

# Postmodernity as Spiritual Supra-Structure of the Global World

## Short Considerations from an Orthodox Point of View

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**ABSTRACT:** In the large context of the modern and postmodern religiosity, the Lutheran theologian Paul Tillich observed that, in the large context of being/ becoming, *people are transformed in objects, in medical, psychological and sociological meanings* (Achimescu, 2013, 184), marking in his statement the huge process of alienation of the human being, characteristic for our contemporaneity. In fact, exposed to a multitude of vectors of influence and pressure, of multiple economic and cultural conditioning, the post-modern man is actually estranged from the self, from his profound vocation to dialogue and communion with the divinity, constitutive elements for the human being, by the face of God, which is, disregarding the ontological failure of the proto-parents, imprinted in the being of each individual. All this *drama* of the contemporary humanity takes place – no matter its concrete forms/ manifestation in time and space – between the earth-heaven, absolutized by the *recent* man (H-R. Patapievici) and considered an autonomous ontological unit, and the sky, from which the human being, called for deification, separates firstly as cult and liturgy and later intellectually; between the earth-heaven, which became the nucleus of a new geocentric Universe, and the sky, rather ignored when it is not the object of more or less occult or esoteric speculations, neo-gnosis or pseudo-metaphysics.

**KEYWORDS:** postmodernity, globalisation, alienation, pseudo/ spirituality, supra-spiritual structure.

## Globalization and post-modernity

The new *ontological* state of the humanity has as support/reason/principle/formative cause the generalised and irreversible course toward globalisation, toward the phenomenon with industrial-technological and economical-financial origins, which proves capable of influencing the entire contemporary society, to impregnate it a new course and to attach to it new values and passing landmarks, some very different from the traditional ones. As the feudal production manner proved to be complementary to the powerful institutionalised Church and as the social hierarchy of the medieval world was conform to the structure of the church hierarchy of divine law, the global world based on economic references - the international division of the world, the global markets of merchant and capital, the corporatism and others - has as correspondence, as spiritual *supra-structure*, the postmodernity, with its entire more or less spiritual values, with its soteriological *offers* and the *entrepreneurs* of the new religiosity (Rev. Professor Nicolae Achimescu), with its endless attempts to find again and restore the ecclesial frame in which the man can speak and communicate with his Creator.

In other words, globalisation – the *horizontal phenomenon, without spiritual, vertical and dimension* and which “*has no connections with the existential questions of the man, as the life beyond, transcendence and redemption* (Popescu 2001, 86) – is based on the pragmatic support for the set of religious and spiritual, individual and community values - new or just actualised/ renewed -, operated by what we call the postmodernity era. Thus, between the global world – as *empirical condition of the modern world* (Tomlinson 2002, 10) and postmodernity – as its non-economic *supra-structure*, a unique way relation is established, determining, influencing and growing the axiological field of the globalism – ideology of globalisation, and its pragmatic values characterised by economic efficiency, profit, consumerism, individual richness, specific to the postmodern spirituality. Still, which is the mechanism used by globalisation, whose lucrative concreteness is *affirmed preponderantly in the field of the utilitarian values* and who has economic and technological-industrial factors as determinant constituents (Popescu 2005, 11), that is capable to influence the human spirituality? How can a purely horizontal phenomenon, without any conceptual opening beyond the materialism and the materiality of the life sunk in immanence and which understands the world as being autonomous and closed in itself [...] *as if would exist only through itself* (Popescu 2005, 13), generate consequences so consistent in the field of religion and of the religious beliefs and practices? Why, as Mark Paster said, should the postmodern

spirituality be considered as *a consequence of the dissemination of technologies configuring the space and the time, and the relation between man and machine and between spirit and object?* (Runcan 2005, 61). We are trying to sketch a few possible answers:

- ✦ Absolutizing the values circumscribed to the economic field, especially the consume, the welfare and the enrichment, the global society has the tendency to *replace the theandric Christ with the anthropocentrism of the contemporary world* (Popescu 2005, 254; Rotaru, 2014, 532-541), to replace the traditional religious values — God, Church, faith, redemption — with the pseudo-religious values related to material goods and prosperity; thus, the global society will cultivate the profile of the man who *lives only for production and consumption*, emptied by the transcendent dimension of the existence until the point of losing the identity with the face of the Creator (Bel 2005, 33), and, implicitly, renouncing to the identity with the traditional spiritual values, replaced, after a natural impulse, with the “cultural” surrogates proposed by the consumerist society;
- ✦ Through its incontestable positive effects related to the development of science and arts and the unlimited expansion of these accumulations, globalisation tends to create and feed what Olivier Clement (1997, 510); called a *multicultural and not an transcultural open culture*, through which *all the arts and myths of the humanity are revised, with no implicit philosophy – a priori, synthesizing – N/A - except for the philosophy of the other accepted in his/her alterity* as a result, seen from a cultural and spiritual perspective, globalisation stimulates the relativism and the subjectivity, refusing the absolute truths, values and references, facilitating the syncretism and the improvisations and justifying “the rediscovery” of the occultism and of the ancient and medieval esoterism;
- ✦ Per se, the globalisation facilitates the exchange of values (any values), leading to the so-called *global village* (Marshall McLuhan), which cancels the distances and compresses the time (Tomlinson 2002, 12) and which stimulates the accelerated expansion of ideas, concepts and doctrines; in this manner, the values of the “recent” man (those related to the economy and those related to the relativism and subjectivity as well) are diffused to a global level, becoming common for continuously larger masses of people;
- ✦ In the field of mentalities, globalisation brings the prevalence of the references related to the “economic progress and material welfare”, simultaneously with the censoring of the spirituality, which “experienced an unprecedented regress; in this context, the individualism – as attitude of self-claustration in the hermetically closed sphere of the self, of the individual material and consumerist

interests – appears as an implicit result of the economic globalisation, extending, naturally, to the level of spirituality, culture and religion; in the conditions of this extended egocentrism, permanently fed by the social pressure in the favour of the accumulation of material goods and consumption, the man is estranged from his traditional community identity, generating a state of “indifference to the traditional aspects of the existence and receptivity to pseudo-cultures and pseudo-religions” (Achimescu, 2013, 489), an emptiness filled immediately by the apparent unity of the postmodern spirituality.

In fact, the post-modernity is “*juxtaposed*” on a world where “the individuals disputes the chances to progress and happiness in society” (Petraru 2005, 50) feeding from the surrogate of the myth of the continuous growth of welfare. The reason of being and the viability of the global society are conditioned by the capacity of the economy to ensure the quantifiable growth of the level of living for continuously larger groups of people caught in the swirl of the post-industrial society, inclusively as a result of the urban colonisation or migration. Thus, there is no wonder that, in the global world, the economic factors gain “divine, existential authentic bases”, in fact, pseudo-existential bases, because, more and more away from God, the society is estranged by *what is ontological born*, until the point where it gains anti-ontological, mechanical contours, with no consistency and meaning (Achimescu 2013, 181). Also, globalisation tends to suppress the natural opening of the humans to the horizons of the eschatology and eternity, absolutizing the linear time, thus “the object of the consumption modern society is the human self, existing here and now...” (Achimescu 2013, 180), so the human being is self-claustrating in a space-time considered to be intangible and definitive, its complete ontological autonomy being presumed a priori.

Dominated by the obsessive search for economic efficiency, the global world – ready, in order to reach its aims, to permit or even facilitate some individuals to reach increased levels of welfare – pays the price of compromising all forms of unity and homogeneity, which can be translated through what the Reverend Professor Ioan I. Ică Jr. (2005, 689) calls “the destruction of the social cohesion, the decay of the states and nations and the dissolution and fragmentation of the culture”. In fact, “technology means fragmentation”, as the Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Baumann wrote, but not only a fragmentation of the social field (with negative impact on the state-nation, of the communities, cultures and traditions), instead a dissolution of the psychological field, so the “moral self is the most important victim of the technology” (Achimescu 2013, 182). As consequence, the man of the post-industrial society, living in a world whose face is consistently deformed by the accentuated unilaterality of

the social values, is subject to the pressures derived from the perturbations produced by the procession to the existence in communion, by the idea of communion, whose confrontation with the more accentuated individualism estranges the man from the others and from the self.

### The pseudo-spiritual vocation of the postmodernity

It is well-known the consequent cohabitation between modernity and the attitudes connected to the religious indifference, agnosticism and atheism. Among them, truly defining for the specificity of the modernity is the atheism, the programmatic rejection of the faith in God being achieved in a manner that can be interpreted as being a sort of reverse fideism, as long as, by refusing the existence of God, the atheist only expresses his belief – as personal faith, without disposing and being able to invoke, in order to support his position, no complete and incontestable rational argumentation. As a result, it seems that the programmatic atheism and the faith bears the print of a “spiritual” exercise, somehow similar to (Victor Kernbach), an exercise assumed fully by modernity, when it deduced the atheism even from the fundamental philosophical reasons of the Christianity, because – as Horațiu Trif (2014, 12), shows – it is contoured as being “the only religion that contains fundamentally the atheist attitude”, (obviously in the context of some speculations to the limit of the Holy Gospel), due to the following aspects that need, mandatorily, observed from a cumulative perspective: (1) the God of the Christianity is a completely transcendent God, His being remaining eternally unknowable *in profundis* to each creature, and (2) at the time of His crucifixion, Christ Himself claims the ontological abyss that separates Him from God (“*My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me*” – Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). In other words, as a result of a deformed/unilateral exegesis, the Christianity itself could generate the premises of the atheism, its existential presuppositions, because a God who is seen as absolutely transcendent (in the sense of an ontology different from the ontology specific to the creatures), “Who cannot be put in correspondence, connection, relation with anything, overcoming any type of determination”, can be easily understood/interpreted as an absent God, meaning an inexistent one, a fact accused by the Saviour Himself (Trif 2014, 12).

The “founding” causes of the atheism assumed by modernity are larger and more diverse<sup>1</sup>, being connected mostly on the manner in which the philosophy (starting with the Cartesianism, the medieval Epicureanism, Spinozism and the mechanistic materialism) understood to relate to theology and to faith. In these circumstances,

without insisting any further, we will only mention that the modernity professes and propagates the elimination of the institutionalized dimension and of the clerical-institutionalized structure of the Church, as well as any existential searches related to divinity. Thus, it results an authentic “transcendental iconoclasm” – “a veritable essence of the modern world” (Patapieviçi 2001, 101), because the “model” oriented to verticality, represented by the ecclesial community, is incompatible to the modern vision of the existence, one that is flattened, exclusively horizontal, which repudiates the social aggregation of ecclesial type and the public practice of the religious faith.

On the contrary, the postmodernity, which renounced to many of the visions and approaches of the modernity, have adopted a more nuanced position in front of the religious beliefs and practices, generally in front of the religion, reconsidering the general metaphysical questionings (Petruaru 2005, 56-57) and the solutions offered by the religions based on the idea of the transcendent sacredness to the ontological and anthropological dilemmas of the “recent” man. Implicitly, modernity had to admit *de facto* that her model in value in the field of spirituality, one based on the suppression of the vertical dimension of the existence, “run out” (H-R. Patapieviçi), and lost the force that, decades ago, extended it globally, influencing masses of people whose religious antecedents were as relevant and authentic as possible. Thus, the “spiritual” dimension of the global world admits that the man, the one dominated by the values circumscribed to production, access and consumption of material goods, is in reality “I a permanent search for the answer to the existential problems he has”, trying to rediscover the religious component of the daily life, to assume it and make it concrete day-to-day (Achimescu 2013, 179). Practically, post-modernity (re)legitimizes the attempts of the man to come closer to divinity, to believe in the existence of the transcendent sacredness, refusing an existence limited to the artificial and oppressive horizon of remaining in immanence, thus, seen as philosophical attitude, it “represents the answer given to the desacralized world and against the triumphant science by the man whose religion was confiscated by history ...” (Patapieviçi 2001, 119).

The explanations of this evolution are not only pure anthropological, circumscribed to the intrinsic religiosity, defining for each human being, because, rediscovering his vocation of *homo religiosus*, the man does nothing else than rediscovering himself, after the modernity stopped him to take his eyes away from the horizontal of the fetish economy. Remembering that “the tragedy of the modern and postmodern man resides in the fact that the search for Christ and the longing for God is always present inside the man, causing anxiety and disorder” (Citirigă 2005, 239), we mention that, disregarding the anti-religious program in all the essential data, the modernity could not suppress totally “the religious need and imagination of the man” (Călinescu, 2005,

p.72); it was survived by enough anti-modern nuclei, which perpetuated the traditional formulas of the Christianity in the levelling desacralized swirl of the modern world. Thus, we will try to review some of the major reasons for the remarkable mutation – o positive phenomenon in its essence, beyond the ambiguities of his concreteness, partly contestable/reprehensible (Fiore 1994, 21), brought by postmodernity to the level of the religious beliefs and practices:

- ✦ The more frequent confrontation of the modern man with inner tensions and crises, which transformed him often into a victim of the social environment created by modernity and pushed him to “revolt [...], contestation and non-conformism” (Istodor 2005, 105), generated on a large scale competing attitudes of repudiation of the monolithic, uniform and levelling supra-structure of the global world dominated by economy; practically, the axiological field, exclusively horizontal of the modernity proved to be completely insufficient for a man and prohibitive for his vocation of continuous search of the communion with the divinity; thus, the man understood to “revolt” and regained the verticality of his existence, disavowing in the same time the environment that constrained him to a (just) material existence;
- ✦ The elimination of the absolute and incontestable landmark of the transcendent divinity induced an extended epistemological relativism, because, in modernity, “there is no objective criterion to establish if someone is right or wrong”, thus, in the field of axiology, each individual consciousness has the absolute freedom of choice (Patapievici 2001, 117);
- ✦ The limitation of the existence to the spatial-temporal coordinates of the immanent world, which equals “the loss of the future through the failure of the eschatology”, generates, in the absence of some references viable in the present a consistent tendency to (re)discover some of the value landmarks (theological and philosophical) of the past, the thinking of the postmodern man drawing “a curve of the historical space” (Jean Baudrillard) that decants and refines, among others, the old “teachings” and visions on divinity (Ică Jr. 2005, 694).

Postmodernity overcomes the obvious reserve with which the modern world used to treat the religious matters; disregarding the particular way in which the divinity is perceived (theist or pantheist, personal or impersonal, etc.), it is sure by now that the contemporary world leave place for the sacredness inside its social infrastructure, even appearing a “return of the religiousness and a re-enchanting of the world”, thus, the man will be able to affirm again his special vocation of “being an active factor of the

harmonious union of the creatures, of guiding them to God and gather them in God” (Citirigă 2005, 229 – 230). In these circumstances, the postmodernism is defined as “an overcoming of the modernism, as the French philosopher Luc Ferry says, showing somehow “the return to the tradition against modernism” (Istodor 2005, 117), still, and a “tradition” cleaned by the factors that were giving it ecclesial and revelation-dogmatic consistency. In fact, even having the notable merit of disconnecting from the perspective of the programmatic refuse of the sacredness (and everything related to the search or the communion with it), postmodernity did not end his project, omitting that “the meaning of our life is discovered only when we discover our roots, deep grounded in the trinitarian and cosmic reality, in Christ” (Popescu 2001, 21).

### The pseudo-coordinates of the postmodern religiosity

As accurately observed H-R. Patapievici, “the only way to overcome modernity is to place your being in the negation of its founding principle – Gott ist tot” (Patapievici 2001, 125); in other words, in order to come out from the areal of the modernity, it is imperatively necessary a real resurrection of the idea of faith in God (and of the cult practices), in order to bring the values of the religiosity into actuality and rehabilitate them, at least partially. The return of the religiousness in the time of the postmodernity – which, structurally, facilitates this process, as above presented – does not bring the restoration of the traditional confessional institutions or the return to the doctrine systems founded on dogmatic bases or the related cult-liturgical practices with sacramental vocation. On the contrary, making place for religiosity in a world that continues to be dominated by the obsessions specific to the economic efficiency and to the accumulation of material goods, postmodernity rather innovates, proving fully its capacity to improvise when, under its auspices, new entities appear, claiming their denominational feature – the so-called “new religious movements”, the punctual expression of the “new religiosity” coming from the modernity in decline. Thus, although the religiousness seems to rediscover itself in postmodernity, there is nothing at all related to the resurrection of the traditional institutionalised religions – which, as in modernity, continue to channel the religious options of individuals and communities, in a climate that rather isolates and marginalises them; instead, it is a completely new vision on the relation of the man with the divinity, characterised by the following aspects:

**a). Relativism.** “The new religious movements” are characterized by an accentuated relativism, which can be localized gnoseological (all particular “truths” being, in the

absence of the absolute Truth, equally valid) and soteriological (all the beliefs are saving equally, any monopole on salvation and any form of exclusivism being completely excluded). Indeed, the “postmodernity decrees the equality of all religions”, any discussion on the norm of the faith (theoretical-doctrinal and applied-cultic) being effectively inoperative (Petraru 2005, 55), thus, in the end, “no religious community can emit the pretention, unless in a purely subjective form, it has the absolute truth” (Achimescu 2013, 401). We try to synthesize the causes of this state:

- ✦ The gnoseological deficit has as reason the programmatic refuse of the supernatural revelation as is treasured in and by the Church, under the complementary forms of the Holy Gospels and Holy Traditions; practically, “the new religious movements” find the source of the belief in the reasoning of the man (Petraru 2005, 55), thus the religious discourses will suffer inevitably of big approximations or by the lack of the fundamental Christological, pneumatological or soteriological landmarks;
- ✦ Proceeding this manner, the postmodernity comes to redefine the authority in the field of faith, leaving aside the fact, in reality, this comes from God; practically, the transcendental base of the authority is undermined in the favour of some supposed “humanist alternatives” (Ciocan 2005, 259), which do nothing more than distorting the Judeo-Christian tradition, compromising inclusively the validity of the use of the natural revelation in the field of Theo-gnosis.

On these bases, postmodernity builds its own religious edifice, one in which there is “no place for a mystic and spirituality founded revealing-biblically and dogmatic-ecclesial on the Trinitarian, Christological and pneumatological community” (Petraru 2005, 57). Thus, “the new religious movements” will present heterogeneous doctrine profiles, will profess the most diverse, will teach all sort of soteriology, all these beings, in the flagrant absence of the doctrine homogeneity, equally legitimate and capable to ensure the fulfilling of the eschatological hopes of the individuals.

In fact, the accentuated relativism, operated by the “new religiosity”, is perfectly in accordance with the relativism that dominates the postmodern world, because “the postmodernism does not accept absolutely anything normative” (Petraru 2005, 59). On this principle, the postmodern man “rejects the divine absolutism, the revealed truth, the gospel commandments, the fix principles and the supernatural aim [of the faith]” (Ciocan 2005, 302), proving that the suppression of the absolute character of the thesis on the “death of God” left free space for some attempts of “rediscovering” a divinity to little intelligible and coherent, thus, an interrogation as “If all the beliefs are

relative, how can any of them promise the truth and the salvation?”, as the American theologian Langdon Brown Gilkey asks, is more than necessary.

**b). Syncretism.** Juxtaposing on the global world and ensuring the relative internal cohesion of a society fragmented “in a lot of group particularities” (Ică Jr. 2005, 691), postmodernity brings a real “levelling of the religious [...] identities” (Achimescu 2013, 17), coagulating a multi-religious and multi-cultural society, with an axiological field marked by the tendencies to the generalisation of the relativism. Practically, “the globalisation and its global culture are intertwined [...] with the deconstructive influence specific to the postmodernism, which questions the traditions and the values specific to the ethnical and national community” (Popescu 2003, 132); thus, constrained to interact (because globalisation brings together the social actors disregarding the distances) and exposed to the pressures of the influencing vectors affiliated to the relativism, the structures of the “new religiosity” prove to be easy permeable for the temptation of the syncretism, related to the synthesis, more or less arbitrary, that integrate contents/sequences of doctrine and cult belonging to confessional entities, otherwise little or at all.

In fact, the syncretism can be seen as a natural development of the gnoseological and soteriological relativism that dominates the postmodern religiosity, because, by integrating through synthesis a set of particular “truths”, the result cannot be anything but “true”, a demarche most facilitated by the insufficient/ inconsistent dogmatic-revealing founding of the postmodern beliefs and their concentration on “the sphere of affectivity, sentimentalism, and love, in the field of the moral life” (Petru 2005, 45). Moreover, as Jean Delumeau showed, “the various religions exult, each in its own language, the wisdom and compassion, the sincerity and the humility”, thus, under the name of these “common values”, it is created an appearance of compatibility and convergence between confessional entities, which, in reality, are profoundly antagonistic under a theological aspect.

In fact, the syncretism and, equally, the relativism are in direct connection with the postmodern process of “deconstruction of the metaphysical and transcendent centre of the world”, which led to the “inducement of a plurality of centres [...], conducting in the end to the lack of any centre” (Popescu I. 2005, 249). As result, each “new religious movement” will partially define itself as “centre” of the world, completely supported from the point of view of the contemporary confessional spectre, completely supported theologically (thus, soteriological), a fact that, corroborated to the obvious atomisation of the contemporary confessional spectre, will only generate relativism and, eventually, syncretism, because, as W.T. Anderson showed, in globalisation, “the faith can contemplate each other for becoming conscious of their existence”, a

“contemplation” that, at one point, becomes synonymous to the “exchange” of doctrine and cult references (Popescu D. 2003, 12).

c). **Subjectivism.** Reverend Professor Nicolae Achimescu (2013, 155) observed that “the individualisation and the privatisation of the religiousness [...] represent the obvious features of today’s Occident”, which equals “the generalisation of the subjectivism in the religious field” (Fiore 1994, 21). In fact, the conditions of the individualism with economic-financial origins that dominates the global world and its projection s self-devouring consumerism, and the religious subjectivism do nothing more than to transfer in the sphere of the religious consciousness and practice the tendency of the postmodern man to abdicate from his community vocation (because the consumerist ideal is quantifiable and relevant only to a strict individual level) and to relate to himself. Thus, the community dimension of the soteriology, the salvation in and through Church, become obsolete inoperable teachings, Christ becoming “private Saviour”, mine and for my use, unless the historic Christ is replaced by a Jesus – the product of an imaginary subjectivism that keeps (if it keeps) a minimum of evangelical features. In the same time, based on the same subjectivism, the Holy Ghost seems to “remain in the private sphere [...], in the inner life of each believer”, when, in fact, He manifest “in the public sphere of the entire community and beyond it” (Popescu 1998, 48), giving meaning to the idea of communion – the ecclesial *koinonia*.

Corroborated with the gnoseological and soteriological relativism, the subjectivism generates two major ecclesiological effects, both copied after the models of the global post-industrial society:

- The so-called “private religious initiative” (Petrașcu 2005, 45), a syntagma designating the “founding action of some individuals as new confessional actors, with the explicit aim of offering theological “answers” and soteriological “solutions” to the quotidian searches of the man; thus, the man claims to be a creator of theological system, many times reclaiming (completely arbitrary) the exclusive possession of the authentic and complete supernatural revelation, of the only authentic responses to the theological matters, offering to the others the urge of *do it yourself* – experiment for yourself” (Achimescu 2013, 207);
- The situation and the engagement of the confessional entities coagulated in this manner in a “religion market” – *psycho-market* (J.P. Willaime), which “is led after the rules of the market economy” and operates with the soteriological “offers” of “some small enterprises in the field of salvation” (Achimescu 2013, 207); practically, the “offers” come to speculate “the need to return to sacredness, to religiousness” (Jurgen Habermas), constituting “a social form of the consumption

culture” and becoming “the object of individual selection or choice” (Achimescu 2013, 234-236); implicitly, related to the “offers” animating the psycho-market, the postmodern man becomes an *ad-hoc* consumer, solicited to choose, to opt, to use once again the subjectivism, because the choice is in fact lacking any criterion excepting the personal interest, pleasure or satisfaction.

**d). De-institutionalisation.** Operating with “a system of beliefs offered to the public to be consumed” (Aiftincă 2001, 9), the postmodern world cultivates intensely the concept of personal/individual religion, which, in a more accentuated manner, “substitutes the institutional religion” (Achimescu 2013, 312), with the new confessional entities, “independent” entities (meaning that they do not belong to any important traditional denominations), creations of some “religious entrepreneurs”, preoccupied, most of all, to access and affirm on the global psycho-market. Concomitantly, the religions organised institutionally and hierarchically are subject to strong critique/defamation by the new religious actors, who try to impose, *de facto*, the competition methods. Still, the fund of the problem is the fact that, per se, the postmodernity tends to repress “any type of institutions, especially the religious institutions”, considered to be “constraining and entirely exterior to the human individuality and to its fundamental freedoms” (Niculcea 2005, 268).

In fact, the de-institutionalisation of religion is a large and complex process. Its causes can be systemised, in our opinion as follows:

- ✦ the economic individualism cultivated so intensely by the post-industrial society and which, according to Olaf Muller, “stimulates the appearance of new forms of religion, many times de-institutionalised, syncretic and diffuse [...], an unconventional religiosity, outside the Church” (Achimescu 2013, 402); indeed, the compromising of any community approach to the social level and the relative inoperability in the sphere of the production of goods and services (because the division of work is different than the human communion) are capable to induce the radicalisation of the egocentric tendencies and leads, at the level of the religious faith and practice, to individualism, an attitude obviously incompatible with the communion vocation of the traditional Church, generating the temptation to contest the Church as institution and the “solution” of adopting *ad-hoc* formulas, mostly informal, for the practice of the religion;
- ✦ the relativism, the subjectivism and the rejection of the dogmatisation, all with direct impact on the content of the faith and on its connection to the supernatural revelation, so, losing the measure of Truth, it loses the institution of the Church;

in fact, the alternative to the institutionalised ecclesial community and to the hierarchical structure are the confessional entities distant to the coherence of the doctrine, impregnated by the subjectivism of the founders and of the temporary leaders and relativizing any norm of faith, reaching to expressions and actions presumably belonging to the cult, “which tend to change radically the religious thinking and manifestation of the man in our times” (Nechita 2010, 63-64).

We have to mention, as, among others, Bryan R. Wilson stated, that, by comparison to the institutionalised and hierarchical Churches, the “new religious movements” seem more adapted to the postmodern world, more compatible to the values the postmodernism promotes, as indicated by the “relative success”, translatable in the increased rates of numerical growth and territorial expansion registered (Bauberot 2005, 221). The following short explanations seem relevant for this situation:

- ✦ the attractiveness derived from their real or presupposed connection with the western world, perceived as etalon of freedom and individual welfare; practically, the incontestable prestige of the West and the value of incontestable reference of the western society are prolonged more or less justified in the new confessional entities, considered to be “passages to modernity for a population destabilised by socio-economic mutations”, and amplify their potential of extension and consolidation in other spaces, as well in relation with the traditional Churches;
- ✦ the attractiveness based on renouncing to the formulation on dogmatic bases of the faith, to the personnel of cult and divine right and to the cult/liturgical/sacramental practices considered to be revolte, inoperable or even absurd or quasi-idolater; the impression of simplicity and naturalness created this way stimulates the involvement of the individuals searching for “simple truths to be believed” an, capable to “structure the personality” and “the attachment to a cultural Anglo-Saxon universe”, considered as authentic and incontestable spiritual reference.

## Conclusions

Subject to a multitude of dissolution pressure by a postmodern “spirituality”, tending to annihilate the fundamental data of faith as transmitted by the Holy Gospel and the Holy Traditions, in order to replace them with artificial constructions marked by subjectivity and relativism, the Church has – in the age that comes after a modernity

dominated by the complete disaggregation of its social influence and authority – the huge responsibility of preaching “the Living Christ, the One crucified and Resurrected, the Light and the Life not only of the Church, but of the entire world” (Bel 2005, 35). Thus, the Church will be able to oppose efficiently and completely founded biblically and patristic, to the main vector generating alienation and deformation of the religious consciousness, represented by individualism and consumerism. Using the fundamental resources of the faith (in its possession), the Church can offer to the man – confused by the pre-eminence of the economy, condemning him to an existence established exclusively on the horizontal dimension of the immanent reality – the answers for the important existential dilemma. The man can be creative, efficient and performant economically and technologically without these abilities to affect in any way the faith in God, the adhesion to the Church – as mysterious Body of the Saviour – and the desire for personal communion with his Creator. Because the Church is “connected with Jesus Christ in Trinity”, which “permits it to militate for the transfiguration of the man and of the creation in Christ” (Popescu 2005, 254), the Church can also offer to the man the answers he needs so much.

## Note

- <sup>1</sup> The German sociologist Niklas Luhman highlights that, related to the traditional societies, the modernity (i) operates with a cosmogony and a cosmology that exclude God; (ii) postulates the autonomy of the morality related to religion; (iii) refuses the idea of hell and, implicitly, the possibility of eternal condemnation of some people, and (iv) transform the transcendence in a study object exclusively for the science of psychology – Prof. dr. Andrei Marga, *Modernitate, religie, cultură*, in *\*\*\*, Biserica în era globalizării*, Alba Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2003, p. 27.

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