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*European and Romanian Postmodern Culture and the Challenges They
Represent for the Life, Teachings and Mission of the Church*

Summary

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Summary

Introduction

The Church represents the secret body of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; having been created through His own redeeming self-offering and sacrifice on the cross, which was hidden from sight, but also, in a visible manner, on the Day of the Pentecost, through the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles. Throughout its two-thousand-year history, the Church has endured numerous trials, starting with the time of the persecutions, continuing with the emergence of heresies and sects, the East–West Schism, the Western Reformation, up to the present day, in which it faces a strong phenomenon of secularization bred by the desacralization and, worse yet, the dechristianization of the contemporary man.

In addition, considering the circumstances regarding Christian life, the pastoral missionary activity and its theology in general, the mission of the Church has a dynamic dimension. In what concerns its missionary activity, the Church has to take the social realities of the time into account; it must keep up with the advances in science and technology, and with the phenomena causing more and more Christians to renounce their faith and embrace other forms of devoutness.

Nowadays, the missionary involvement of the Church can prove itself to be fully successful, when faced with the whole array of social imperfections that exist, however, on the other hand, it can unveil certain missionary flaws; such as the poor training of some clergymen, or their low involvement, in the process of catechism or that of bringing their contemporaries back to the path of salvation.

One has chosen this topic in view of the fact that the social and missionary dialogue of the Church is mostly acted out in relation to the culture of the contemporary post postmodern society. Due to the phenomenon of globalization, said society has become multicultural, i.e. a community and communion of cultures, in which a series of diverse and even antagonistic societies have “merged” culturally, simply by establishing contact with one another.

The contemporary man is overwhelmed by the feeling of autonomy; it is for that reason that the society that he created has adopted the rational and Illuminist phenomenon of secularization, very

quickly, entirely omitting the transcendental nature of the human existence. The technological development has allowed postmodernism to work to the benefit of man, however, it has also worked against him; turning the said into a slave to the forces of reason, which he cannot control. The man of today has changed his views regarding the purpose and the role he has in God's Creation, thinking he has absolute power over it, being possessed by a strong feeling of dominance. This perspective has led to the desire to dominate, to control and to exploit God's creation at one's pleasure, ignoring the divine laws. Thus, the ecological crisis has emerged; the divine commandment "fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1.28), being profoundly misunderstood by the human being, autonomous from God.

On the other hand, culture itself has undergone massive changes due to the process of secularization and desacralization of the human society, process started many centuries ago which has, in a way, reached its peak in our present days. Unfortunately, we are now witnessing the tendency to tackle themes which are profoundly extraneous, at times antagonistic to those of the divine revelation, of the Christian morality and that of the Church of God. The themes debated during the hours of catechization or during the sermons held at the Holy Altars, are considered to be antiquated, obsolete and old-fashioned by the postmodern culture. Contemporary culture promotes themes such as consumerism, convenience and wealth. Sadder still is when the so-called postmodern culture promotes blaspheming themes and images regarding the Church, its symbols and its teachings.

In this context, the mission of the Church becomes that of laying down a model for a life of sharing love and faith, following the image of God, Who is a Unique Being, divided into three Divine Persons, but also, following the deified human life of the Son of God, the Embodied Word. Therefore, the theme of this paper proves to be highly necessary for the internal mission (pastoral care), since a liturgical and community-oriented attitude needs to be adopted by the faithful, attitude which emerges from the nature of their membership to the Church and from the awareness that Orthodoxy is the depository of God's truth, revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, The Son of God, and this spirit has to be taken into consideration when one attempts to create a work of art.

The theme of this paper is equally necessary to the external mission, because of the phenomenon of immigration, so widely encountered nowadays. In view of this context, the Romanian Orthodox Christianity, especially, becomes exposed to a secularized culture, many times anti-Christian in a desacralized and even dechristianized West.

I. Missionary Attitude and Teachings of the Church Regarding Culture. Fundamental Guidelines

The fundamental values of the culture existent in our contemporary society are no longer helpful for a man searching for his salvation and the vicinity of God, to the contrary, they find their finality in themselves, in acquiring wealth or, at the most, in a purely aesthetic pleasure. In Antiquity or the Middle Ages, culture did not have this soteriological dimension, it, unfortunately, emerged in modern and postmodern periods, when the phenomenon of secularization and that of dechristianization was in full process of development¹.

Nowadays, one can speak about a culture of the elite, but also about one of the lower-class; one can speak about a religious culture, as well as a secular one; a modern one, but also, an antique culture; a political culture, but also a scholastic, academic one. We, thus, find it difficult to propose a satisfying definition of culture. Culture encompasses all human existence or action at an intellectual, organizational, institutional and spiritual level and, since it permeates the institutional layers of society, it generates civilization as an immanent result. This last one being the concrete result the human spirit has over nature and human society. On the one hand, civilization is the one that satisfies the material needs of the body, and, on the other hand, culture satisfies the needs of the human soul. It is adamant that, between the two levels of the dichotomic man, having both a body and a soul, there be harmony, symbiosis and balance and that he avoid to lay special emphasis on a level to the detriment of the other.

The theonomous culture, the Orthodox culture and spirituality, respectively, teaches us that the mystery of man does not lay in his existence, on the contrary, it resides only in God, the man can only be complete to the extent to which he keeps his spiritual connection to his Maker and to his Saviour, sitting at the right hand of God the Father, basking in the glow of the light of the Holy Spirit. The theonomous culture differs from the autonomous culture, which deceives the man by making him believe in the superiority of the physical world, governed by science and technology, at the same time enslaving him to his desires and irrational passions, very difficult to suppress. The theonomous culture bestows the spiritual power and energy of the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ and His Church. This culture is, for the man, the coherent and profound dialogue and answer of the act of creation of the world and man, by God – The Holy Trinity.

¹Henri-Irenee Marrou, *Sfântul Augustin și sfârșitul culturii antice*, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest 1997, pg. 437

The pagan culture was not represented as being something opposed to Christianity, it was seen as more of a gift from God, meant to help man reach divinity. Likewise, this culture did nothing more than prepare man for the teachings revealed by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, the Embodied Word. On the other hand, in laying the foundations of the Gospel regarding Genesis, terms from the ancient Greek philosophy were frequently used, especially from Plato's philosophy, which were given a new semantics, a new Christian interpretation, in accordance to the Holy Scriptures. The Christian apologists who had a non-Christian core education deserve great praise for using all their pagan knowledge for the convenience of the Church of Christ, and in the service of God, and for enriching the truth of belief and the redeeming dogma of the Church.

The modern culture is based on three main trends which have appeared and developed in the time frame between the 15th and 19th centuries. Firstly, the Renaissance was a cultural movement which had a profound influence on intellectual life, such as it was known in the early modern era. The movement began in Italy; it, then, rapidly spread throughout the entire Europe, massively influencing all the fields of culture: literature, philosophy, religion, art or politics. The Renaissance men of culture promoted a humanist method of study and focused on capturing emotion in their art.

The Illuminist movement, as an antifeudal movement, prepared and put into action the political revolutions of the period between the 17th-19th centuries in all the countries of Europe, South America or North America (The Civil War) which had as a purpose the creation of rational societies, through promotion of culture, and of "the lights" hidden in the lower classes.

Another fundamental layer of the modern culture is represented by Romanticism, 18th-19th centuries. This trend influenced literature, arts, music, but also scientific fields, such as: natural history, historiography and education.

There obviously have been many other cultural, political or philosophical trends, which belonged to the modern era, that influenced culture in some way or another, however we have limited our study to the most important pillars, characteristic to this period.

The Postmodernism is a movement, a trend that defines the culture of the 20th century and that has manifested itself through art, architecture, literature and philosophy, and that has had a decisive role in the creation of the contemporary culture, Romanian or foreign, in this period we call "post\postmodern".

II. The Relation between the Orthodox Theology and Modern Culture in the European Society

Modernity can simply be defined as those ideas and principles and those various types of manners of interpreting, from the philosophic to the economic one, on which the Western, the Central European and American societies and cultures have based their existence, since the 16th century, up until the 20th century.

The spectacular evolution and advancement of science in the modern era has changed people's perception of the world and has also promoted a profound anti-Christian attitude. One must mention that, in the 19th century, the modern man has pivoted towards the uncovering of the truth regarding the world and towards creating a perfect society, trusting science completely and its power to create a better future. On the other hand, the 20th century represented the century of unbelievable developments in the field of science.

Through his modern ideologies, man separated himself from the surrounding nature, transforming himself into the undisputable master of the world. It got to the point where man conceived the idea that he had to impose his own laws, which differed from those of God, and exploit nature in an exaggerated manner, which led to the economic crises, which, in turn, endangered the environment and man, by default.

Secularization has been one of the main problems faced by the Church since the beginning of the Modern era. Surprisingly, the consequences of secularization do not imply the disappearance or the core decline of religion, yet the phenomenon in question greatly influences the diminishing of religion as an institution and a culture, in the context of the modern society, making it lose the important role which it played in society and in the life of every man. The process of autonomy of man, generated by the shift in the paradigm of culture in the modern times, influenced more than the powers of the spirit, but also at a somatic level. Thus, the sensitive dimension of man, his or her feelings, were, from this time forward, no longer guided and illuminated by the work of the Holy Spirit, on the contrary, they perverted and affected the bodies, which stopped being "the temples of the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 6.19), turning them into a reality in which the most revolting ardours occur, slowly leading to the degradation of man.

The mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary society of today, which is characterized by secularization, has a few extremely useful solutions, such as the catechization of the

faithful, which is very helpful in fighting the sectarian proselytism; performing the Sacrament of the Eucharist with the Body and Blood of Christ, The Redeemer, as often as possible, seeing that the scarceness or lack of Communion and not attending the Church service leads to individualism. The Church must keep a close watch and guard the togetherness of the faithful, considering the fact that many of those who declare they are Christians go to service occasionally, when they have a certain need or purely by chance. When dealing with that, the Church has to bring forth the universal priesthood, not just the sacramental one, and reel in its faithful, and involve them in various activities useful for the life and mission of the Church.

III. Coordinates of cultural paradigmatic changes in European post-modernity. Missionary evaluation

From a religious perspective, in postmodernity we are aware of the current that quite aggressively rejects any manifestation of religiosity, as it was consecrated within the Traditional Churches. We are talking about postmodern secularism that is characterized by vehement denial of any form of institutionalized religion, and accepting the "construction" of its own belief and religion, perceived in a different manner by everyone, and without belonging to a certain Church, confession or cult. The theologies in postmodernity try to find their way between two familiar extremes. At one end there is the liberal dissolution of the specificity of Christianity and a thorough process of accommodation of the world, often concealed by a change towards the pietistic or the emotional, which eventually yields the realm of the intellect in favour of the secular wisdom. At the other extreme lies fideism, both biblical and clerical.

The phenomenon of desacralization in post-modern society is a worrying one because it also affected the evolution of postmodern culture. Desacralization is a phenomenon derived from the paradigm of modernism and post-modernism, with a strong impact on Christian values and life. The desecration of the West occurred slowly and imperceptibly. There is a convergence with the deliberate, systematic and brutal dechristianization coming from Europe. Both the desacralization of man and his dechristianization have had a major impact on human culture in modernity and postmodernity. In the West, more than anywhere in the world, man has increasingly turned towards a kind of unreligious state, and has cultivated a desacralized culture and, more than that, a deeply non-Christian culture. The two phenomena are also responsible for leading to a violent deculturalization

of Christianity. In this context, human relationships have been artificially altered, and revealed truths and Christian morality have been rebutted.

Postmodernism has represented and still represents a strong challenge to the mission of the Church. It was understood both as a period of conservatism, that followed the Modern Period, but also as a return to the classical, to the tradition. Postmodernism promotes both a cultural and a religious syncretism through which it wants to generate a new system of values, a new paradigm in which the cultural and religious achievements accumulated throughout the history of mankind are mixed. Unfortunately, postmodern culture has become a second "nature" for man, unfortunately leading to atheism, pseudo-religious indifference and autonomy, three anti-religious characteristics that make the salvation of the soul impossible.

IV. The Mission of the Church in the Contemporary Romanian Culture

Contemporary Romanian culture can only be analyzed in the context of European twentieth-century culture. In the first half of this century, one can notice the emergence of new movements that wished to find new ways to express and reflect the revolt against modern civilization. The currents that have had a great impact on the Romanian culture are expressionism, cubism, abstractionism and surrealism, manifestations that have influenced culture and art throughout the 20th century.

Throughout history, the research of the Romanian scientists brought mankind inventions and discoveries that were recognized by the entire scientific world. Romanian physicians and engineers invented and discovered formulas and machines that later proved their usefulness to the whole world. In the first half of the 20th century, Romanian engineers and scholars have completed their education both in the country's universities and, especially, in those of the West, and have participated in various researches alongside great international scholars. Petre Țuțea is the most eloquent example of what a Romanian or a foreign educated man should be. Firstly, the educated man must be a Christian. At the opposite end, another Romanian philosopher, Emil Cioran, who was the son of an Orthodox priest, failed by following pessimism and in the worst possible nihilism. Țuțea moves at the ontological and axiological levels between the Mosaic Decalogue and the Sermon given on the Mountain by the Redeemer, the classic example of the Christian culture integrating secular cultural forms, that is why Petre Țuțea must remain a Christian cultural landmark, a secular apologist and a sacerdot of communicating with God, addressed to every man who wishes to become a creator of

values in the spirit of the Gospel of Christ. At the opposite end, Cioran is the embodiment of a nihilistic pessimistic cultural paradigm regarding the Christian truth that denies Christ in the name of an unnecessary riot, meaningless and senseless. Cioran is the frightening embodiment of the cultural patricide, for being one who denies Christian belonging, identity and fellowship, from a son of a Orthodox priest, becoming spiritually estranged, a tormented man that gravitates morbidly between confusion and error. Emil Cioran shows the world that a culture without Christ leads to a dimension where man perceives the loss of the Absolute, his pessimism and nihilism being the cry for help and helplessness of the one who has fatally used his free will. It is the classic case of estrangement and uprooting of man who bizarrely separates itself from Christ and generates a culture of nonsense, despair, and anxiety. The mission of the Church must address the people of the Romanian culture who have departed from God, such as the philosopher Cioran, and bring them closer to the Church so that the gifts of God can multiply and be eternal and redeeming.

The Person of the Saviour Jesus Christ has always occupied a priority place in the concerns of those who wanted to do "theology" outside of Revelation and the Church, invoking the following reasons: authentic revelation is not the one presented as such, but different, being unknown or known in a very small percentage, all because of the intervention of the Church that did not want it to be disclosed, being motivated by petty group interests, which served, in particular, their desire to dominate by religious means. Hence the urgent need for the "authentic" revelation to be known; this desideratum has two fundamental consequences: people end up - at last! - to know the truth, concealed by a "conspiracy" of the Church, and its spiritual domination is eliminated. Along the lines of these "logical coordinates" the author, Dan Brown, has written "The Da Vinci Code".

The Church is not only a place where dogmatic ideas or teachings are found, or a place where religious ideas are created, but the place where man meets Christ and shares the grace of the Holy Spirit. It is only from this spiritual experience that dogmatic teachings have arisen throughout history, especially during the Ecumenical Synods, which were based on the divine revelation revealed by Christ the Saviour, the Embodied Word. The lack of the Eucharist in the contemporary Romanian cultural life leads to the transformation of the Orthodox Christianity from Romania into a simple tradition, respected by some of the elders or a show in the context of events in human life (marriage or baptism).

V. Mission of the Church in Modernity and Post-Modernity regarding Western European Culture

The fundamental changes of the modern-day paradigm became known to all the Orthodox peoples of South-eastern Europe because of the young people, who had the opportunity to study in the universities of the West, where the Renaissance, humanistic or Enlightenment ideas appeared. After the religious wars of the Catholic and Protestant West, modern ideas of freedom of thought spread rapidly across Europe, introducing the Renaissance to a new world that was being formed in an unprecedented enthusiasm up to that moment. In the modern period, political, social and ideological upheavals and changes were made, the climax being represented by the French Revolution under the motto of freedom, equality, fraternity.

From the desire to free human thinking from any external authority or constraint, especially from the Western Church, Renaissance promoted, in the modern age, the urge to develop and cultivate science, but also to promote the critical spirit. This perspective will not be abandoned, on the contrary, the tendencies mentioned above are emphasized in the 17th and 18th centuries in the Enlightenment. In Germany, the main representatives of modernism were Christian Wolff, Johann Heinrich Lambert, Johann Nikolaus Tetens, Moses Mendelssohn, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, Leibniz, Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. In France, the main coryphaei of Modernism were La Mettrie, Helvetius, Diderot, Jean d'Alembert, Montesquieu, Voltaire, or Jean Jacques Rousseau, but we will stop at the last three.

The challenges of the mission and life of the Christian in the 16th-17th centuries, from the philosophical, literary, artistic or scientific sphere, proved to be extremely serious, even if some seemed utopian. In this period a new Babel Tower is set up in which the autonomous and self-sufficient man claims to be able to ignore Him, defy him and substitute the living God of the Christian Revelation. If the challenges of modern times have sometimes had a blasphemous character, those in the realm of science have shown us that the way in which science has been relating to the Church must be treated with the utmost responsibility and competence from a missionary perspective. The dreams of modern man, of becoming godlike, show that he believes, in his madness, to be a kind of demigod, the creator of monstrosities and chimeras. In his hatred and rebellion against God, the desacralized and dechristianized modern man removes God from his life and kills man as "homo sapiens" through certain new or revolutionary actions, man in fact dehumanizes and consequently self-destructs from the spiritual point of view.

Christianity today must show that the attention given to eternal life brings with it a transformation of this world. Being an apprentice of the Lord means to love your neighbour, to share your worries and to manifest your love through palpable things. Therefore, we must firmly proclaim that the mission of the Gospel is not to turn the earth into a prosperous paradise; for the ultimate goal is the acquisition of eternal life. From this point of view, the courageous assertion of the mission of the Church in the secularized world of our day can only be pleasing, always taking into account the dynamic aspect of tradition, ethnicity, nationality and Christianity everywhere. We must not overlook the ideas of the Christian mission, which unlock the roads of modern theology, such as: the mission of the Church in postmodern society, the relationship of the Christian-Orthodox Church with the other denominations and cults, the ecumenical aspect of inter-religious dialogue, aspects of theology of culture, sociology and psychology of religions, ecclesiastical diplomacy, theology and culture, theology and art, theology and medicine, theology and society, the relationship between theology, spirituality, mysticism, ecclesiastical literature, ecclesiastical culture, religious poetry, Christian art. All these aspects of the mission of the Church, related to her vocation and service, leave room for further research, which we certainly must all engage, in a coherent apology of all Christian brethren everywhere, because only if one dares and sows the Word of God everywhere in the world, they can overcome the world, in the Christian sense of the word.

Postmodernity is the fundamental characteristic of the desacralized contemporary man in which the human self and the chimera of the fact that man can be the substitute of God are excessively valued. The theses that influenced both postmodern culture and the life and mission of the Church were negativity, pessimism, scepticism and relativism. The four major theses of postmodernism have had and still have a major impact on contemporary culture in Romania or around the world and on today's cultural manifestations of man. Inevitably, one or more of these theses can be found in any kind of cultural approach, that is, literature, art, or philosophy. Unfortunately, these cultural manifestations sprinkled with postmodernist ideas are harmful to the Christian mission, to the life and spirituality of the Christian today.

The mission of the Church must take into account the cultural dimension of man in modernity, as well as all cultural slips coming from the sphere of modernity and postmodernity. Certainly each of the two periods, important for human civilization, has had a major impact on culture. In Renaissance and Enlightenment, cultural elites have promoted an attitude of passivity and indifference to spiritual ones, which has, after this period, made human culture to be an autonomous

and not a theonomic one, which has God as its centre. On the other hand, postmodernism has deepened this cultural crisis of man, this time through an anti-God attitude. Postmodernist theses, such as negativity, pessimism, nihilism, or scepticism, have directly influenced the way culture and cultural creations are also seen, having at the same time, an autonomous character.

VI. Missionary solutions to the re-Christianization of modern and post-modern culture

Catechesis and preaching are two solutions at the fingertips of the priest, thru which he can promote Christian culture, the true culture that centres on God, and which is based on the revealed teachings of Christ the Saviour, the Embodied Word. It is absolutely necessary that the priest, in his missionary activity, attempt to create an approach between the Church and Christians, by instilling them a spiritual and redeeming culture, and by explaining the difference between it and the culture that does not regard Christ, the unnecessary and meaningless culture, based on nihilism, pessimism, materialism, and pragmatism. This can only be done by the priest's effort to be connected to the reality of the moment and by updating the sermon and catechesis to the society he belongs to and the lives of Christians in the contemporary world. Catechesis and pedagogy are important elements of the mission in fighting contemporary secular culture of an autonomous character and can be two effective means in the development of a theonomic culture, which has God at its centre.

The relationship between Church and local culture, the kenotic incarnation of the Church, structured from a theocentric point of view, which places Jesus Christ at its core, in any context. One must take into consideration that faith and cultural expression never fully match with each other. That is why the indigenisation must have a critical dimension; in the sense that, local culture must not be destroyed by evangelism, but it cannot be fully accepted either. The relationship between Gospel and culture must be creative and dynamic through the convergence of all Churches, towards Catholicity, towards the unity of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The Mission of the Orthodox Church needs evangelistic (explicit) programs, in this context remaining faithful to the apostolic vocation. More specifically, Orthodox doctrine gives the greatest importance to the Liturgy; liturgical time offers the faithful an irresistible and essential power, when Christians gather from the world outside, the ecclesial space, in the Church, a sacred place, around the Lord Jesus Christ. Culture, as a divine call to man for salvation, is man's response to the act of divine creation and consecrates man as a creator of values according to the pattern of the eternal

Creator. For an indifferent or religiously autonomous person, culture becomes a "second nature," a kind of "leather clothing" that covers and annihilates divine grace.

In this post postmodern and post-Christian world, it is necessary that the Church have a sincere and objective analysis of the present moment and of the mission, with all the varied challenges, to become a possible instrument of missionary work or at least the mirror in which to look before embarking on a mission. "The voice of the Church must resonate clearly, coherently and competently about all these challenges coming from the "world" as the totality of evil and the predisposition to evil of the creation of God.

The mission of the Church notes that interculturalism involves a dialogue between the different cultures of today's civilization. The mission of the Church rightly regards multi-culturalism as a failed, poorly managed experiment where the conditions, values and peculiarities of a geographic space have not really been taken into account. Unfortunately, all cultural differences have been integrated into the religious phenomenon that has come to manifest itself through a minority culture, authorised, unfortunately, through political multi-culturalism. Moreover, multi-culturalism could not prevent or treat radical pseudo-religious visions of God, man, family, society. Orthodox missionary solutions regarding intercultural dialogue must start from dialogue, tolerance and mutual respect, and from the understanding of the deep connection between cult and culture. Today, when we speak of worship, we are considering the effort to cultivate the relationship between man and community with the Creator of us all. Through culture, the Orthodox mission understands the cultivation of man's relationship with the creation of God. The spiritual connection, founded on theological grounds, between the cult and culture must lead, from a missionary perspective, to a new culture of coexistence that is nothing but a culture of healthy human relationships that makes it possible to suppress abuses in an eminently prophylactic dimension.

Conclusions

Contemporary culture, in general, and the Romanian one, in particular, can be understood as one of mass, a religious culture, but also a secular culture, a modern culture, but also an ancient culture, a political culture, but also a scholastic, university one. We could not help from noticing that we have encountered a difficulty in trying to provide a proper definition of culture. Culture has the whole sphere of existence and action of man at an intellectual, organizational, institutional and

spiritual level and, due to the fact that it reaches into the institutional plans of society, it ultimately results in civilization. The latter is the result concretely translated into the human spirit over nature and human society. Civilization is the one that satisfies the material needs of the body, and, on the other hand, culture is the one that satisfies the spiritual needs of the human soul.

The mission of the Church has always taken into account the space and cultural specificity of times and of men, Christians or non-Christians. Thus, we could see that between the culture of the ancient world and the Christian teaching, proclaimed in the primary mission of the Holy Apostles and Apostolic Fathers, there was a great resemblance because there are certain ideas found in ancient philosophy that are very close to some evangelical precepts. As an example, the pre-Socratic philosophy, this shows that the discovery of God can be made through His work and creation.

I have noticed that the cultural dimension of faith is a sure one, because culture is, from the beginning, incarnated in faith, and religious experience is also, to some extent, the culture that absorbs it because it, faith, is rooted in a tangible ethno-Cultural context. The process of evangelization of non-Christian peoples, especially within the Roman Catholic mission, has taken into account the elements of that culture, of course transforming ontologically. The process of Evangelism was one of real divine inspiration that was based on faith as a norm that had the power to transform the culture of peoples, who had not had contact with Christ's redeeming teaching.

There is a major difference between what culture represented in the Patristic period and part of the Middle Ages, this being one belonging to the Spirit, to theonomy, which was centred on God and the teaching brought by the Revelation of Christ the Saviour.

At the other pole, culture in the modern and postmodern era became an autonomous one, based on man's desire to become independent from God. We have noticed that postmodernism is a movement in architecture, art and philosophy, but also a reaction to everything modernism has represented. Modernism was considered to be the tip of the search for aesthetics by Enlightenment, but also a rational authoritarian epistemology. On the other hand, postmodernism has been concerned with the way in which the authority of ideal entities, which were called metanarratives, is weakened by a process of fragmentation, deconstruction or consumptionism. The term postmodernity refers to all the phenomena and the theses that emerged after modernity. Postmodernity also takes into account the sociological and technological aspects, as well as all other conditions that followed the modern times. Postmodernism is also a set of personal cultural, intellectual, academic, artistic or philosophical answers.

Unfortunately, there is a cultural crisis that is deeply felt in contemporary society, being certainly an echo of the religious crisis that made its debut at the end of the seventeenth century when the religious wars took place and when modern science was born, which led to an inevitable crisis of European consciousness. The world of today's contemporary culture is, undoubtedly, a world that has distanced itself from God, who increasingly ignores God, but also the religious-moral values related to His name.

Contemporary culture has its roots in the fundamental characteristics of the autonomous culture of the modern age, which, after many opinions, has its beginning in the fourteenth century, but there are also voices who believe that the Copernican system could be considered a foundation of modernity, dating back to the fifteenth century, while the democratic government, which can be called the essence of modern politics, has become the dominant Western political form, shortly after.

Secularization of today's culture is the logical consequence of the separation of the Church from the world by the removal of God from its life in the modern age. The term secularization also has a legal and cultural meaning. The term, the notion of secularity, means the rift brought about by modernity between faith and reason, between the Church and the world. Because of the secularization, the Church is seen today as an institution of the state that does not differ from other institutions, but who is struggling for supremacy in the people's society, is perceived as a creation of God's people not by Christ in the Holy Spirit. We, unfortunately, find that priesthood is seen as any trade and not a mission that they fulfil on the basis of the divine grace and the Sacrament of Ordination.

In the modern era, the beginning of the process of autonomy of man was also marked by the change of the paradigm of culture in the modern period, which was also achieved at the somatic level; itself becomes autonomous, in contradiction with the theocentric culture of the patristic period. Thus, the somatic dimension of man and his feelings were no longer guided and enlightened by the work of the Holy Spirit, but they also perverted and affected the body which ceased to be considered the "temple of the Holy Spirit" after the words of Apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 6:19), but a reality in which the most repugnant passions, which led to the degeneration of man, manifest themselves. The Age of Lights has changed the sense of autonomy that the creation had in the theology of the Roman Catholic Church, transforming it into a sort of autonomy that denies the existence of God as well as His qualities of Creator, Saviour and Pronator. These fundamental paradigm shifts have decisively influenced the development of culture until present day.

We have, unfortunately, seen that the secularized postmodern society leads to total desacralization of contemporary man and to a relativization of his cultural values. Since modernity, an exclusion of the Church from the public sphere was sought, it was no longer considered competent to make a public objection, and the religiosity was reduced only to the subjective private space of man, while also changing the cultural paradigm of man from a culture of the Spirit, that centered on God and His Church, to one that is strictly human lacking all that is sacred. The phenomenon of desacralization, a specific phenomenon of postmodernity, or the tendency of contemporary man to liberate the profane from the authority of the sacred, is well represented by secularization, or in other words, led to the process of secularization. Desacralization is a phenomenon that has a strong impact on cultural values and Christian life, representing a real danger because, after gaining the desire to substitute God, man used science and technology to find answers to the fundamental questions about life and its origin, other answers than those found in divine revelation and preached by the Church. On the other hand, dechristianization is characterized by the weakening of the religious life of a significant part of the religious practitioners, who until recently had a very strong religious life. This manifests thru the less and less frequent participation in the Holy Mass or the Holy Sacraments. Until recently, the faithful practitioners, close to the Church, formed a strong core, even if they were in the minority, and had a real Christian life in which they combined prayer with mercy. Unfortunately, this nucleus began to disappear. Desacralization and dechristianization have had an immediate effect within European culture, but also within a part of the Romanian one, because this type of culture has not become a creator of values and works that have God at the center and are, therefore useless to the salvation of man.

Today, European and Romanian cultures are in a deep crisis because the traditions that shaped the civilization of man began to fade and were transformed into a kind of harmful multiculturalism that relativises Western spiritual and cultural values. And, as if this change of paradigm was not enough, we observe, with deep indignation, a deceptive ideology of Islamic culture that has embraced violent aspects and which, unfortunately, makes thousands of victims both in predominantly Muslim territories and in the main cities of Europe. Religious and cultural fundamentalism has nothing to do with a theocentric culture, that has at its core love for God and love for one's neighbour.

Christianity will never condemn and deny culture, but it will always be critical of any cultural situation that does not regard divinity and does not measure "cake" by the measure of Christ. The

cultural problems and needs of "this age" cannot be avoided or neglected because Christians are called to serve "in this world" and "in this age" and to create works of salvation. It is just that all these needs and problems must be perceived and seen in a new and wider perspective that is revealed by the Christian revelation and illuminated by its light.