

Globalization and Social Justice. The Church Between the Desideratum of Justice and Social Equity and the Primacy of the Transfiguration/Holiness of the Person

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Abstract

Our study aims to assess, from the perspective of the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Traditions of the Orthodox Church, the connection - so very specific to post-modernity era - between globalization and the aspirations, equally universal, for justice and social equity. In the melting pot of the new post-modern utopia, of economic, social, political as well as religious transformations, the unique doctrine of contemporary economic ultra-liberalism will aim, for final goal, at creating a new man and a new world order, involving the reference to and the assessment of social justice and social equity issues, where, for the sake of the verb "to have", people forget the usage of "to be". In the final part, we will point out some of the defining aspects of the position of the Orthodox Church regarding the presented issue.

Key words: globalization, social justice, social equity, recent man, Orthodox church

J.E.L. classification: F69, H89, I31, Z12

1. Introduction

Supported by the explosion of new technologies of the IT revolution, starting from an ultra-liberal doctrine, globalism - *the ideology of globalization of the free market and trans-culturalism, as unity in diversity*, is, in the dynamic dialogue of the contemporary world, a positive reality *which includes absolutely everything, from financial markets to Internet* (Held, 2004), marking a decisive path for the human condition and the present-day society. As a phenomenon quite specific to globalization and postmodernity, the idea of social justice does not, in any way, constitute the exclusive attribute of the "recent" man (H.-R. Patapievici, 2006). Its persistence renders itself with an obviously undeniable historical dimension, since its ideal was already present in the Antiquity in Plato's and Aristotle's discourses, while the prophet wrote that *'... the fruit of that righteousness will be peace; its effect will be quietness and confidence forever'*. (Isaiah 32:17) The Saviour warned His disciples that *'... unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven'*. (Matthew 5:20). Moreover, He said *'... Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled'* (Matthew 5: 6), *that theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven'* - justice being illustrated as a guardian of everyone's rights, whose social mission is to regulate the acts of all citizenship virtues according to *the common good*, as in the Scriptural texts: *Give everyone what you owe them* (Rom. 13: 7). This definition is in line with the formulation expressed by the lawyer Ulpian and included in the Roman Law, defining it as *Constans et perpetuam voluntas ius suum cuique tribuendi*. However, between globalization and the actual social justice, as an extremely complex structure process, with multiple determinations and implications, this definition reconfigures the old one into a new, utopian vision, by a conceptual aspiration which has a predominantly social-humanitarian signification, comprising an interconnectivity space, whose origin, *in a reductionist way, only lays in the importance of economic factors, on the expense of the spiritual ones, the first incur a profound mutation in the ontology by nihilistically reducing the beings to objects or goods and the human being to the process of thriving* (Ioan I. Ică jr. , Germano Marani, 2002, p. 487). In fact, the

existence of that common economic space determines the extent to which one can speak of the existence of proper interaction between globalization and social justice. Or, in other words, the fact that both globalization and social justice lie, as we shall see, in a strong connection with the economic factor, which establishes a certain interdependence of them, which we will try to explore in the following pages, leaving to the theological perspective, however, the possibility of drawing the final conclusions.

2. Theoretical background. Globalization and social justice: economic dimensions

The predominant economic acceptance of the globalization process is undeniable, at least as long as it involves the removal of state-owned barriers for production, goods trade and capital movement. In the logic of globalization - *the greatest economic change since the Industrial Revolution* -, the world has become a huge enterprise and, in the same time, a unique market. The international division of labor, albeit more and more accentuated, only accelerates mutual economic dependencies, *the chains of creating a new value* - investment, design, production, sales - subordinating to an obvious multi-national, transnational, managerial logic. Under the pressure of an increasingly aggressive economy, where the rejection of accession to and integration in that reality brings along the risks of isolation and decapitalization and, consequently, the spiritual poverty. The world has become a huge "*global village*" (Marshall McLuhan), tending to suppress the particulars of any culture, civilization and, of course, faith and religious practice, determining "space and time compression" (John Tomillson, 2002, p.11), by the ability of bringing all to the one and same denominator, to homogenize and synchronize multiple identity factors, once untouchable. Dissolving / limiting restrictions on the movement of capital and commodities and favoring industries generating high added value, the trend towards globalization has also been imposed by the fact that, by internationalizing and stimulating production and trade, it is also capable to bring about increased employment and pay. In other words, it will lead to rises in living standards, so that the adherence to the global economic flows will directly influence the advance of any community. In its core, the ultimate spring of globalization is *to maximize at any cost the efficiency and productivity of human labor*, whether physical or intellectual, *up to the point where the modern world has made the material and effective progress into a myth* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2013, p.185), known as *The Myth of Continuous Progress*. In its turn, social justice has a decisive economic dimension, assuming the realization of socially acceptable standards of fairness and rectitude *in the sphere of economic goods and social positions*. Even if not exclusive, as it also involves non-material components, such as rights and freedom, opportunities or social respect, *this dimension is, we believe, the most important, as the inequalities that it generates are the most serious and can irreparably affect life or people's health* (Eugen Huzum, p. 62) Therefore, if the impact of globalization is primarily concerned with the production and sale of goods, to which the movements of capital and labor appear to be somewhat subsequent, *social justice is mainly the way in which society understands to distribute the benefits, costs and risks of the social co-existence* (Eugen Huzum, p. 61). Under these circumstances, the process of globalization will have an impact on the desideratum of social justice in a complex and diversified manner, generating both favorable and reprobable consequences. We present them briefly, referring to an estimate made by Vasile Simileanu (2011):

1. *By positive effects / strong points*: sustainable development, increased investment, limited unemployment, increased income, easy access to goods and services; creating the due requirements for improved access to specialized education and medical care; the free movement of ideas and cultural values; the unitary approach to issues such as poverty, the ecological crisis, and cross-border migration;

2. *By the negative effects / vulnerabilities*: perpetuating and exacerbating the gaps between rich and poor countries / regions, between North and South, respectively West and East; a discriminatory character of investment and commercial policies ; the trend of wage moderation in relation to nominal productivity; the risks of suppressing the particularities of culture, civilization and religion.

Essentially, a large-scale economic development, eased up and stimulated by the globalization of production, has ensured a certain improvement in living standards in states and areas with

extremely serious social problems. Thus, according to World Bank estimates, if in 1981, not less than 43% of the world's population lived in extreme poverty, in 2015 the figure fell below 10%, respectively up to about 700 million people, (comparing to 1.75 million in 1990, for example). The number of people forced to live with less than \$1 a day steadily declined after 1990, the East Asia and the Pacific region experiencing the most accentuated dynamics. This development was substantiated by the steady increase in life expectancy, a pertinent indicator of the living standards, which is 10 to 15 years higher than in 1950, in virtually all the underdeveloped regions of the world, with the exception of Sub-Saharan Africa. Here, the development recorded up to the 1990s was undermined by the AIDS epidemic and the accelerated and often irreversible degradation of fertile farming soil. We can conclude that even though China absorbed about 75% of the global poverty reduction rate between 1990 and 2015, the progress is, in essence, relevant despite the persistence of the extreme situations in Sub-Saharan Africa, where around 36% of those experiencing extreme poverty do live. *Thus, we can see that the general economic development has generated a decrease in poverty, the pace of the expansion of industry and trade being directly proportional to the positive evolution of the living standards.* From the point of view of the desideratum of social justice, *this positive effect of the globalization process is undermined by the continuous deepening of the development gaps between the rich and the poor countries, on the one hand, and between the wealthy and the poor citizen, on the other.* A continuous economic growth does not generate a reduction in income inequalities, wealth, chances, gender, states and/or citizens, but rather emphasizes them, so that, *under its distributive dimension, social justice is harmed.* In fact - as Vasile Simileanu notes - *the global world remains, despite certain rhetoric, far from the ideals of unity and solidarity, clinging to the modern metropolis morphology, one that brings together the glamour of the residential areas with the gray of the periphery.*

3. Research methodology

The research method used in our study is part of the seven types of *research methods in the field of social sciences.* We used the method of *secondary analysis*, taking over the scientific material from several observers, the materials/documents that we have taken for our study, we reinterpreted them in a theological-philosophical-juridical manner.

4. The paradox of globalization: social atomization

Although from a certain point of view, globalization, through globalism, is a perfect means of attitude and action uniformity, *in fact, it tends to accentuate individualism against the person and to dilute the internal cohesion of different social segments, and communities in general.* Implicitly, this is an egocentric world in which each individual would only pay attention to oneself and to one's own needs, desires or aspirations. A world dominated by the criteria of economic efficiency, productivity and the logic of utilitarianism and consumerism, will gradually see weakening one's passion with which one once considered the ideals of social justice. Becoming global and ever more dependent on this, *the world is still atomizing itself, for although forced to work together in the sense of working and performing together, human individuals prefer solitude, their expectations becoming increasingly narrower and only answering their individual aspirations.* In fact, since the 1960s, as the American sociologist Thomas Luckmann noted that an increasing social division of labor and the ever narrower professional disciplines determines the dilution / weakening of the identity factors of human groups (Cătălin Raiu, 2012, pp.15-16), process which, exponentially accelerating, has incurred an extreme fragmentation of society and a preeminence of individualism. Under such circumstances, the adherence to the idea of social justice and, implicitly, the recognition of the values it stands for, strikes the propensity of the *recent man* for the absolutization of his own self and the present experience (Bruno Cescon, 2003, pp. 74-75).

Globalization and its corollaries - post-industrial economy, managerial revolution and postmodern "spirituality" have reduced man to the *temporal flow of production and consumption* (Ioan I Ică jr, 2005, p.692), According to the American sociologist Richard Senett, the globalization means a global world where *a lot of people live with the impression that "the society demands" ... especially the technical integration into an efficient production system* (Nicolae

Achimescu, 2003, p.183) leaving aside the other aspects of cohabitation, including social justice. *By establishing the criteria of economic and financial performance as a reference, such as discipline, efficiency and labor productivity, individual profit, skills and competence, as well as those of consumerism, i.e. access to various goods and services, acquiring power, prosperity and individual wealth, the globalization implies the risk of a substantial alienation of the human condition.* Indeed, this egocentric logic transforms people into "simple, medical, psychological and sociological objects" (Paul Tillich), as long as everyday life seems more and more to become, simultaneously with the "refusal of existential depth", emanates "...a way of being what substitutes the true human identity [...] with a deceiving existence based on the commodity and mediocrity of a consuming life." (Adrian Lemeni, p. 444).

Thus, the "recent" man becomes obviously a simple "wheel" in the huge mechanism created by the process of globalization, which "... foresees the economically efficient triumph at the cost of destroying social cohesion", implicitly emphasizing "social inequality and chaos" (Ioan I. Ică jr., 2002, p. 689). By concentrating and referring exclusively to "one' own feelings and one's present existence", following only "... the immediate satisfaction and achievements" (Nicolae Achimescu, 2003, p. 178), the human of a globalized world seems to be devoid of what H.-R. Patapievici calls "... the discernment to understand that any progress in the visible is due to amputations in the invisible" (H.-R Patapievici, 2001, p. 12).

Thus "pressed" by the economic and financial unilateralism of the consumer society, it avoids with obstinacy the "disturbing questions" concerning its own existence and condition, preferring a flattened / horizontalised, comfortable, egocentric existence and, as such, lacking "the spiritual dimension" of verticality. (Dumitru Popescu, 2001, p.86). The *recent* man will, therefore, have the tendency of solitude, preferring to see himself alone in a world that, paradoxically, becomes more interdependent. Becoming global, the world of people will at the same time fragment to the utmost, atomizing itself, each individual choosing to claim their autonomy from their peers and their community.

The very idea of community is depreciating, becoming almost quasi-utopian, because a global society, largely abandoning the bond of shared belonging to institutionalized and sacramental Christianity, seems unable to find its cohesive factors. Practically, the *recent* man cannot recognize others as fellow men; it seems that globalization has ever more diminished man's godly face, suppressing, even more, the ability to see oneself in the others. Even though God "... carved the human image looking at the Wisdom and heavenly and eternal humanity of Christ" (Pavel Evdokimov 1996, p.67), globalization has forced the *recent* man to be lonely, repressed in his own ego, but also, -observes with precision Father Ioan I. Ică jr. -, "... without defense against technical-economic manipulation" and the *perverse triad* represented by production, profit and consumption/show/ communication (Ioan I. Ică jr. , 2002, p.693). Living in a world where economic factors acquire *authentic existential bases* (Nicolae Achimescu, 2003, p. 181) as if the whole universe had determined and could be reduced to himself, the *recent* man makes his destiny by connecting it, unilaterally, to some aspirations related to his socio-professional development, prosperity and individual well-being. An existence unilaterally oriented towards material values (Dumitru Popescu, 2005, p. 87) can only lead to a consubstantial expectation horizon, i.e. without any spiritual fabric. And indeed, the *recent* man, who has become a citizen of the global world, seems to have suffered an ontological mutation that gave birth to a new human typology, less willing (and able) to accept and disseminate love, kindness, solidarity, community spirit.

Practically, globalization *relies* on an ontologically changed man by *the nihilistic reduction of beings to objects and commodities and of being itself to well-being or to mere exchange value* (Ioan I. Ică, 2002, p.693), and which finds in the egocentrism the main landmark of his existence. Deliberately loosening the identity of the Creator's image, can the *recent* man think in the axiological terms of social justice? Is there still room for the ideas of righteousness and fairness on the agenda, dominated by the utilitarian-consuming imperatives of the man of the globalized world? Yes, no doubt, nor could it be otherwise, *for the divine image of man is indefeasible*, despite *all the places and times when the disinterested service for his fellow man* seems to be abandoned (Dumitru Stăniloae, 1993, p. 40). *That this is the case, is proved by the consistent civic and institutional actions meant in favor of social justice and, more importantly, explicitly referring to situations in which the lack of social justice is flagrant, including, for example, the European*

Union initiatives for the elimination of malnutrition in a number of Asian and African states or the "Compat 2025" Project aimed at completely eliminating hunger.

5. The Church and the need for equity and human solidarity/Research methodology

In order to assess the position of the Church in relation to the need for social justice, from the point of view of globalization, we will have to point out that, as Eugen Huzum notes, *globalization is not equivalent to philanthropy*, and the ecclesial institution does not programmatically ... *bring [all people] to a certain minimum standard of living, health and socio-economic comfort* (Adrian Niculce, 2004, p. 63). Given the prevalence of the secular organization of the modern state and the increasingly obvious secularization, the Church is left outside any institutional or legislative institutional level, *being able to intervene only informally for social justice, the operationalization of its values under the normative plan and their implementation at a community level*. In spite of its limits of action, the Church will proceed, however, by fully assuming the desideratum of social justice, for the achievement of which it will not cease calling all people, whether they are faithful or not. From this perspective, the ecclesiastical institution will not hesitate to disseminate *a core of fundamental (moral-ethical) values*, values of love, solidarity, sociability, gratitude and friendship, values that have proven their relevance in the circumstances of postmodernity (R. Bellah, Ph. Hammond) (Pierpaolo Donati, 2002, pp.324-325). In fact, when it takes on the desideratum of equity, the Church is precisely concerned with the fact that ... *the human person's life [must] be dignified, as Christ the Savior and restorer of full life has revealed man to the commentary man as Image and Similarity of God in History* (Germano Marani, 2002, p.56), which, after all, it is nothing more than a (re)actualization of the thinking of the Fathers of the Church of the IV – V centuries who fought to repair ... *the injustices suffered by society* (Luigi Padovese, 2002, p. 281). Without being in any time autonomous and without a purpose in itself, the efforts in favor of social justice are an integral part of the missionary activity of the Church (Dan Ciachir, 2003, p. 33). Focusing on the human person - for "*Suppose a brother or a sister were without clothes and daily food. If one of you said to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is this?*" - James 2, 15-16 - the actions of the Church - and we repeat - informal actions, although entirely grounded in a series of explicit biblical imperatives, *will be, implicitly, connected to the particular purposes of a spiritual and eschatological order, as ... those who have a special interest in human beings [...] find themselves tied to the great purpose of the exaltation of the human being, who was made by Christ, the Risen and Ascended* (Atanasie Yannoulas, 2013, p.154). In fact, *the deep vocation of the Church consists in mediating the tensions created, on the one hand, between the individualism generated by the prominent position of the economy, in this case the production and consumption of material goods, in the global world and on the other hand, the need to preserve and strengthen equity in relations social. The Church will, therefore, exercise a mediating function*, to which we can formulate the following observations:

a). In itself, the concerns of contemporary society for the quality and efficiency of labor, productivity and performance do not pose any theological problems, be it just because "... *Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the LORD blessed him.*" (Genesis 26, 12). As a result ... *it is proper for everyone to be aware of his work and [...] to do it without laziness, with diligence and care* (Saint Basil the Great, p. 1024) because The Holy Scripture qualifies labor as the most precious treasure of man, i.e. *the riches of the hunt* (Proverbs, 12, 27), pointing out precisely that this is a human general need that cannot be detached from Adam the fallen's condition (Genesis 2, 15). However, when the preoccupations for productivity and profit become obsessive, monopolizing people's work and thinking to the point where it enslaves and alienates them, the Church will raise its voice, warning of the dramatic consequences of such a state of affairs. Understanding that, ultimately, ... *globalization tends to eliminate God from His own creation* (Dumitru Popescu, p. 13), the Church will assume the safeguarding of the "recent" man, of the man who has lost *consciousness of the ontological dependence on the divine* (Gheorghe Petraru, p. 53), living only ... *for production and consumption [and] emptied of [...] any transcendence* (Valer Bel, p. 33), a accusing man... suffering of solitude and lack of genuine meaning (Valer Bel, p. 36). And in this huge work of salvation of the human being, the restoration of the spirit of *koinonia* - as a way of thinking and acting against individualism (Ion Bria, 2013, p.

189) - will necessarily be imposed, representing a decisive step from the perspective of the Church's action in the direction of supporting and promoting values linked to social justice.

b). The biblical and patristic view in respect with justice point to what we may call the relationship of *proportionality*, socially determined, between the work one does and the associated rewards/benefits one must reap, the theological thinking, anticipating this point of view - dominant in our time - regarding the priority perception of social justice as equity in the distribution of benefits (and also risks) resulting from the social work. The Holy Scripture is explicit in this respect: "*You will eat the fruit of your labor; blessings and prosperity will be yours.*" (Psalm 128: 2); "*That each of them may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God.*" (Ecclesiastes 3:13) or "*the worker deserves his wages*" (Luke 10: 7). Likewise, the Holy Tradition: *The good worker receives the fruit of his labor with joy; the lazy and idle one cannot look in the eyes of the one who gave him work* (Clement of Alexandria) or *Serve all needs, without laziness; engage in your work with all your humility, in order to [...] be sufficient, you and those without means [the poor]* (the Apostolic Constitutions). Therefore, the Church will be fully justified in advocating a fair distribution of the final results of social work to the society as a whole, advocating to avoid situations of abuse, exploitation or discrimination, alongside the support, including by direct actions, of disadvantaged categories of the population, because ... *the care for the grieved and burdened by the needs, the victims of a profoundly unfair social order, was [...] the mark par excellence of the authentic Messiah* (Adrian Niculcea, 2005, p.19).

c). The theological substrate of the Church's actions in favor of a social justice resides, as expected, in the commandment to love one's neighbor ("*... Love your neighbor as yourself*", Matthew 22:39), for only by loving one's neighbor can man fully understand the impact and causes of the lack of equity in social relations ("*The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith*" - I Timothy 1: 5). In fact, the love of one's neighbor is the basis of the whole social action of the Church, for *since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*" (I John 4:11), an action that comes to give meaningful sense in this very life to the preaching work of the Savior Jesus Christ ("*Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*" - John 13, 14-15).

Becoming a worker according to Christ's love model, love - *agape* breaks down any individualism, any lack of empathy with others; learning the love for one's neighbor, man learns to resonate in solidarity with the others, rediscovering his vocation as a community being, according to St. Paul's pleading - "*... as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*" - Galatians 6:10) . By loving and realizing the profound significance of communion, "the recent man" will immediately discover that "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35), which is not only the starting point for the philanthropic mission of each Christian, but also for adhering to the broader concept of social justice. Looking at the practice of justice as the defining hypostasis of his own spiritual status - precisely because righteousness is fructification of love, and "*... anyone who does not love his fellow man remains in death*" (I John 3:14) - the man will completely part from the risk of alienation caused by the ever more egocentric perception of redistribution of labor benefits.

6. Conclusions

Fully understanding the need to keep the balance between work and reward and praising those who, through hard work, generate benefits for the whole community, that is to say, accepting the socially useful role of high productivity and efficiency - "*A sluggard's appetite is never filled; but the desires of the diligent are fully satisfied.*"- Proverbs 13, 4 - the Church will be able to modulate its discourse and public action so that righteousness in work is repaid by the equity in reward. The action of the Church - an echo of the urge to solidarity addressed by the Savior Himself, will be based on the virtue of love, for by learning love, the Church assimilates *de facto* the desideratum of social justice, as ... *the loving God [...] at the final judgment will ask us how much we have tried to be like Him by loving our neighbor and answering to his needs* (Adrian Niculcea, 2005, p. 19). Basically, equity gives the measure of human love and solidarity fueled by love; practicing justice and opposing abuse and exploitation, the collectivity merely regains its authentic Christian values,

in order to become once again able to radiate the Savior's archetypal love: " *and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God* "- Ephesians 5: 2.

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