

The Influence of the Economic Globalisation on the Contemporary Religiosity. Brief Theological Considerations from a Christian Anthropological Perspective

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Abstract

Our study aims to depict and evaluate the consequences generated by the contemporary dominant position of the economic-financial factors in relation with the religious awareness of the postmodern man and his capacity and availability to assume and fulfil a religious vocation. From this perspective, we insist on the aggravating circumstances born from the complexity of the globality and globalisation (Marga,2014,p.19), in an linear designed economy, generating consequences that feed the disparaging course of the people, the credibility and the social prestige of the faith and religious practice. These circumstances, although leading to the fragmentation and compromising of the manner in which the man of the global society relates to God (Marga, 2014, p.166), also determines the post-modern global man to try to adhere to a theological horizon of eschatological expectation, between not yet and already. According to all these implications, we also refer to the delimitation of the profiles of the authentic religiosity, with which the contemporary man is confronted, adopting the analytical perspective generously offered by the Orthodox theology.

Key words: globalization, globalism, globality, contemporary religiosity, global economy

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

1. Introduction

In general, the concept of globalisation designates *the more and more ample and dense network of interconnections and interdependences characterising the modern social life*. It requires the consolidation and diversification of the global interconnection, so that everything related to the economic-financial base and the spiritual superstructure of the contemporaneity, from the post-industrial technologies to culture and from the flows of capital to religious beliefs, will tend to coagulate in *postmodern interconnections*, networks or flows with universal opening, which, by bringing everything together and making everything available, will generate the *compression of space and time*, transforming the world in a *global village* (Tomlinson, 2002, pp.10-12). Generating evolutions, considered positive by many commentators – at least the economic-financial and technical-scientific ones – globalisation apparently has the advantage of easily assimilating and integrating traditional and habitual elements, because it can disseminate them worldwide, without any *a priori* conditions or *without any (other) implicit philosophy except the philosophy of the other, accepted in its alterity* (Ică jr., 2002, p.510). Therefore, the globalisation is intended to be built and implemented as *a complex phenomenological and social condition – a global human condition*, with a corresponding *framework used by the social agents to build their existence, identities and actions* (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 22), in a world guided by its own utilitarian values and rules.

2. Theoretical background - The economical sense of the globalisation and its influence on the new structure of the world

During the fact that, in the 60's, globalisation was consecrated as term in the space of the economical scientific debates is not ransom, because, in fact, the appearance and the expansion of the road toward the global unicity is phenomenologically and temporally juxtaposed with the multiple mutations in the world economic system. In this context, the Catholic economist Stefano Zamagni explicitly connected the beginning of the globalization to an important economic event, the denunciation (1971) by the American president Richard Nixon of the gold-dollar standard, the value standard stated in 1944 by the Bretton Woods Agreement. Therefore, without being connected as value to the gold, *the dollar could really become the reference currency of the entire world, by overcoming the American currency protectionism, which could lead to nothing else than the exponential development of the capital movement, the restriction related to it being eliminated by the American presidency three years later* (Ică, 2002, p.455). In essence, the economic-financial subtext of the globalisation appears as determinant and decisive for its evolutions and paths. It will build its dynamic and magnitude on factors as *the finances, the trade, the production and technology, whose expansion will be able to generate very diverse effects, even the modification of mentalities, even the religious one, and life styles* (Popescu, 2005, p.11). Practically, all the mutations in the production and distribution of goods and services during the last 50 years will culminate with the mutations appeared in the space of the post-industrial economies, based on the preeminent role of the industrial branches in direct connections with the contemporary scientific and technical revolution, directly impacting, stimulating and amplifying the globalisation process. Therefore, the economic progress and development tend to favour the globalisation and, reciprocally, allows to the economic aspects to gain and upward dynamic. The economic progress, *the welfare and prosperity* ensured at least theoretically for large masses, and the globalisation course seem to be placed in an interdependent connection. *They forecast the triumph of the economic efficiency, disregarding the negative consequences possible to be politically, socially and cultural-spiritually provoked by this solidarity* (Ică jr., 2005, p.689). We also observe the fact that the globalising post-industrial economy is mostly expressed in multi-national frames, adopting the rebirth of the Marxism as management ideology (Beck, 1997, p.203), substituting the old reforms of the Industrial Revolution. It compulsory brings *the deepening of the international division of the work and the extreme specialisation of the actors from the scene of the production of goods* (Raiu, 2012, pp.15-16). By cultivating the preoccupations for fiscal optimisation and cost reduction, the production of goods is *de facto* internationalised. The free circulation of capitals and technologies is doubled by the unlimited connection made available by the computer technology, leading in the end to the appearance of circuits, mechanisms and integrated and global economic-financial institutions, including the simultaneous process of opening and unification of the national markets (Ică jr., 2002, pp. 444-451). Moreover, by synthesizing the constitutive elements of the globalisation, the Catholic theologian Stefano Zamagni concluded that, among the first five determinant factors of the globalisation, four of them are economic, financial or technical, as presented below (Ică jr. 2002, pp.455-465):

1. *the globalisation of the financial markets* – the physical and/or virtual coagulation, followed by the organisation and regularisation of a supranational space for the transaction of the financial instruments – stocks, bonds, currency and goods; the integration of the financial markets attracted a similar evolution – a tendency of globalisation - for the goods and services market and also for the labour market;

2. *the significant progress of the information technology*, a process which, presenting the possibility to erase the physical, ethnical, identity, cultural and religious distance between people, will give to the human existence and activities a dimension otherwise not possible to be explored; in these circumstances, *the modern human existence gained the feature of a totality, supported by a tentacular network of visible and invisible connection, leading to the development of a consciousness of the globality* (Andersen, 1990, p.27);

3. *the generalisation and the exacerbation of the competition* represent a foreseeable finality of the globalisation of the financial markets, also of the goods and services market; the post-industrial economy is pushed, more and more acutely, to relocate its production capacities and to force the

entrance on third markets in order to overcome the pressure of the competition, becoming quasi-general and unable to be overcome using the *traditional* measures, the competition will favour the road to globalisation, leading, among other things, to the situation in which *the traditional national states have become unnatural economic units*. The adhesion to the *transboundary civilisation* required by the globalisation became explicitly imperative (Tomlinson, 2002, pp. 27-28);

4. *the generalisation of the contractual culture* – the economic and financial cooperation and partnership relations are expelled and considered as limitative and constraining in a space created by regulations and procedures specific to each state; in other words, the transnational regulation of the economic exchanges will generate globalisation by the simple fact that the exchanges will no longer be restricted/ controlled/ blocked by the interests of the state actors.

On a similar position, the British sociologist Anthony Giddens explains the fourth dimensions of globalisation, the fundamental elements of the phenomenon, considering that the economic elements have a decisive role (Tomlinson, 2002, p. 28):

1. *the world capitalist economy*, respectively the generalisation of the capitalist production and of its values – productivity, efficiency, consumption, etc.; the uniformity of this option is in itself a real and relevant factor for the consolidation of the globalisation;

2. *the international division of the work*, respectively the extreme internationalisation of the production activities of the material goods, in the circumstances created by the elimination of the barriers in the circulation of the scientific knowledge, technologies, industrial equipment and capital flows; practically, the proliferation of the centres for scientific creation, technological innovation and industrial production gives power to the post-industrial economy to act as a firm agent of globalisation.

We will conclude that the contemporary economy has a decisive role in the implacable path of the contemporary globalisation. In essence, the world of the national states and of their rather unilateral interests, consecrated and legitimated by the traditional industrial age, was constraint to open to a gradual globality, as imposed by the international division of the work and the acute necessity for wider markets.

3. The globalisation and the alienation of the Christian ethos

The globalisation process is a mostly determined by economic factors, because *its manifestations appear especially in the area of the utilitarian values, offering the profile of the present civilisation* (Popescu, 2001, p. 11). The globalisation almost inevitably brings a deficit of spirituality, reducing the horizon of the human being to the tangible values of the immanent reality. By conferring a practically unlimited magnitude to the possibilities of knowledge, relation and available actions and by *forcing the limits of the concreteness approachable by the common individual*, the globalisation will extend to the maximum the borders of the accessible world, but with the price that, from a theological point of view, is unacceptable expensive: *the limitation of the magnitude of the ideal to the immanent earthly dimension* (Marian, 2018, p. 18). In other words, in relation with the non-material dimensions of the existence, the globalisation illustrates the fact that *any visible progress is made with the cost of an amputation from the invisible body, which transfigures the world* (Patapievici, 2001, p. 12), because, in the modern and late postmodern logics organically accompanying the globalisation, ***only a relation of inverse proportion can be developed between the material accumulation and the desiderate of preserving the spiritual values***. We cannot ignore the fact that the globalisation tends to *become uninterested of the spiritual values, until the point of abandoning them, aligning continuously larger segments from the civil society to some influence factors that quantitatively restructure the reality – using the utilitarian or hedonist principles – and push forward the utilitarian values* (Popescu, 2001, pp.11-12).

Dominated by the pre-eminence of the economic factors – the efficiency of the work, the production of goods and the individual welfare, the globalisation will limit the non-material dimensions of the existence through its reduced capacity of resonating with the spiritual values in general and especially with the religious values. Therefore, in the unilateral symphony of the referential related to the production and consumption of material goods, *the voice of the faith and religious practice will be inevitably placed to the periphery, almost always muted by the noise of*

the materialist-utilitarian axiology. In fact, the globalising path is closely intertwined with the secularisation, due to which *more and more social, economic and political institutions are modelled and expressed outside the Church or even against the Church* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 198).

In essence, if we look at the globalisation as a macrosocial process mostly expressed under the form of economic, technologic or managerial determinants, the secularisation, although causing at its turn social mutations, determines most of all a significant change of paradigm to the level of the religious consciousness. As underlined by Arnold Loen, this does not constitute *a process in the space of the social existence, but one developing inside the human consciousness, so that its manifestation areal will be the field of interpretation, of the reality in the horizon of the human reason* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 199).

From a pragmatic perspective, the secularisation describes *a state of religious indifference, making larger segments of the civil society to keep an absolute silence about God*; a society affected by secularisation gains an alienation of the Christian ethos, highlighting its own functionality and rational structure under the reign of the new secular religions (Gavriliuță, 2018), whose technical-economic-social will tend to *free* from the consciousness of the dependence of transcendence. To the limit, it *will stop manifesting interest for holiness and sacredness* (Achimescu, 2013, p.198), by the unilateral development of the science and less of the wisdom, of the technological progress at the expense of the spiritual energies, of the industrial development at the expense of the ecology, and of a unidirectional democracy toward the perennial horizontality in a landscape of continuously weakened morality (Kung, 2002, p. 20).

The finality of the secularisation process, from the point of view of the followers of the new secular religions, will be impossible to be represented by anything else than the quasi-complete elimination of faith and religious practice from the space of the social acceptable references and values, in the same time with the isolation of the man and of the world in the narrow space of their own spatial and time dimensions, leading in the end to a general crisis that causes national collapse, social deconstruction and political catastrophe (Marga, 2014, p. 24). This crisis should be understood and solved, as observed by Hans Kung, from a perspective of the ethos, starting from an ethics founded on philosophical and theological teachings, *positively responding to the challenge of the change of paradigm beginning after the World War II*. Still, although it does not explicitly aims the religious factors of the social infrastructure, the globalisation will impact them, because, by lacking the openness to the transcendent, it creates a mundane space dominated by the values of the utilitarianism and consumerism. Finding its founding reasons in efficiency, profit and consumption, the globalised world will have the tendency to *reduce everything to the present time, to here and now* (Ică jr.,2003,pp. 74-75), limiting the eschatological aspect to the expectance horizons of the individuals, to the *instant satisfactions and achievements* (Achimescu, 2013, p.178) Practically, the globalisation generates and feeds the dilution of the religious influence, by marginalising or just excluding it from the area of the preoccupations of the contemporary humans.

Tending to become global, the world will incline towards the omission of its dependence to the sacredness, easily ignoring the important role of the religion in the historical and cultural becoming of the world. In the mercantile logics of the modern and postmodern globalisation, *the natural world is considered an autonomous reality, closed in it, losing any connection to God, as it would be able to exist through itself; thus, the globalisation tends to eliminate God from His creation* (Popescu, 2001, p. 13). As consequence, globalisation appears as *a horizontal phenomenon, without a spiritual-vertical dimension, derailing the human consciousness in a manner that leads the contemporary man to ignore the disturbing questions related to his mortal condition* (Popescu, 2001, p. 86).

The new human condition will lose a part from its humanity, although it will be able to access the benefices of the post-industrial economy, reaching new levels of welfare. By choosing *the convenience and the mediocrity of a life of consumption* and by refusing *the existential profoundness* ensured by the indissoluble vocation of the religious being (Ică jr. 2003, p. 444), the contemporary man will deliberately abolish from his statute of *Anthropos, image of the Face of God in Good, Truth and Beauty*, refusing to look toward the Creator and preferring not to be a worker for the divine image that is part of him.

Given these circumstances, we can observe that, from a religious perspective, ***globalisation and secularisation simultaneously act as solving and alienating factors***. In the end, their effects will cumulate and be conjugated. The two macro-phenomena will gather in a single synergic work that will inevitably fragment the historical established continuity of the mass religiosity, reducing it to a chain of *ecclesial islands*, which are rather marginal and isolated. Although he is a creator and, theoretically, a beneficiary of the new global reality, the contemporary man is *reduced to the temporal flow of the production and consumption* (Ică jr., 2003, p. 692), *in a practical way as long as the economy is more important than the spirituality [...], the body is more important than the soul, the time is more important than the eternity, the relativity is more important than the Absoluteness, and the man is more important than God* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 198).

Estranged from the self, his vocations and aspirations, the contemporary man risks becoming, as observed by the philosopher and sociologist Zygmunt Baumann, a victim of the mutations generated or favoured by globalisation. By gaining accessibility to the material goods and by adopting the desideratum of the individual welfare, the contemporary man will ignore his soul. Under the pressure of the consumerism coming from the economic progress and development, the human condition tends to depreciate more acute.

The contemporary man is estranged from the self in an existential way, similar to his world, already confronted with the spectrum of *the nihilist diminishing of the beings to a merchandise and of the man to the welfare or to a simple exchange value* (Ică jr. 2003, p. 693) and with the immediate consequences of this perspective, inducing the real risk of transforming the humans *in medical, psychological and sociological objects*, as underlined by the Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich. As long as the human being is reduced to the role of a simple impersonal part in a huge productive mechanism that requires unconditionally engagement and offering in exchange a certain welfare. In the global society, the human development is conditioned *de facto* by *the technical integration in an efficient production system* (Achimescu, 2013, p.183).

The contemporary human destiny appears rather sombre in spite of all the benefices brought by the consumption society. *Enslaved by the perverse triad* – as called by father professor Ioan I. Ică jr.–consisting of the gathering of the production, profit and consumption, dominated by the pressure of here and now – *the mantra of the man today, aiming to fulfil promises*, the contemporary postmodern man finds himself *alone and without protection against the technical and economic manipulations* (Ică jr. 2003, p. 693). In a situation of living only for *production and consumption*, incorrectly perceiving the meaning of the existence, the man will waste his earthy life and lose the celestial life, uprooting from the source and refusing the eschatological transfiguration (Nechita, 2005, p. 33).

In fact, the tragedy of the contemporary postmodern man resides in the significant perturbation of the ideals that always accompanied him and gave content and meaning to the humanity, due to the fact that he is in the run for material accumulations. The preponderance of the utilitarian axiology in the global contemporaneity have led to a situation in which *the Christian ideal is not found any more in the present anthropological projects, which are unilaterally reduced to the professional success and a life of consumption* (Nechita, 2005, p. 54). Implicitly, as sadly observed Jean Daniélou, the global contemporaneity secularised also the essential data of the Christian eschatology, starting with God, the Creator and the Saviour of the world, easily substituted by the referential of money and consumption, passing through the idolising of professional results and performance – *the performance and the productivity, the image and the success became the new idols of homo oeconomicus* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 413). The end result is taking to extreme the mortal existence, an existence of here and now – *the modern world transformed the material progress and the efficacy into myths, considering them safe paths for the access to a pretended earthly paradise* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 185).

All these artificial, relative and perishable values tend to articulate and function in the space of the social consciousness of the individuals and communities, similar to a false religion, becoming a *secular religious surrogate*. In fact, the contemporary man cast God away, pretending this is the path to discover the self and to highlight the power of the reason. The man intends to transform the universe not through grace, but through multilateral continuous development of the immanent world; *the idea of infinite progress becomes the standard of the illuminist man and the project of self-improvement is attractive and provocative. Convinced that he can be his own creator without*

the help of God (Popescu, 2001, pp.481-482) and completely fulfilling a humanity tempted to repudiate the real potential of overcoming the condition of fallen man, the contemporary postmodern man will culminate through the attempt to give ontological values to the economic base of the existence and to connect his becoming to the evolution *in the field of production and consumption* (Achimescu, 2013, p.181).

The new anthropology – coagulated in circumstances favouring the globalisation and the secularisation – will be antinomical positioned in relation with the values of the traditional Christian thinking, which founded the culture and civilisation of the old *Europa Christiana*. Therefore, inevitably, the contemporary man is in the centre of an authentic crisis, with profound structural implication and, as His Eminence Damaskinos Papandreou, the Orthodox metropolitan of Switzerland, said, this crisis questions the European spiritual (Christian) identity in itself (Achimescu, 2013, p. 181).

4. The effects of the globalisation and the Orthodox “solution”

Wearing the face of God, the One giving love and care – *The Lord watches over you, the Lord is your shade at your right hand* (Psalms 121:5), the man has *the divine given role to become a partner in the dialogue with Creator and a ring connecting God and the world* (Popescu, 2001, p. 486). By receiving this great dignity together with the gift of the salvation in Christ – *for us and our salvation, He, Who is in the Father, accepted to receive the human face and to accept all the suffering of the flesh* (St. John Chrysostom, p. 283) – and, therefore, being able to walk on the road to see, at the eschaton, the uncreated world, the contemporary post-modern man is in the situation of rediscovering God.

The postmodern man rediscovers God because, pressured by globalisation of the economy and confronted with the troubled values of the secularisation, he has forgotten that *Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God* (Matthew 4:4), coming to believe that *he can live without God or, at least, without the God preached by the Church* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 178). Still, in order to find again the Creator and the Saviour, the God ignored by a contemporaneity that does not hesitate *to exclude Him[...] from the centre of the existence, proposing a radical anthropocentrism instead of the theological vision on the world and rejecting the idea of world purpose, its divine sense and fulfilment in God*, the contemporary humanity has to accept and understand, as Nikolai Berdiaev wrote, that *the man without God is no longer a man, because the man is not only a body interested in economy, but also a soul nurtured by the Word of God* (Popescu, 2001, p. 766).

In fact, the contemporary man will have to overcome the alienating effects of the exacerbation of his natural propensity for the material accumulation – an artificial one, as any other product of the fall, an urge for which the man is willing to idolize the consumerist-utilitarian aspirations (Achimescu, 2013, p. 486). The exacerbation will represent the key-term of this desiderate because the simple connection of the man to the pragmatic exigencies imposed by the development of the society and those related to the welfare generate alienation - *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken* (Genesis 3:19).

The exacerbation of the desire to gain material goods will model the non-religious behaviour of the man in the globalised world, making him to openly claim his autonomy in relation with God, because the simple relation to His will would mean *an attempt against his own freedom* (Popescu, 2001, pp. 481-483). This *freedom* means to order the life, interests and aims without God and even against God, but, to a closer look, it is just an illusion, because, without the verticality given by the transcendence, it cannot represent the authentic freedom – *It is for freedom that Christ has set us free* (Galatians 5:1), because *only where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom* (Corinthians 3:17). Therefore, the effort for the restoration of the man's humanity requires assuming again, individually and inside the community, the Word of God, *the Light coming from above, the godliness with no beginning and no end* (Eusebius of Caesarea, p. 192). This is the only way to *fight the individual tendency to impose oneself to the nature and to free the egocentric hunger of the man, the instinctual tendency to possess, to consume and to enjoy with the flesh* (Yannaras, 2009, p. 69).

Therefore, the Orthodoxy highlights the fact that, only by placing Christ in the centre of the individual existence and in the centre of any community, the human nature estranged by globalisation and secularisation can be restored. Therefore, only in Christ, the contemporary post-modern man can overcome the real *transcendental iconoclasm*, which, by spreading the thesis of the *death of God*, characterizes and marks the contemporary western world (Patapievi, 2001, p. 101), making it to not recognise anymore the defining spiritual structure given by the Creator. Only in Christ, the contemporary man, left *alone in the infinite prison of the universe*, confronted with the *lack of meaning* and searching for a *real and sincere communion to oppose to the egotism, individualism and consumerism*, will understand again that *the coming of God for the man was due to the fact that the man was lying dead in darkness, sin, and the unholy spirit of the wicked powers* (St. Macarius the Great, p. 242). Only in Christ, the man will find again the supernatural call to *protect him against the chaos* (Achimescu, 2013, p. 222), guiding him to the eschatological transformation, because *he became man for us to become divine* (St. Athanasius the Great, p.151).

In parallel, the Orthodoxy answers to the estrangement of the contemporary man, offering him the authenticity and the completeness of the Church, the house of God (*Corinthians 3:9*), the Temple of the Holy Ghost (*Corinthians 6:19*), the body of Christ (*Ephesians 1:22, 23*), the holy nation belonging only to God (*Peter 2:9*), because He gained them with His blood. In the divine-human space of the Church – the icon of the future Kingdom (Origen, p. 94), centred on the Eucharist and capable to *keep us in God* (St. Cyprian, p. 438) – the contemporary man, so preoccupied with his possibilities to understand and explain the world, will understand the supremacy of the eternal spirit in relation with the material world, as *it happened to the Body of the Resurrected Christ, a body of flesh and soul, changed in a spiritual body* (Kovalevski, 1996, p.111).

In the super rational reality of the Eucharist sinaxis, the man will be able to understand that *his vocation is to be an active factor of the harmonious union of the beings, to direct them to God and gather them in Him* (Nechita, 2005, pp. 229-230). Therefore, any excess in the direction of the materialist-utilitarian direction of the existence will attract the man into a trap, estranging him from his real calling. The voice of the Church will be, in this context, the voice of maintaining the *order* in everything, of equilibrium and wisdom, because *the role of the Christianity is not to despise the material world, as it happened in the past, or to idolize it, as it happens nowadays, but to transfigure it in Christ*, because, as St. Maximus the Confessor wrote, the man is, as priest, a real mediator in *achieving the aim of the entire creation* (Yannaras, 1996, p. 64).

5. Conclusions

The Church gives credit to globalisation for the safeguard of the standard of living for large masses of people, as well for facilitating the access to education, culture and health care for communities once condemned to pauperism and marginalisation. In the same time, the Church – always consequent to its Christocentric message – will have to attract the attention of the fact that, by absolutizing the material components of the existence, the globalisation tends to impose to the man an unnatural existential path, capable to estrange the man from the self and to compromise his calling to achieve the likeness to the Creator.

Therefore, aware that the contemporary postmodern man is, in spite of his apparent ease and confidence given by welfare, a man who needs its support, the Church – *always searching to bring God to the people* (Ică jr., 2005, p. 336-337) – will teach that the material welfare and the spiritual welfare can cohabitate, working together and completing each other. In fact, the rapid evolution of the civil society imposes to the Church to position in this manner, in order to avoid the endangering of universality of preaching and of the Orthodox mission. Therefore, equalling addressing the rich and the poor, the prosperous communities and the communities fighting for their daily existence, the successful people and the marginalised people, the Church will teach that the authentic form of welfare is the spiritual one - *To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory* (*Colossians 1:27*) – because, without ever degrading, will bring eternity to its possessor – *In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life* (*Timothy 6:19*).

In the same time, the Church will not hesitate to warn on the risks coming from taking to the extreme the material wealth (*Jacob 5:2, 3*), a wealth that in fact, impoverishes the man, taking away his most precious gift: Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

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