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# PHD THESIS SUMMARY

## RELIGION AND GLOBALIZATION. SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES AND MISSIONARY PARADIGMS

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### **1. Argumentation, frameworks and research objectives**

This doctoral thesis proposes a multilateral analysis of the relationship between globalization and Christianity from the missiological and sociological perspective. The stake of this analysis is not aimed at a descriptive analysis of the phenomenon of globalization from the perspective of the two angles, but at highlighting the point where the mission of the Church and the global dynamic meet constructively in the society of the 21st century.

The truth of the Gospel must be confessed and re-confessed, given the new frames of today's society, which has experienced secularization, religious conflict, religious indifference, atheism, the brutality of the militant political ideologies of fundamentalism. But the relevance of this Truth, which is of the Savior Jesus Christ, is constant regardless of the given context. And it is the responsibility of the Church's mission to effectively and meaningfully articulate Christ's truth for man and the community living in the year 2024.

The 21st century already has a large number of epithets, labels. Expressions such as post-modern, post-industrial, post-religious, but also post-nihilist, the age of unbelief, the abolition of man, are examples of how people feel and think about our age. We could collect a few dozen such tags, analyze and interpret them, and see what kind of future they might lead to. In the context of worldviews, these labels regarding globalization as a powerful and complex process are debated. Another indication is the amount of writing on the topic of globalization. According to internet resources, every area of life is affected by globalization. Google, for example, provides about 500,000 entries for this word. If globalization were perceived as not drastically affecting people's lives, there would be less interest in it. Given its implications for human life at all levels, those happy with the phenomenon are quick to praise and defend it, while those who are unhappy or skeptical are quick to protest, warn, and discourage it.

Globalization already has so many definitions and is such an obvious phenomenon that we might be inclined to think that it is unjustified to begin a critical reflection on it on the basis of definitions. However, sometimes the evidence hides in it things that require our attention. Therefore, critical reflection can be part of an effort to raise awareness of the problem and be a sign of the need for the Christian Church to engage in dialogue that concerns its present and future role in the world. Although globalization does not have a precise definition, and although there is no consensus on what it really is, different thinkers have tried to define it in different ways. According to renowned sociologist Peter L. Berger, "globalization is a worldwide process driven by economic and technological forces. It brings with it a multitude of social and political developments, some benign, some anything but

benign. But globalization has also had massive consequences in the field of culture, including the central cultural phenomenon of religion".<sup>1</sup> Dennis P. McCann offers a similar definition: "Globalization is a multiple process, driven in large part by epochal changes in communications and transportation technologies that impact the full range of diverse societies and institutions in complex and unprecedented ways, though without a unique center of initiative and control".<sup>2</sup> In particular, for Abdulaziz Sachedina, globalization denotes the evolution of a supranational role that Western industrialized nations will play under the leadership of the United States in shaping the social, political, and economic future of mankind. Whether imagined or real, this ongoing US supranational role and its fundamental influence in global politics is a source of fear in the rest of the world, including European nations.<sup>3</sup>

These three definitions summarize and make us think about the nature of globalization, its origin and destination, and its multilateral consequences. This PhD thesis tries to relate globalization to Christianity, especially to its fundamental values regarding faith and the mission of the Church to communicate the Gospel. In this relationship, globalization will not degenerate into a process that excommunicates and destroys, but rather will become one that builds unity and generates hope in a world that urgently needs both. We live in a world that urgently needs increased responsibility and accountability, based on ethics, values and a normative "must".<sup>4</sup>

Many of those who oppose globalization today fear the decline, even the loss of cultural identities in favor of a kind of MacDonaldized collectivism. The temporary process of globalization does not start from people's faith in God, but rather from industry and technology. If one considers religious fundamentalism, it is not the source of industrial and technological globalization. However, the result, as in the case of Christianity, is the same: it creates a mentality (consumerism), a culture that affects all levels of people's lives, generating a new way of being in the world. Will it produce that uniformity that many fear? Most likely not, because, according to Christian doctrine, being created in the image of God, man has a "transcendent dignity that cannot be bought, exchanged or taken".<sup>5</sup> If we think in terms of systems theory, according to which any system has two fundamental dimensions - change and the status quo - it is the dimension of change that will have to meet the other fundamental dimension, the status quo. What the outcome of this meeting might be is not really predictable. What is predictable is that values with stronger stability will prevail, and these might include values such as truth, justice, ethics, and faith.

Skeptics warn, among other things, that the loss of people's traditional national and religious values will lead to their values being replaced by those of the consumer society. Some sociologists, philosophers and theologians agree that this fear is justified by the fact that we are already partially immersed in this type of society and see many of its negative consequences, such as the substitution of long-term values for short-term ones, depersonalization and dehumanization of social relations. Michael A. Casey observes that: "The problem with globalization, as it currently operates, is its tendency to favor

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Berger. "Globalization and Religion." *Hedgehog Review* 4 (2) (2002), p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Dennis P. McCann. "God and Globalization." *Theology Today* (2003), p. 273.

<sup>3</sup> A. Sachedina. "Political Islam and the Hegemony of Globalization: A Response to Peter Berger." *Hedgehog Review* 4 (2) (2002), p. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Oskar Gruenwald. "The Teleological Imperative." *Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* XIX (1/2) (2007), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

secularization among peoples and cultures that are not secular and do not want to be secular.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, globalization seems in this sense to be a last spasm of an antiquated type of Enlightenment that has led Western society down an existentially wrong path.

Although collectivism and loss of values might occur at certain levels, this fear can be easily dispelled if we look at the Greek, Roman or Christian globalizations, which did not lead to the disappearance of cultural identities. Christianity is a particularly relevant example, different from Hellenism or Romanization, because it had to do with faith, the greatest value of people. It had and continues to have a much longer life than the other two phenomena. The Christian church expanded from one culture to another while integrating into them, incorporating them without destroying the ethnic identities of the peoples who embraced it. Perhaps it is useful to note certain social groups in the midst of powerful consumer systems, such as the American one, that continue to adhere to their religious, cultural or ethnic values and identity.

Optimists also see globalization as a chance to diminish the one-sided focus on individualism generated by the Enlightenment, responsible for many crises affecting Western society. The hope is that globalization can bring nations and people closer together and consequently promote the value of communion as people strive to live better economically. In fact, as Gili S. Drori states, in the current process of globalization, the world can be considered more and more as an "imagined community".<sup>7</sup>

Globalization per se is not a new phenomenon. Even secularization, which preceded globalization, was - for some still is - a globalization movement. Rooted in the Enlightenment, secularization displaced the Christian Church from the center of society's life and pushed it to the margins, moving it from the top of the individual's value hierarchy to optional, to the status of one among many, not even *primus inter pares*. Secularization has de-mythologized sacred texts, de-ritualized divine services, de-traditionalized daily life, and de-sacralized the highest values that have given meaning to people's lives for millennia. Sometimes it produced a radical reversal of values, turning the abnormal into the normal and vice versa.

Although it seems to have been prevalent and quasi-universal in the Western world, secularization, according to Berger, no longer characterizes our age.<sup>8</sup> It exists as a limited phenomenon that has spawned the globalization we witness today. Consequently, there is a continuity between the two. Secularization spread throughout the Western Hemisphere, drastically affecting Protestant churches, the Roman Catholic Church, and even the Orthodox Church beyond the Iron Curtain, where Marxism and generally materialist philosophies and ideologies were forcibly imposed. However, globalization has an even older history. We can easily find it in antiquity. Hellenism, for example, was one of the most significant globalizing forces in all of history. Its effects are visible to this day. The Roman Empire was also a system of globalization that left recognizable traces on all subsequent societies, East and West.

From a cultural point of view, to the extent that globalization facilitates communion, this value must be recognized. Just as a person finds fulfillment in communion with other people, so do cultures. They find their full value and validation in communion with other cultures. In an "open culture", reports Dumitru Popescu, both separatism or exclusivism, on

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<sup>6</sup> Michael A. Casey. "How to Think of Globalization." *First Things* 126 (2002), p. 55.

<sup>7</sup> Gili S. Drori, *Globalization and Organization: World Society and Organizational Change*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Berger. "Globalization and Religion", p. 9.

the one hand, and uniformity or collectivism, on the other, are not real risks<sup>9</sup>. Open culture can retain its own values by which it identifies itself, while being willing to adopt new ones. The model is unity in diversity, a paradigm offered for centuries by every major branch of Christianity—Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant.

Of course, it could be objected that this theory is only valid when it comes to culture and not when the process relates to industry and economy, because even though industry and economy are defined and affected by culture, they are perceived as having a visible tendency towards hegemony. As long as globalization manifests itself through hegemonic tendencies, it will be viewed with reservations or even hostility. However, the dilemma is whether hegemony will be exercised by force or merely by influence. If by force, it will meet resistance. If it does so through influence, it will give other nations the option of whether or not to borrow from the hegemonic culture.

The objectives we propose in this doctoral thesis aim at the following paths of argumentation: framing the mission of the Church in the global horizon of today's world; displaying the confrontation or tandem complementarity between Christianity and globalization processes; specifying the consequences of global dynamics (economic, cultural) on religion as a whole; sketching answers from a missionary point of view to how globalization places the Christian Church in a new condition of theologizing, pastoral reflection and act of representativeness in pluralistic and multicultural interaction.

## 2. Actuality of the treated theme

Like any other subject, religion is analyzable today, analysis shaped and forged during the 21st century, it reflected the interests and political situation of the world at that time. As the 21st century unfolds, it is undergoing a major transition, along with religion itself. The study of religion was developed in a context of industrialization, urbanization, European colonialism and world war. Nation-states, some with colonial territories, were the dominant political unit at the time. Inevitably, the subject reflected this situation, even when taking a critical stance. The "religion" was often identified with one of the few "world religions" that the colonial powers helped to classify as such. "Primitive religions" were also a subject of study, naturally for missionaries in the colonies, and later for anthropologists. Christianity and churches occupied a particularly important place in the researchers' imagination, shaping the way many imagined the "real" religion. Where Christianity was strong, the mainline churches were still closely integrated with the nation-states in which they were located, often as established national churches. The issue of "secularization," namely whether religion was in decline as people moved from traditional, rural environments to modern urban environments, was a high-priority topic on the agenda.

At the beginning of the 21st century, things were beginning to look very different, and the study of religion changed to keep up. Nations remain powerful as units of political power and social identity, but nation-states have been challenged by broader global forces, whether economic and cultural flows or supranational corporations and other organizations. Some empires collapsed, including the British and Soviet, but the United States and China retained de facto imperial power. In general, "the West" has lost its dominance as multilateralism has replaced post-Cold War unilateralism.

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<sup>9</sup> Dumitru Popescu. "Orthodoxy and Globalization: Global Culture and Particular Cultures." *Bulletin of the Boston Theological Institute* 2.2 (2003), p. 3-14.

The influence of globalization processes has been evident in social and cultural networks through new media such as the Internet, in the expanded power of global capitalism, and in the growing influence of international bodies and legal instruments. The flow of global capital around the world and the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small number of corporations have challenged the power of nation states and their political institutions. In this process, the importance of national borders has been both challenged and reaffirmed, with some calling for a world without borders, where capital and labor can move freely, and others opposing such "globalism". In the early 21st century, popular anti-globalist movements emerged to defend the power and legitimacy of many aspects of national government. Some conservative populist movements express nostalgia for a time when the nation-state was the locus of power and the backdrop of personal and collective identity. Now, however, all this is happening against a global backdrop.

Religion has changed and adapted as well. The types of religion that attracted the attention of earlier generations of sociologists of religion still bear the imprint of their contemporary national and colonial contexts. Insights into these religions are still valuable. But these forms of religion are now competing with newer types that are integral to the challenges and opportunities of globalized societies. For example, traditional African religions that were previously stigmatized as "primitive" experienced a renaissance, while "lived" types of religiosity in everyday life, of enormous variety, began to be taken much more seriously. serious - as serious, perhaps, as the "official" types of institutional religion. The pressures and opportunities of marketization and consumerism have inspired various new types of "religion of prosperity" that offer to enhance people's material, physical, psychological and spiritual well-being, which have also come to the attention of researchers. Also, how women and other marginalized groups fought for greater influence and power and accelerated the development of "alternative" types of spirituality that give them a more central role. Global flows and connections have made all kinds of new religious connections and alliances possible—the breadth and reach of the Internet and its ability to feed a multitude of social groups have helped facilitate this process. Religion of all kinds has become linked to many types of identity formation and struggles that generally have less to do with national identity than with a multitude of subcultures focused on shared interests, aspirations, lifestyles, and identities.

As Peter Beyer<sup>10</sup> suggests, the political situation that shaped the academic study of religion can usefully be characterized as "Westphalian". During a period of rising European power, the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia consolidated nation-states and their borders in an effort to bring more peace and stability. Part of the agreement referred to religion, which was included in national jurisdiction by the formula cuius regio eius religio (whose rule, his religion). In other words, whoever was sovereign could determine the official, national religion. Religion was defined from top to bottom. As the power of monarchs declined over the following centuries relative to that of state governments, the latter came to play a more central role in regulating the nation's religious affairs. This meant that there was usually only one officially "established" religion in a national territory, the treatment of other "minority" religions being a contentious matter. Even when tolerance was extended, these minority religions were disadvantaged in relation to the official religion (which, in the case of the European powers, was always Christian, but could be Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox). And

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<sup>10</sup> P. Beyer. "Questioning the Secular/Religious Divide in a Post-Westphalian World." *International Sociology* 73(2) (2013), pp. 109–129.

religions outside the West have been shaped by this pattern, either by the colonial powers that ruled them or by their own national governments: the nation-state shaped religion, and religion shaped the nation-state.

An important element of the Westphalian settlement was that religion became increasingly differentiated from other aspects of society, becoming a separate sphere in its own right, with its own representatives, rules and boundaries. Instead of being an integral part of the state and society as it once was - an integral part of education, health care, legislation and politics - it has become more bounded and autonomous. This contributed to the emergence of the idea of separate and discrete religious "traditions" or "world religions". For example, in India under British colonial rule, a religion census was introduced in the mid-19th century that had a lasting influence on how people envisioned and measured religion. It measured religion in terms of separate 'traditions' or 'communities' - Hindu, Muslim, Christian and so on, and has remained an important tool of governance as well as research. Religious communities themselves often accepted this approach and tried to strengthen, reform and purify themselves accordingly. In the process, religions and their leaders came into competition with each other, either peacefully or violently. Until the 20th century, the world's religions competed with each other not only within national territories but also across the globe in search of status, followers, and resources. Initiatives have also been developed to promote better relations through interfaith dialogues.

The differentiation of social spheres also led to the growth of the secular sphere. As religion separated and became more autonomous, other spheres such as politics, health, and education began to define themselves as non-religious—often as non-scientific and non-religious. This dichotomy between the religious and the secular has become a defining characteristic of modernity and the study of religion. Secularism, the ideology underlying the desire to separate religion from the rest of social life, often bears the imprint of its national origins. In some countries, national constitutions and ideologies are defined as being secular in the sense that the state is neutral with regard to religion (as in India), while others are secular in an atheistic and anti-religious sense, as in communist countries with ideologies Marxists who sought to restrict or destroy religion (as in the old USSR and China during the Cultural Revolution).

Thus, the influence of the Westphalian model continues into the 21st century, with religion still being treated by many governments and legal systems as an autonomous sphere. Some countries still have an official, state-sanctioned religion (eg Iran), and national identity is still closely linked to religious identity. Others recognize a limited number of official, registered and tolerated religions (eg China). Other states allow more of a free market of religion under the banner of "religious freedom." The latter has taken different forms, especially in post-colonial societies with different attitudes towards religious freedom (for example, compare Singapore and the Philippines). However, by the last quarter of the 20th century, it was increasingly clear that we were entering what Beyer calls a "post-Westphalian" era, in which religion is less and less tied to national identity as well as the old religious authorities. Rather than being structured by the nation-state, religion now takes many new forms that are less constrained by governments and national borders. It moves from a bounded sphere to something much more fluid and begins to differentiate itself from other social spheres; for example, it creeps back into health care systems to provide healing and wellness, or is used by the mass media and modeled after the entertainment industry—such as American televangelism in the 1980s and 1990s. At the same time, religion and "spirituality" also take

increasingly "de-traditionalized" forms, especially in practice, while at the same time certain groups and certain leaders increasingly claim to be the "true" representatives of a religious tradition (true Orthodox Christians, true Hindus, etc.) Thus, "religion" becomes more varied and difficult to define, either in theory or in practice. The situation is very different from the period in which many classical works on religion were written.<sup>11</sup>

A related approach that emerges from the analysis of globalization, as being particularly useful for understanding religion in a contemporary, "post-Westphalian" situation, is that of "marketization", including the integral process of consumerization.<sup>12</sup> The links between marketization and globalization are close.

Beginning around the 1960s, in the West and tributary countries elsewhere, and then, more recently, in the Global South and parts of Asia, what might be called a "global market regime" emerged to challenge the old Westphalian "nation-state regime". This was due not only to the growing power of capitalism in practice, but also to the growing influence of a "neoliberal" ideology that promoted the supposedly "spontaneous" regulation of the free market as a better alternative to central planning led by the nation state. Increasingly, the (global) market was promoted as more efficient than the state and more capable of ensuring human freedom, material well-being and economic growth. The credibility of this point of view was enhanced after 1989 by the collapse of communism and the "triumph" of capitalism and the free market. Countries such as communist East Germany were quickly subsumed under West Germany's market logic in the process of German unification. China has also embraced some of the neoliberal approach. What happened in the decades that followed was the progressive colonization of all social spheres within an economic logic under the banner of "rationalization", "efficiency", "pragmatism", "globalism" and "economic realism".

The neoliberal advance has led to a reduction and diminution of the power of the nation-state and a reconfiguration of its nature and function - now understood as ensuring the optimal conditions for economic growth, above all. The term "governance" began to take the place of "government". This illustrates a change in the way power and authority are instituted and exercised.<sup>13</sup> Governance denotes a centralized and vertical exercise of power within well-defined hierarchies and categories contained by the nation and its people in the case of democratic governance.<sup>14</sup> The concept of governance, on the other hand, has been developed in every field of business administration and invokes a more horizontal imaginary, with ambiguous democratic and often anti-democratic aspects. Governance involves a point-based, networked, pluricentric and multi-level type of regulation where mutual trust and negotiation between interdependent actors are essential.<sup>15</sup> The ideal of governance is to avoid rigid institutionalizations in favor of relatively flexible institutional frameworks, with "rules, norms, knowledge and social imaginary articulated in a contingent manner". Presented as a form of participative, value-neutral and optimizing self-regulation, governance is grounded

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<sup>11</sup> F. Gauthier. *Religion, Modernity, Globalisation. Nation-State to Market*. London and New York: Routledge, 2020, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 34.

<sup>13</sup> F. Gauthier, T. Martikainen, and L. Woodhead. "Introduction: Religion in Market Society." T. Martikainen and F. Gauthier, eds. *Religion in the Neoliberal Age. Political Economy and Modes of Governance*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 1-20.

<sup>14</sup> E. Sørensen and J. Torfing. "The Democratic Anchorage of Governance Networks." *Scandinavian Political Studies* 28 (2005), pp. 195–218.

<sup>15</sup> T. Martikainen. "Multilevel and Pluricentric Network Governance of Religion." T. Martikainen and F. Gauthier, eds. *Religion in the Neoliberal Age: Political Economy and Modes of Governance*, Farnham: Ashgate, 2013, pp. 129–142.

in the idea of the global free market and promotes technical and judicial processes over supposedly arbitrary "top-down" political regulation. In practice, counting and measuring take on new prominence, as do compliance and regulation, with managers and experts increasing their power.<sup>16</sup> The impact of neoliberal reforms and practices on social services and welfare provision, as well as on religion, has been dramatic and has contributed to the blurring of the boundaries between the religious and the secular.

For religion, marketization changes the environment in which religious institutions and authority operate and introduces new ways of managing human and economic resources. In a Westphalian context, religious institutions were often bureaucratized, hierarchical, vertical, and regulated by the state. Now, they are often forced to downsize, streamline operations, develop communication strategies and brand identities, outsource administrative tasks, and present their "mission" as providing profitable services that meet individual "needs" of spiritual "consumers" in the new regime of the global market. They compete for market share in a global "religious market". Even traditional Christian churches, for example, are adopting new media and marketing language. The ideology of religious freedom that appeals to a legal framework of human rights is compatible with this new regime and is increasingly invoked by both governing mechanisms and religious actors, the latter using it to protect the right to proselytize and remain free from state "interference".

Thus, religion acquires new forms and roles. In some cases, it fuels resistance movements, for example in connection with the Arab Spring. Religious NGOs operate in many parts of the world, such as Africa, to mediate between global market pressures and everyday life. In other cases, the new networked, agile, charismatic, horizontal, and transnational religious organizations that offer consumers immediate benefits, both worldly and supernatural, have grown so large that they now defy established forms of religion and their social and political privileges. Many religious "enterprises" are beginning to look and even perceive themselves more as businesses than as public services or arms of the state.

Marketing involves consumerization. A consumer culture is characterized by the imperative of self-expression and therefore visibility, as individuals and collectivities struggle to be recognized. Visibility becomes an imperative and a goal in itself. Social media and a more visual culture reinforce these trends. Some researchers look at Islamic movements and new ways of prosperity around the world in this light. Concentrated in Southeast Asia and Latin America, they emphasize how many celebrate accumulation and consumption as virtues and evidence of divine favor. Modern consumption means much more than the purchase of goods or services: it means the modernization of the self, the expression of one's identity, the production of community and shared values, and the circulation of values and symbols. Currently, the consumer provides the subject and citizen model. Religious "suppliers" must produce attractive religious products that attract consumers. Religion becomes a matter of choice rather than tradition—something to be entered into voluntarily rather than something handed down from birth. Muslims, Hindus, and born-again Catholics join Pentecostals in accepting that "authentic" godliness must be assumed through personal commitment and choice, far beyond the borders of the West.

Thus, an ethos of consumerism shapes religion from below as much as neoliberal marketization shapes it from above. As a result, much of religion detaches from its old moorings in state, society, family, and neighborhood and becomes more deinstitutionalized,

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<sup>16</sup> D. Graebner. *The Utopia of Rules: On Technology, Stupidity and the Secret Joys of Bureaucracy*. Brooklyn, NY and London: Melville House, 2015, p. 33.

mediatized (broadcast through communications and social media), and event-based. National forms of religion give way to new imagined transnational and global communities, such as the global Ummah or transnational networks of Christians or transnational communities of like-minded neo-pagans. Expressive-authentic religion that appeals to the subjective depths of each individual is gaining more and more importance. Religion is not only subjectivized, but also projected outward through dietary habits, rituals, and visible symbols. Identity is communicated through symbols, signs and objects that can be easily transmitted through new media. In this sense, religion is becoming more and more a matter of lifestyle. Religion is also a means by which individuals and communities fight back, resisting "inevitable" economic imperatives and neoliberal logic and creating alternative personal and collective identities, both toward each other and toward the gods.

Taken as a whole, the processes discussed are better understood not as a uniform and homogenizing process, but as an uneven process with varying effects on different social institutions in different parts of the world. Religion illustrates this as well as anything else; globalization offers many trajectories for religion. Part of the success of many global religious movements lies in their ability to interweave global tradition and networks on the one hand with local culture on the other.

Many of the new religious "waves" or "projects" that have spread across the globe in the last century are related to new global processes, including consumerism, advertising, branding and marketing; fast communications; rationalization and standardization; and global capital and finance flows. As shown in the chapters on "Transnational Movements," some of the most prominent examples are the rise of global Christian charismatic revisionism, global Islamic revisionism ("Islamism"), indigenous revivalist movements, and fundamentalism. The latter manifests itself in various forms within different religious traditions, for example Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish and Christian fundamentalism. "Prosperity religion" can also be seen as a global wave adapted from different religious traditions, just like "spirituality" and neopaganism, which present different cultural variants with some common characteristics. The differences and variations within these global cultural projects are often as notable as the similarities.

Nor should the transnational character of some religious groups and dynamics - from lay meditation movements in Chinese societies to young Buddhists in Australia - and how they have a commercialized dimension. Local religious groups originating in East Asia, for example, have managed to spread throughout the world. Buddhist organizations such as Japan's Soka Gakkai and Taiwan's Tzu Chi assert not only their economic power but also the achievements of the economies they represent by extending humanitarian work to places affected by conflict and disaster. The same can be said of the global expansion of indigenous churches, which are driven not only by a postcolonial claim to what they believe to be authentic Christianity, but also by a desire to demonstrate and spread economic and divine power. Born in the Philippines, the Iglesia ni Cristo (Church of Christ) and the Kingdom of Jesus Christ, for example, are restorationist churches that now have millions of members worldwide. From humanitarian work to church planting, these global projects, enabled by the rise of aspirational middle-class followers, contribute to pluralism and global civil society, following some common paths of development but rooting them in different ways in local situations.

In addition to adapting to global pressures, including economic and cultural ones, religion can be a force of resistance and offer alternatives. Some examples involve resistance

to pressures that are considered foreign, Western and/or colonial, and are based on indigenous and non-Western traditions. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was an early and influential example at the macro-political level. Juergensmeyer argues that fundamentalist movements have in common, despite other differences, a rejection of modern Western secularism. Other examples include resistance to Western scientific ideas such as Darwinian evolution, or to sexual and gender norms such as pro-homosexuality, for example in Nigeria and Ghana, or to economic determinism and globalism, even in the US. In Europe, Muslims' use of religious symbols, customs and practices – such as women's wearing of head and face veils – to secure their personal, cultural and community identity and piety has been heavily commented upon. The revival of indigenous forms of religious and spiritual practice, from traditional healing practices to neo-paganism, is another example that exemplifies some aspects of globalization and resists others. In addition to encouraging global connections and universalism, globalization encourages difference and particularity. This is why the local and the nation-state as a marker of demarcation remain important.

This new and still emerging situation is what this thesis aims to capture: religion in the condition of globalization, especially with reference to Christianity, analysis doubled by the research of missionary vectors in the contemporary global society: How it responded and how it responds missionary Christian Church to the complex processes of globalization? How does the mission of the Church actualize the truth of the Gospel in a plurireligious world where the flow of consumerism dictates brutal forms of dehumanization of the dignity of the human person? Is globalization a consequence of Christianity or an enemy that threatens the status of religion in society? These are just a few questions I intend to answer.

### **3. Research methodology and sources**

Given that the analysis is carried out on two levels - missiological and sociological - the methodology used in this approach to research the relationship between the mission of the Christian Church and globalization in contemporary society - involves several directions: comparative analysis, historical-critical evaluation, verification of statistics and theorizations sociological, descriptive research related to today's contextual reality.

At the international level, the topic of globalization, as I noted, is highly debated. But from this register we cannot omit the substantial contribution of Romanian missiologists to the clarification of the relationship between Christianity and globalization. From their bibliographic references, one can see the concern for the actuality of religious freedom in contemporary society and in the mission of the Church. We mention Rev. Prof. Istodor Gheorghe, Rev. Prof. Gheorghe Petru, Rev. Prof. Aurel Pavel, Rev. Prof. Gelu Călina, Rev. Prof. David Pestroiu, Rev. Prof. Mihai Himcinschi.

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