HOW CAN THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST BE REGARDED IN THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract: Questions like, who we are, where we come from and where we go, have caused many debates over time, humanity being concerned about this issue since the beginning to the contemporary days. According to Christian teaching, the world has its origin in God, being His work, created not out of an ever existing substance and coeternal with Him, but "out of nothing". Unfortunately, over time, the world has been removed from its primary purpose, becoming a laboratory for conceptual experiments, thus neglecting the evangelical principles and the ancestral traditions at the same time. Before approaching the actual topic, we shall note that the seriousness and sincerity with which there must be assessed and analyzed the challenges of the contemporary world, sometimes giving rise to a wide range of interpretations, sometimes even dissensions, confusions or uncertainties. There are organized conferences in our continent that propose different theories, concepts or complex systems "intended" to create progress and facilitate the destiny of humanity. Concerned with these issues, the contemporary society is living, on the background of a general crisis of the meaning of life, a cultural, religious or educational mess, obvious symptoms in what a globalized society is intended to be. Given these circumstances we wonder: where can be located and how can the Gospel of Jesus Christ be perceived in the contemporary context of globalization.

Keywords: evangelical principles, ancestral traditions, challenges, concepts, globalized society.

Before addressing the actual topic of the paper, we note that the seriousness and sincerity with which challenges of modern and postmodern world, about spiritual matters, should be addressed, entails a wide range of interpretations, sometimes misunderstandings, confusion or uncertainty, not only on those who belong to the Church, laymen and ministers alike, but to any Christian who wants to draw and learn a minimum of evangelical principles enshrined in the basic Christian[1].

Lacking claim to be exhaustive, however, I say it is unacceptable as a Christian not to worry about the anxieties of the contemporary society and also the questions and issues that arise in a society that wants to be globalized, with all its coordinates, and which, is more than ever seeking to overthrow God of its existence and its way of being. I said this is not accidentaly, since the absence from the European Constitution of the word "God" and any other reference to Europe's Christian traditions is likely to fret all the Churches in Europe.

There are held on our continent a series of conferences that bring up the question of European spirituality, but we wonder: *that spirituality*? The response that may occur immediately is certainly: *the Christian*. The political correctness Europe that wants to place all alike, is increasingly becoming a place where the fact of being a Christian must be spoken softly. We say that basing on the negative remark made by the Austrian Minister Johannes Farnleitner, whio, in June 1999 was making a statement that should give pause to all: "Europe stops and must stop where Orthodoxy begins"[2].

[1] Stelian Gomboş, Despre comuniunea liturgică în Iisus Hristos - ca premisă a comuniunii popoarelor într-o Europă creştină, (About the Liturgical Communion in Jesus Christ - as a Prerequisite for the Peoples Communion in a Christian Europe) , published in "The Theological Revue" , no, 3, July – September, 2008 , p. 88.

[2] Elisabeth Behr Siegel, Locul Bisericii Ortodoxe în construcţia europeană,(The Place of the Orthodox Church in the European Construction) http: //. www.nistea. com/ort-eur.htm.

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Without trying to offend anyone's religious belief or affiliation, I would add by saying that intentions are that that Europe should stop where actually Christianity begins.

When the Iron Curtain was still high, Mircea Eliade, in exile, notes that for many Westerners, Europe stops at the Rhine or at most in Vienna [3]. I would say, without being ironical, it probably stops there to where they got during their wedding journeys, because beyond the Rhine or Vienna there is something, there are ancient principles based on a strong belief in God, anchored to the rock of transcendence.

So, the question we ask each other as Christians would be this: how can we keep our spiritual and moral relevance when Romanian society mores are increasingly shaped by Western patterns? What are the steps to be taken so that the Gospel should be perceived as fair, lacking obsolete, in this new social context of globalization, without losing what little which has left.

Our intentions are to try to provide answers and solutions to the concerns of the society and also of our peers. We will certainly find these answers in the teachings of the Gospel, being such a clot that can bring together all the members of the Body of Christ in and through the Word of the Father.[4]

Globalization between choice and constraint

In addition to being discussed and treated in different ways and in the light of all the bearings of our society, globalization is an inevitable phenomenon, and we who live it are not able to decide or to choose whether we want or if we accept globalization. Today, globalization simply exists and we are somehow predestined to live under its sign, under its spectrum, and to cope with it [5].

But what is or what it means, in practice, this phenomenon that we used to call globalization? It is almost impossible to give a definition of globalization in a form universally accepted and perhaps even final. The reason is that globalization subincludes a multitude of complex processes with a dynamic variable reaching different areas of asociety. It can be a phenomenon, an ideology, a strategy, or all together and it is the modern term used to describe changes in the society in which we live.

Trying to identify it, the concept of globalization began to be used after 1990 to describe a complex, socio-economic and cultural process, but it is impossible to exhaust in a definition or a form all springs involved by this reality. However briefly, we can say that globalization is a new and very well articulated system, through which it is expected that we should become one river.

On this basic and general framework all the other components are added, making up the postmodern society in which we live: economic and financial, political, cultural and even religious. Nothing of what is happening now in our society remains uncontaminated by the scourge of globalization, globalization becoming the symbol of the times we are living.

However, globalization universalized, involves the idea of unifying the societies and thereby one can reach the relativization of national or community identities, the ones

[3] Mircea Eliade, Împotriva deznădejdii, (Against Despair), "Humanitas" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 151.

[4] Florin-Toader Tomoioagă, Ortodoxia românească în noul context european: adaptare, refuz, misiune, (Romanian Orthodoxy in the New European Context: Adaptation, Refusal, Mission) published in the volume „ Tradiție și Modernitate în societatea românească în noul context creat de aderarea la Uniunea Europeană", (Tradition and Modernity in Romanian Society in the New Context Created by the Accession to the European Union), published in "Univesity of Oradea Publishing House", Oradea, 2007, p. 203.

[5] Cătălin Turliuc, Globalizarea - simbolul contemporaneității, (Globalization-the Symbol of Contemporaneousness), published in „Lumina de Duminică" newspaper, in 28 September 2008.

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through which a people or a particular community defines its existence, with the threat of homogenization, of the creation of a global culture, as is consumerism, becoming the measure of all things in a society deprived of meaning.

On the other hand, globalization customizes, favoring individualism and pluralism, which are expressed both by a variety of faiths and denominations, but also by a multitude of opportunities for religious commitment in the world.

There should be noted that when we do not reflect on the truths and realities of existence, we come to what we might call globalization in which modern man no longer thinks of deification and is rarely concerned about his own state, specifically to reach a state of holiness [6]. Basically, these terms have nearly disappeared from the main background of the Romanian language and in the sense of many, they became archaisms.

Unfortunately, standards went down and requirements went down as well. If the medieval society had as a social ideal people holiness, the society we live got to be satisfied with "humanizing" them. We live in a world where gradually Christian values have been abandoned or rather, we live in a society that has never known and accepted them fully and consciously. The nowadays world must be reattached to Christian values and sensitized to the refined values of Christian doctrine, namely to the principles of the gospel of Christ.[7]

In other train of thoughts, globalization phenomenon exhibits a relativization of community values by emphasizing the role that the individual - not the person – in the mass a society is made up of, hence the more elusive nature of the liabilities based on the fact that we are bearers of image of God. Paradoxically there is intended the accountability of modern man, but this responsibility is considering further legal relations, not the moral or ontological ones. And then we wonder: globalization is chosen by us or we are constraint to choose it? Through accountability only directed to certain aspects, man loses his vertical sense references and primarily summarizes the horizontal ones, made available by the institution where they work and whose fingerprints are increasingly faithless .[8]

Under the impetus of globalization there is intended a division between sacred and secular, but mostly it is envisaged that they should not be confused. The contemporary man is directed mainly to guide his steps towards material life at the expense of its moral spiritual dimension so that the long-sought happiness for as a trend for the soul which should be directed to the welfare and comfort. Vitalistic postmodern conceptions presents as a man concerned only for the present moment. The Faustian phrase "oh, moment stay, you are so beautiful" [9], is just the result of a conception repealing any concerns of man to his soul, and especially to the next life.

Nowadays man, with a greater discretion is inoculated the idea to look exclusively to the ground, thus deducting his name from "humus", without being allowed to think that he

[6] Stelian Gomboş, „ Despre folosul, participarea şi impactul tinerilor creştini români ortodocşi în Uniunea Europeană” , (About the Benefit, Participation and Impact of Young Romanian Orthodox Christians in the European Union) , published in the volume,„Tradiţie şi Modernitate în societatea românească în noul context creat de aderarea la Uniunea Europeană” (Tradition and Modernity in Romanian Society in the New Context Created by the Accession to the European Union) , Univeristy of Oradea Publishing House, Oradea, 2007 , p. 191.

[7] Teofil Tia, Biserica Ortodoxă Română şi Întegrarea Europeană- reflexii, analize, problematizări, (The Romanian Orthodox Church and the European Integration-Reflexions, Analyses, Investigations) “Reîntregirea” Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2006, p. 21.

[8] Ştefan Iloaie, Misiunea Bisericii în contextul secularizării , (The Mission of Church in the Context of Secularization), published in “Renaşterea”, no. 11, November, 2006, p. 2.

[9] Johanne Wolfgang Goethe, Faust, PartI, translated in Romanian by Lucian Blaga, preface by Tudor Vianu, Editura de Stat pentru literatură şi artă (The State Publishing House for Literature and Art), Bucharest, 1955, p. 75.

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really is "anthropos-ανθρωπος", too. [10]. Losing this genuine spiritual dimension, it is natural that in the soul of man there should be occurred an abyss that can not be replaced but only with substitutes which gives confusion, misguidance and disorientation.

Quitting traditions and Christian values that have guided mankind for centuries or even millennia, which were the expression of the secret structure of the whole cosmos accessible to senses and mind which refers both to God and neighbor and to the created world as a whole has not but an alternative: nihilism and death.

In this sad reality and bleak outlook, we as Christians and preachers of the Gospel principles, are called to show our fellow men the way to God, the return from exile of sin and spiritual death, to communion with God and neighbor.

Mission of the Church in a society marked by globalization

This last part of the subject we intended to address is related to the mission of the Church in a society marked by globalization. Without the intention to address the many pressing issues warranting an interest, I will stop only on some of them.

Since always the Christian Church life has been characterized as a complex one, which had as foundation God's love and its interpersonal expression at human level. This experience of love as an expression of the divine economy present in the Church, actually characterized the life of the Church in the first centuries of Christianity, so that the entire effort of Christians was directed towards creating love among people following the perichoresis trinitarian model.[11]

The unbreakable basis of Christian love is Trinity and the Church placed it at its foundation. According to the Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, man was created in the image of the Trinity, this intratrinity love also having direct consequences on the experience of love at interpersonal level, being concentrated, in a truly sublime way, upon the Church community.

The human being is a relational and dialogic creature and fulfills the truth of his existence only in relationship and loving dialogue with God and his fellow men.[12]

In my sense, one of the urgent tasks of the Church in this society marked by globalization is to persuade the nowadays man to maintain a loving dialogue with God, because by maintaining this dialogue, the man manages to grow in his love, to become love, placing himself outside individualism, egocentricity and solipsism. This perspective was opened in the Church's life, by the presence of the Trinity, as a structure of supreme love "to love one another, as in a plan to confess." Thus, the Trinity perichoresis reflects in the Church's community, the integrated human person and the communion within the Church increasing inside it, in its love-giving and sacrificing love.

Love as the Trinity life incarnation and as experience of this life through the sacrifice and resurrection of Christ, remains the main principle of the constitution of the Church as communion of people with the Trinity and with the neighbor.

As a divine-human institution, clearly defined in time and space, the Church meets inside it heaven and earth, men and angels, being the heart of the universe where we

[10] Gerhard Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol I A – Γ, WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY, Michigan, Grands Rapids, 1999, p. 364-365 ; Anatole Bailly, Dictionnaire Grec-Francais, Edition revue par L. Sechan et P. Chantraine, Paris, Ed Hachette, 2000, p. 163-164.

[11] Marius- Mihai Ilca, Teologia iubirii ca oglindire a vieţii Bisericii în primele veacuri creştine, (The Theology of Love as a Reflection of the Life of Church in the First Christian Centuries), published in „ Teologia", "The Theology" Revue, no, 1, January – April, 2010, p. 187.

[12] Dumitru Stăniloae, Sfânta Treime, structura supremei iubiri, (Holy Trinity, the Structure of the Supreme Love), published in „Studii Teologice" "Theological Studies" Revue, no 5-6, 1970 , p. 347.

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are all called.[13]. Fed by the divine energies, it has ensured by our Saviour, the victory over all the vicissitudes of life: "... and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it". (cf. Matthew 16, 18). This certainty guaranteed by the words of Jesus Christ offers the Church the success in its mission among people, proving that it is the life of God among people. Church is no stranger to the world and even less to people.[14] Because it has a theandric constitution, Christ and humanity are so united in the Church, that within it, they cannot be seen without each other and one cannot talk about one without the other.

The second condition for the Church to carry out an effective mission for the time and context of globalization is to be itself, to keep its identity of any price and in any conditions. Keeping the identity of the mission which the Church carries with itself, is to identify everyone with the authentic experience that gives life and spiritual strength for inner fulfillment, but also for outward testimony of the truth, regarding the beauty and uniqueness of living in and with Christ. Church is the place where Christ brings Himself as Sacrifice, Christ The sacrificed One being the source of holiness of the Church and also the source of our holiness.

As a conclusion, we will state that the Church's missionary approach should include the concept according to which the Church is not only the community with high or very high number of members, but even the community with the smallest number , but where is indwelling the spiritual testimony about living our lives and about the authentic life of Christ.

Thus perceived, the mission of the Church is not represented only by a huge project just like an octopus which includes everything in itself, but also by the micro intervention of being successors of the Savior, a skill which any baptized Christian should possess.

The Church's mission in a globalized society is to strengthen spirituality in order to combat the desacralization of Christian life and of religious relativism, being some of the major factors of the secularization distinguishment and expansion in the context of the postmodern world globalization.

Looking carefully the missionary aspects of the Church, but also the challenges that are aroused in this respect, we state that globalization is a challenge to our identity in our quality of Orthodox Christians, because it leads to an anthropological reduction in which human beings are seen as individuals and not as persons in communion, not cooperative but competitive, consumerist and materialistic, not spiritual, with eschatological vocation. These dynamic realities must determine a new theological approach to a complex and changing context, so that the Church should continue "to make all things to all men, that might by all means save some." (cf. I Corinthians 9, 22), namely to have a responsible and pragmatic perspective.

In this respect, the Gospel of Christ must not only be protected, but also confessed. And confession is made by sharing faith through a message adapted to the post-modern context, in terms of language, methods of approach and the content of the message itself.

Church calls us all alike, to focus our efforts and to revitalize the society we live in, but it also calls our neighbors, because a healthy, right and respectable society is built only by promoting Christian values, the only ones made up of real guarantees for a vivid future of mankind.

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