified necessity of specialisation led, in the same time with the modernity, to the claiming and, later, the gaining of the complete autonomy, convertible shortly in opposition to the Church. The process has big amplitude and profoundness and origins in the dawns of the Humanism and Renaissance. The implacable course to specialisation, which contaminated progressively all the aspects of the life, did not spare the Church, which became a “specialised institution, with no political power, separated from the politic and the state by the law [...], limited to the management of the salvation of the individuals and forced to manifest its influence exclusively on traditional or moral path or through private lobby” (Ioan. I. Ică. Jr., 2005, p. 698), as the sociologist Peter L. Berger observed. Detached from *the temptation of power and the inflation of the institutional*, as Ioan I. Ică Jr. writes, the social Church reached the implacable state of adapting to a social reality, which, from a certain point of view, outruns it. Losing the previous positions and influence, the Church was in a risk situation, due to the imminent danger of confrontation. The Church risked to become a pole of social conflict and overcame the situation through the adoption of complex measures.

CONCLUSIONS

Which might be the positive role of the Orthodox Church, of the Orthodoxy in general, in this concert that is compulsory polyphonic, postmodern and globalising autonomous social voices? Against a secularised postmodernity decreeing the equality of all religions – of rational and not divine determined nature, when the global society is leading to the elimination of the religion in the social life, after the artificial separation between the public and the private, with a postmodern human kind forgetting the authentic spiritual values – circumscribed to “*to be*” and not to “*to have*” – and placed artificially median between the sky, which is rejected due to the loss of eschatological reflex and hope, and the land, which seems to be estranged and generating a repudiation of the ethnical, cultural and religious identity (Ioan I. Ică jr, 2005, p. 690), the Holy Fathers of the Church, beginning with Saint Athanasius the Great, saw in *the cosmic dimension of the Church* a reflex for Trinitarian communion, mirrored in the identity of each nation and its specific culture, starting from the connection of love between them (Popescu, 2003, p. 90). *In fact, theology is the one that, eschatologically projects the form of the perfect globalisation, the Heavenly Jerusalem, where the chosen ones will live in perfect harmony under the*

reign of the Lamb (Ovidiu Pecican, 2003, pp. 235-236). In other words, the global remains inscribed in the inner consciousness of the creation (Dumitru Popescu, 2003, p. 16) and it is not per se antagonistic to the divine economy from the point of view of the proposed form of social coagulation. In fact, the history between the Fall and the Eschaton is the one altering the global origin and final aim of the humanity, giving it dimensions and reverberations estranged from the fundamental meanings to Eschaton. How can the Church answer to the huge challenge brought by the secularisation of the society, when its tendencies of radicalism become more explicit? *A possible answer will be connected to the following guide marks:*

a. The Church will assume the social positioning that the secular radicalism is willing to give it to the Church, meaning “...*the minority and the diaspora that are active spiritually, morally, socially and cultural*”, *active in a pluralist environment as religion and ideology* – see *The Epistle to Diognet*;

b. The Church will reject any temptation and tendency for social isolation, because it is called to “become the soul in the body of the world and to vivify the body of the humanity with the life of God” (Dumitru Popescu, 2003, p. 16); the millennial and apocalyptic refusal of the social dialogue may only stimulate the unjustified ambitions of the opponents;

c. The secular context is capable to give a new power to the missionary vocation of the Church, to offer it a new meaning and a new signification; the Church is under the imperative commandment to (re)evangelise the world, to (re)announce the coming of Christ, His Incarnation, sacrifice and Resurrection, and to (re)proclaim the Kingdom of God; in spite all the factors that seems to stop it, there are many factors that make the mission of the Church not just possible, but opportune, too: **1.** The society (all the humans and each human being) and the culture (seen as a “spiritual” superstructure of a world oriented toward the economic, financial and technological performance) are far from being sufficient, as Jurgen Habermas observed, claiming, in extremely different but constant forms, the report to the transcendent; **2.** The fact that in all circumstances, no matter how hostile, the religious intrinsic vocation of the human nature cannot be fully repressed; even maculated, even overwhelmed by the immanent and temporary realities, it will resist and will be able to become anytime a manifestation; **3.** The secularism, no matter how acute, will not be able to affect the religiosity of the individuals, their supernatural vocations; in fact, the real “victims” of the secularisation are the institutionalised religions, which traditionally uses to establish and condition the social evolutions; they were confronted with the pressure of rejection

and marginalisation, because the spirituality of the individuals was affected directly. Peter L. Berger observed that secularisation “did not stop the religious practices and beliefs in their survival [...], sometimes with much fervour” (Jean Bauberot, 2005, p. 220), confirming the preservation of the individual religiosity.

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