SUMMARY DOCTORAL THESIS

IDENTITY AND ALTERITY IN GLOBAL SOCIETY: CONFIGURATIONS AND STRUCTURES OF RELIGION IN THE XXI CENTURY

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This doctoral thesis does not intend to rewrite in a theological manner a problem already discussed in Romanian theology, namely *globalization*, but a contextualization of the problem in the contemporary society. In this approach, our analysis has gone from the premise of contemporary challenges to religion: the relationship between *identity* and *alterity* in global space, *religious pluralism*, and *interreligious dialogue*. As the main objectives of the thesis we mention: the presentation of the valences of the globalization phenomenon from a religious, social and political point of view.

The 20th-21st centuries' society stood and is under the effervescence of social dynamics in all aspects: cultural, religious, economic. This new reality, defined as "globalization", is the consequence of a process of interpolating into consideration the alterities within the same frame. In cultural and religious terms, globalization can be analyzed at least in two ways: (1) a chance of emancipating the visibility of different religious identities in terms of peace-building through acceptance and tolerance towards "the other", and (2) a risk of relativizing the identity values of each religion.

Globalization imposes new vectors in the dynamics of today's society, a process that provides a much more transparent view of religious pluralism and, implicitly, the cultural profile of each religion. This reality leads to a certain kind of evidence of diversity, but also of identity in the cultural-religious plan of the world. Globalization can also be used as an excuse for the failure of the reform, for the exaggerated prolongation of the transition period, for the deep moral crisis, being a good subject to deviate discussions from the real problems.

In the view of D. C. Korten[1], the founder and chairman of the Living Economies Forum, the global economic system is a self-destructive system guided by the tyranny

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[1] D. C. Korten, *When corporations rules the world*, Kumarian Press, West Hartford, 1995.

of the market, characterized by the continuous increase of social tensions, by the degradation of values related to family and community life.

The evolution of the world towards globalization is at the same time a chance of welfare increase of all participants in the world economy, relying on environment-friendly growth and ethically based on human dignity. Thus each has an obligation to treat everyone fittingly, in the spirit of solidarity and responsibility towards any human being, towards families and communities.

This rapid change of the world, in the conditions of globalization and the information society, requires radical re-evaluation and introduction of new concepts such as community, integration, cooperation, coexistence, identity, reciprocity, complementarity, solidarity, citizenship, etc. The citizens' Europe is imagined as a community of citizens, regional, cultural and local communities. In this context, shaping the European identity, of conscious citizens of united Europe is an educational priority.

Globalization does not necessarily mean cultural unification, but also the creation of favorable contexts for respecting differences, pluralism of values, solidarity, and partnership ethics. In the conditions of economic globalization and the inevitable growth of individualism, society, if it wants to be seen as humanly and efficient, needs social groups, collectivities in which there is cooperation, where members are not uniform, passive and conforming beings, but autonomous personalities, with initiative, that assume responsibilities for themselves and for others. That is why learning the democratic coexistence and cooperation between individuals and communities in a Europe of communities and democratic values is a formative goal of the first order.

With the introduction of new electronic techniques on a large scale, representative democracy is becoming more and more outdated, because today citizens have the knowledge and information necessary for the democratic and productive development of life and for making important decisions. Under these circumstances, every citizen can become a participant responsible for a direct and effective democracy.

Thanks to the telecommunications revolution, each individual and the smallest community can establish interrelations with others through cyberspace, building an interactive global network. The rapid development of community computer networks makes it possible to preserve cultural values, acquire languages and solve practical problems in the community. Summarizing, globalization processes converge towards

the creation of more vigorous, more efficient functional units, towards a system based on the personal responsibility of each citizen.

It is an incontestable fact that the European space today presents itself as an environment of interaction of political, philosophical and religious ideologies. This interaction can be recorded at both institutional and individual levels, anticipating a new social reality, but also a daily challenge. If, 200 years ago, Europe had a generally valid Christian profile, from a religious point of view, today one can see a religious horizon in which there is a sum of religious identities, each with its cultural heritage.

Without scandalizing, we allow the thesis to argue that today the European continent presents itself as a mosaic of religious identities, despite the fact that Christian religion has been dominant for centuries on this continent. This historical fact legitimizes the statements of Pope Benedict XVI and those of the Metropolitan of Switzerland Damaskinos about the real "Christian heritage of Europe". They highlight the need for Europe to find its significant spiritual foundation of identity: the Christian faith. To the successive phenomena of secularization is opposed a profound theological vision that empowers the Christian common mission within the united Europe.[2] What has led and continues to lead to the dilution of identity and a lack of awareness of belonging to Christian values is secularization, the desacralization of life. This new reality, supported by moral relativism, which proliferates in a consumer society, and guided by the milestones of the fulminating development of technology, in which the existential fact of "being" is hijacked by the maniacal contest of "having", outlining a lack of horizons in relation to other religious identities, and here we refer to Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism.

Practically, Europe is experiencing today the very interesting experience of implementing in its socio-religious field of foreign religious traditions, imported by the phenomenon of migration, engaged in the general plan of globalization. Globalization has brought in different cultures and religious identities beyond their geographic boundaries.

These clarifications allow us to point out that the migration purpose is directly linked to financial needs. Every European country, developed and economically stable, has been a real interest in finding social comfort from Muslims in poorly developed

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[2] Check Joseph Ratzinger and Damaskinos, Metropolitan of Switzerland, *Moștenirea creștină a Europei*, edition taken care of and translation by Viorica E. Ungureanu, Trinitas Publishing House, Iași, 2002

Arab countries, but also from Hindus and Sikhs of the Indian area. It is statistically easy to verify the massive presence of Muslims in Germany and the Indians and Pakistani people in England. [3] Interesting to follow is the metamorphosis that non-Christian religions imported into European space will suffer: how to affirm their own identities of these non-Christian religions in a space unknown to the cultural environment in which they have formed, if they remain broadly consistent with traditional values, given that the dilution of the Christian identity of Europe allows a land suitable for religious proselytism.[4] Basically, it is a test of competition between desacralization of life and traditional religion, of which the Western Christianity (Catholicism), unfortunately missed.

The phenomenon of globalization is quite complex, manifested on many levels. Greek theologian Georgios Mantzaridis[5] has been able to synthesize in one of his studies several aspects of globalization and, above all, how it affects our everyday life. Most authors, Orthodox or of other denominations, when talking about globalization, legitimately refer to this connection with the economy[6]. However, globalization is neither an exclusive nor a primordial economic phenomenon, but extends to all levels of human life: political, religious, and spiritual. That is why this phenomenon has so much relevance to our times.

Appreciated by some as a positive phenomenon, criticized by others as being negative and even harmful to society, globalization has encompassed all of today's humanity. No one can deny the existence of this phenomenon in the life of the states of the world, of society and of the human person. That is why many studies have been carried out, which try to present a coherent vision of the phenomenon and its consequences in the life of the human person.

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[3] For a broad study of the consequences of the migration phenomenon in England, on a socio-religious level, check: Samantha Knights, *Freedom of Religion, Minorities, and Law*, Oxford University Press, 2007.

[4] An analysis of the possible metamorphosis of the traditional principles of Islam in Europe is made by Father PhD. Prof. Nicolae Achimescu. Check „Creştinismul răsăritean şi islamul", „Islam şi Islamism", „Faţa tradiţionalist-conservatoare a islamului", in *Universul religios în care trăim*, Trinitas Publishing House of the Patriarchate of Romania, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 310-313, 365-368, 397-400.

[5] Georgios Mantzaridis, *Globalizare şi universalitate. Himeră şi adevăr,* translation by Father PhD Prof. Vasile Răducă, Bizantină Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002.

[6] It is very eloquent the characterization of globalization as being "the American answer to the Europeans and Japanese efforts in finding themselves as dialog partners at the same table with the U.S.A". According to K. Melas, *Globalizarea. O nouă fază de internaţionalizare a economiei. Mituri şi realitate*, Athens, 1999, p. 68.

Our research seeks to present these pros and cons of globalization, underlining that this phenomenon also has positive aspects, generally of an economic nature, but also of negative aspects. Olivier Clément, making a radiograph of his time, says: „Today, Western Europe is unmistakably united in resignation and unease. Without a great vision of the future, without a great ideal except that, as it seems, to defend the "rich" of the "invasion" of the peoples of the South against the turmoil of Eastern Europe, for despite his cultural scholarship Dostoevsky and Soljenitân, the European money is prudent! The duty of Christians - and when overcoming mistrust and stereotypes, the Orthodox feel it very strongly - is to communicate to the European construction a renewed breath in the perspective of divinity-humanity. Christendom societies have often thought of God as against man and his freedom, and secularized modernity has thought of man as against God and His spiritual depth. The time of divine-humanity comes when God reveals Himself in man, and man reveals himself in God. Divine-humanity can give meaning to the explorations of humanism, when deep psychology and micro-physics preach the spiritual; can also make sense to the explorations of Oriental mystics when, in contact with the West, they have to take into account the cosmic and historical evolution and the reality of the other"[7]. The process of secularization of man and of human society is generally determined by both theological and cultural causes. There is also a certain continuity between doctrinal errors in the field of theology and some currents in European culture.

A particularly significant aspect in the context of globalization is identity-related, which may be national, religious, ideological, political and historical.[8] However, Huntington and Juergensmeyer, have predicted an increase in the meaning of identities, defined primarily in religious terms, and argued that future conflicts would no longer have as their source ideological differences, but rather, they would go along the identities separating communities (or civilizations) from each other.[9] Global transformations have led to a relativisation of both individual and collective identities,

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[7] Olivier Clément, *Adevăr şi libertate. Ortodoxia în contemporaneitate. Convorbiri cu Patriarhul ecumenic Bartolomeu I*, translation by Mihai Maci, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1997, pp. 143-144.
[8] Susanne Hoeber Rudolf, „Dehomogenizing Religious Formations", in Susanne Hoeber Rudolf & James Piscatori (ed.), *op.cit.*
[9] Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizaţiilor şi refacerea ordinii mondiale,* Antet Publishing House, Prahova, f.a. Check, also Mark Juergensmeyer, *The New Cold War. ?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State* University of California Press, 1994

whether they are national, political, religious or other identities, but at the same time have generated reactions in defense of these identities, or attempts to rebuild new identities. Religious traditions, in this context, have an essential role as sources of new representations of global order.[10] There are, on the one hand, religious movements that fight the tendencies of relativizing identities, by defending socio-cultural particularities, such as Islamic fundamentalism, for example, but there are also other religious traditions and movements that support a pluralist global order, proposing an expansion of identity, conceived in terms of common humanity. However, the problem of identity seems to be of crucial importance in the era of globalization.

Religion, therefore, is one of the important identity sources, and religiously defined identities are part of the more or less visible identities that define the actors and their actions. However, religion is not only related to violence but also plays an equally important role in shaping a peaceful ethos, conflict prevention and resolution, reconciliation between conflicting parties and peace-building and peace-building processes. This "ambivalence of the sacred"[11] must be recognized by all the scholars, so that the influence of religion on international relations is identified in a just way. In both aspects, religion has become a major force on the international stage, which needs to be treated as a serious variable in the conduct of international relations, the stake being extremely high. In Peter Berger's words, "those who neglect religion, in the analysis of contemporary issues, do so at a great risk"."[12]

The central objective of this paper is the analysis of *globalization*, with direct reference to contemporary authors, using an appropriate research methodology. That is why I presented the methods, techniques and procedures used in this scientific approach. Using the theological approach as a reference point, I will use the specific research methods of this kind:

a) *The historical method* tries to outline the conceptual development of terms such as *globalization, identity, dialogue*, etc. in philosophy and theology, and then analyze them from a phenomenological point of view. The purpose of using this method

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[10] Roland Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture,* SAGE Publications, London, 1992.

[11] R. Scott Appleby, *Tlie Ambivalence of the Sacred,* New York, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.

[12] Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World, Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1999, p.18.

in my work was to observe the characteristics of the relationship between *globalization and identity, globalization and Christianity* and *globalization and interreligious dialogue*. Thus, a complex historical and contemporary picture of the idea of globalization can be outlined in contemporary theological thinking, which offered Orthodox theology notional terminological vocabulary, of course with the lesser or more radical reinterpretation of the concepts in their significance.

b) *The analytical method* by which we sought to highlight the analysis of each concept from our register of attention, but also the distinct reporting of theologians in order to answer a series of fundamental questions for this research: does globalization attacks the structure of personal, religious and cultural identity? What are the benefits of globalization and what are its negative derivations for Christian religion? The advantage of this method is its ability to highlight the unique peculiarity of each philosopher's thinking, patristic theologian in part, and his specific emphases.

This PhD thesis aims to be an additional contribution to the specialized theological fund that has the right to analyze the issue of globalization. The onset of postmodernism can be associated with the image of a ideological-globalization "Big Bang" - a differentiator and "collision" generator, a non-cursive, non-homogeneous and asymmetric process that incorporates a substantial dose of uncertainty. Basically no individual can escape this inexorable process, but the errors, excesses, inequalities that globalization has to do must be corrected.

In this global(ization) context, the great challenge for mankind is how to reduce the sources of fragmentation, the weakening of inter-human cohesion, the frustrations of some groups and communities, the "clashes" between civilizations. Unless we are talking about a static phenomenon, globalization "does not extend only to the macro-economic level, but it also penetrates into all the microsocial structures, to the very human person, infusing its destructive spirit, which is the spirit of money. (...) Morality always leans on the dynamics of the spirit. Morale is the shift from the level of to be to the level of to be good. And the difference between being and being good is not quantitative but qualitative. However, when all qualities are considered as quantities and when they are valued by money, there is no room for morality ... Therefore, it would

not be exaggerated to talk about the virus of money, which in the form of an universal epidemic or globalization epidemic, deeply contaminates the human person"[13].

It is widely reported that we live in an era where most of the social life is subsumed to global processes, an era in which national cultures, economies and borders are about to collapse. We have been accustomed to invoking globalization as a reference system to explain and interpret the various processes and phenomena characteristic of the contemporary world. We can say that we find the influence of globalization in different proportions in all areas of human activity. The concept still preserves the ambiguity note and is often used without much discernment, even by the researchers, putting it on top of all forms of modern development - that we can hardly explain anything with its help. The increasing magnitude of the phenomenon, acceleration and depth of impact shapes widespread social interactions, approaches distant communities, and extends power relations from region to continent globally[14].

Although it enjoys more and more attention in specialized works and not only, it has not yet been possible to harmonize the speech on all the topics that it embraces, some of which remain sufficiently controversial for the time being[15]. Beyond the sphere of contradictory discussions, globalization is a reality that manifests itself independently of our will. On a more than general look, the phenomenon appears to find itself in an impossible and explicit whole, with parts, components and microelements whose classification could not even elucidate the ambiguous nature of the huge process in which integrates. Ulrich Beck was certainly right in seeing in globalization "the most commonly used and abused (key and litigation) word, the most rarely defined and probably the most misunderstood, nebulous and politically spectacular of the past and future years"[16].

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[13] Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *Globalizare şi Universalitate, Himeră şi Adevăr,* translation by Father Prof. Vasile Răducă, Bizantină Publishing House, Bucharest, pp. 13-14.

[14] Zygmunt Bauman, *Globalizarea şi efectele ei sociale,* Antet Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002, p. 5.

[15] Among these: determining the moment of occurrence of the phenomenon (some authors put it in the fifteenth century, others in the middle of the 20th century, and most after the Cold War cease); the use of a common terminology with which to operate, starting from the name (the French prefer the term "globalization", others "regional globalization"); the synthesis of a commonly accepted definition for the globalization concept, etc.

[16] Ulrich Beck, *Ce este globalizarea? Erori ale globalismului - răspunsuri la globalizare,* Trei Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 37.

Most of those who analyze the phenomenon refer to it as an *evolutionary process*[17], a *historical transformation*[18], or a *multidimensional reality*[19] resulting from "the diversity that is part of its intrinsic nature"[20]. The constant of all these approaches is the surprise of increasing interdependencies, on the one hand, as a result of "increasing interconnections reflected in the expansion of information, technology, capital, goods, services and people flows"[21], and on the other hand, the increase of openness and transparency. This can be translated by the fact that time and space are compressed to an intensity and in unprecedented ways, which projects globalization to be "not just a mere social theory but rather a description of a new extremely significant social reality"[22], or, in the words of one of the most important supporters of contemporary (economic) globalization, "the link with global flows may perhaps be the central aspect of current history"[23].

We are currently witnessing the genesis of a global civilization, in which the word most used is "common". The common interests, the common values, the common effort are thus subsumed to the common cause of humanity: the creation of a common topos in order to cut the common destiny of mankind. The phenomenon of globalization leads to a widening of the identity of religion and civilization that will gain in importance for individuals and peoples. When we discuss the factors of potentiating the interactions of different cultures and civilizations, the super-factor, which binds and at the same time incorporates these factors is precisely globalization.

Thus, it can be perceived as "a widening, deepening and acceleration of world-wide interconnection in all aspects of contemporary social life, from finance to the spiritual sphere". The above definition is quite succinct, but it gives a lot of light to the aspects that support globalization to sharpen the multicultural theme. We can talk, with

[17] George Modelski, „*Globalizations as Evolutionary Process",* in George Modelski, Tessaleno Devezas, William R. Thompson (editors), *Globalization as Evolutionary Process. Modelinz Global Chanse.* London: Routledee, 2008, pp. 12-29.

[18] James H. Mittelman, *Whiter Globalization? The Vortex of Knowledge and Ideology,* London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 4-5.

[19] Paul Hopper, *Livingwith Globalization,* Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006, p. 139.

[20] Ian Clark, *Globalization and International Relations Theory,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 35.

[21] NIC (National Intelligence Council), *Mapping the Global Future,* Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2004.

[22] Ian Clark, *quoted paper,* p. 35.

[23]Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies,* New York: Free Press Paperbacks, 1996, p. 15.

a certain reservation, of a "global civilization": we have habits, interests, common orientations with people belonging to so many other cultures, nationalities, religions, we share common desires. Pressed from all sides by a modern society that still does not have all the means to adapt and integrate quickly and efficiently, people are not prepared to play an important role in the new globalization situation.

Most often, globalization analysts try to avoid obvious engagement towards the overly simplistic slogans of one side or the other, seemingly adopting a neutral tone. Globalization is, in the first instance, an objective process and a phenomenon of development of the contemporary world, a process that is based on a number of impersonal causes and with a great potential for transformation (in good or less good) of the lives of people around the world.

Regardless of our wishes and expectations, besides the fact that it is a positive or negative phenomenon, it is certain at the moment that globalization is a real, alive and obviously unstoppable fact. Opposing this reality would be at least absurd. Being a term with such a wide and frequent use, we can say that it has been placed in a kind of dishonesty, being attributed as a consequence to every movement, every change in the fields of reference of human activity: economic, social, political, cultural, educational, scientific and technical, spiritual, etc. That is why, in the discourse of globalization, we find, in fact, the sources, from which the theoreticians inspire ideologically, religiously, economically, politically, culturally and, last but not least, financially.

Globalization creates extraordinary opportunities and brings with it, intense progress in certain areas; very large expectations are created in the most diverse areas of the world. But this progress is far from being uniform, with globalization, in some cases, provoking strong tensions at the level of social and economic structures that cannot adapt to rapid pace. These static and dynamic differences can cause the genesis of major conflicts.

On the other hand, the spiritual dimension and religiosity — diametrically positioned to the hurriedly outlined "prophecies" in the rush of globalization — organically render exceptional resources capable of laying the foundation of that inner equilibrium so much coveted by the contemporary man, annoyed by the anxiety and piercing doubts. Our challenge remains, as our Savior Jesus Christ said, to "*understand the times well*", to "*take our cross every day*" to be ready to follow Him, living under

the impulse of Love and Truth, and to try a resistance to depersonalizing ideologies of any kind[24].

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