

## **The Religious Fundamentalism and the Modernism. A Theological, Psychological and Cultural Approach**

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### ***Abstract***

The phenomenon of modernism, postmodernism and their corollary - globalization, is a major challenge for society at all its levels: religious, political, social, cultural and economic. Religious fundamentalism is a movement that rejects modernism and its values. The eschatological perspective, the destruction of the world ancient order, a heretic hermeneutic of the sacred texts, as well as the apodictic character of its own value judgments give specificity to any fundamentalist movement in religious terms. Face to this challenges the European states try to build a new inclusive society, where every human being and every community has its own place, in respect of other, and respect of the freedom of everyone. Relieving the tensions within the religious fundamentalist movements through inter-confessional and inter-religious dialogue is one of the objectives through which an inclusive society can become a reality.

**Keywords:** exclusivism, inclusive society, globalization, postmodernism;

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Fundamentalism is today considered rather a political-religious ideology, a political deviation of all the religions, whether it is Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, or Judaism, etc. Giovanni Filoramo observes the global dimension of the phenomenon of religious fundamentalism that manifests itself in the great religions, as a natural reaction to the loss of the identity of modern society. It can be said that religious fundamentalism is rather a perversion of the meaning of religions, a hybridization of major religions under the influence of modern political ideologies [1].

According to Huntington religion plays a role in defining the establishment and development of each civilization history, and the clash of civilizations, as an expression key to culture contemporary, is the effect of indirect religions that are the basis of these civilizations or cultures.

Mircea Eliade think every religion has its own morphology with its proper mechanisms, a doctrine, a moral theology, etc. In the same way a religious fundamentalism intrinsically has these internal features. A religious phenomenon will not be revealed as such except considered in its own way, i.e. studied on a religious scale, to not betray its own morphology.

Religious fundamentalism, located in contrast to democratic modern society is an attempt retrieval profound meaning, into a contextual complicated environment, and it is basically a reconstruction of our world in terms of axiological re-laying the foundations of modern human being and of the world in which he lives.

If we accept the fact that the modern national state is a construct of Western Europe then, as a consequence, we can say that religious fundamentalism is oriented anti-Western Europe.

The massive invasion of religious fundamentalism in modern society is evident on all levels of existence and tends to occupy the whole of society, in all its capillaries. This holistic aspect of religious fundamentalism is evident in all hypostases.

These reverberations and invasion are evident at all levels: religious, political, psychological, social, of the traditional family, individual, etc. This holistic character causes the penetration of Western or Asian societies, suite of the process which has been called the clash of civilizations, and this invasion occurs not only in the confrontation between civilizations but also within each civilization.

This complex phenomenon can only be deciphered in an interdisciplinary framework: theological, sociological and politico-philosophical. Therefore, no matter how brief an analysis may be, these multiple approaches must be taken into account.

## 2. ARGUMENTATION.

### Religion fundamentalism. Conceptual delimitation

The phenomenon of fundamentalism religious can be understood as a rejection of modernity, including its corollary, the globalization [2]. The opposition to the modernity is the main characteristic to describe the fundamentalism. From this perspective only the movements of this period, XX century, are called fundamentalisms.

On the other hand, other centrifugal religious or radical religious movements can not have this title, properly. The heart of this reactions of rejection of modernity are dictated by the apodictic character of their religious beliefs.

The main characteristic of the foundation of religious fundamentalism is that opposition to modernity with all its values. This opposition starts from the premise that the respective religion is in imminent danger of dissolution and therefore engages in this struggle to preserve its own values. The truths of religious fundamentalism are called into question by modernity, and this danger dictates the tension between the two movements. Essentially, religious fundamentalisms are opposable to modern society, and the truths of a small social group tend to become generally accepted as being of divine origin. In principle, four distinct ways are used to achieve this goal.

First of all, these movements use a way of interpreting their own Holy Scriptures in a heretical way, decontextualizing them, amputating them, through a partisan hermeneutics, which betrays their fundamental meaning. Thus, through a misinterpretation of the sacred texts of the great Religions, promoters of compassion, peace and understanding between people, the religious fundamentalism movements reach and cultivate intolerance, exclusivism and terrorism.

Based on the revealed character of Scripture as the expression of divine will for humanity, the fundamentalists attributed absolute character to their truths, of their group, and that it is set up in opposition to the truths of the secular world in which they live.

It is paradoxical fact that always the fundamentalists consider the unique fountain of Divine Truth (sacred texts), however fundamentalism perverts the meaning of these scriptures by an interpretation distorted and selective. Thus, we are witnessing a paradoxical and tragic destiny of the fundamentalism: even all religions promotes compassion and truth, finally, they arrive to spread up hatred, intolerance, exclusivity or even murder and

organized terrorism [3]. For these reasons we witness a critique of the religion, generally, that forms the decay of society and thus the growth of the hostility between different classes of the postmodern society [4].

Third, fundamentalists use in their own discourse a radical eschatological theological perspective. For them, the restoration of the heavenly Kingdom is imminent, and for this, it is imperative to transform the world in accordance with this millennial cosmology. Islamic djihad, Saudi Arabian whabbism, contemporary fundamentalist martyrdom, the reconstruction of the Temple, celebrate this restoration of the kingdom of heaven on earth. The struggle from the spiritual plane has become one in the concrete historical plane, with all the violence that this fight implies.

Fourth, fundamentalists use a dual fragmentation of the world, approaching reality in a Manichaeian style. For them, the world is divided into good and evil, truth and falsehood, Good and Evil, Us or them, and so on. This approach knows no nuances, and polarization becomes an excessive and discordant phenomenon, a factor that divides the society into two deeply antagonistic categories. Around these radically expressed values are the communities of fundamentalism type, with their recourse to the ineffable and pure roots of their own religions, simultaneously with the discourse directed against the decadent present.

Lastly, this phenomenon is specific to modernity, therefore, pre-modern radical movements do not justify this name, even if it manifests one or more of the above characteristics. On the other hand, within every traditional religion there are fundamentalist currents, as not all those labeled with this name in the so-called fundamentalist movements are actually fundamentalists, but only those who manifest all five characteristics listed.

### 3. A THEOLOGICAL APPROACH

The religious fundamentalism is a movement for the defense of certain truths considered immutable, coming from God, a defence of a morality that is desired to be imposed even at the level of the state policy and to the every citizen[5]. Saving these souls, even by force, in the charismatic Christian movements, beyond the attitudes of such policy becomes objective morality [6]. The exercise of any faith have to not harm religious belief of other. The freedom of religion is an attribute that is intended to catalyze just interreligious and intercultural dialogue. The Religions themselves, their Magisterium and their own theology can activate the interreligious and intercultural dialogue to avoid the resurgence of the fundamentalist movements.

We believe that an theological evaluation of the phenomenon is necessary to decipher the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon, and to find possible solutions to the current crisis. Both, traditionalist religions and political modern ideologies must defuse the tensions inside fundamentalist religious movements, to build an interreligious dialogue based on freedom and trust of each other, on the respect for the rule of democracy, the rule of Law and human rights.

Christian theology starts in approaching otherness from the principle of love of neighbor. This can be manifested at least at the level of empathy, through a dynamic full of compassion and by cultivating the respect of every different person and community. Another fundamental principle of Christianity is that of cultivating peace and understanding between people, communities and cultures. Recourse to these values can be a step forward in responsible interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

### 4. A PSICHOLOGICAL APPROACH

The paradox of fundamentalism is that although it ideologically rejects modernity in all its aspects, but at the same time it is one of the pillars of modernity using the democratic political systems of modern societies, using specific information technology to radiate its own ideology. Another paradox of fundamentalist movements is the violence with which they impose their own ideology, directed against both their own members and those outside their community. And, not at least, the

fundamentalist movements are a subtle form of cynicism. Although, the leaders of the fundamentalist movements denies any influence of modernity in their own value system, however, in a frame sociopolitical dictated by modernity, they try to impose on society their own ideals[7].

The violence manifested by the fundamentalist movements is exercised both in terms of discourse and in terms of concreteness, through acts of decisional exclusivism and even the terrorism. This pseudo-culture of hatred is fueled mainly by fear. The fear of losing the religious identity in the face of the ocean of globalization is what fuels hatred and contempt, and which, consequently, maintain the state of opposition of fundamentalism to the values of modernity.

Fundamentalist Islamic movements show violence against both innocent European citizens and Western culture, as was evident in the attack on Charlie Hebdo. magazine Terrorism can be explained as a reaction of fear to losing the religious and cultural identity in front of multiculturalism as a result of the clash of civilizations, a "pseudo - culture " of hatred, born both from fear of other, but from ignorance, too. Faced to the process of dissolution of one's own identity and losing the values of traditional religion, the religious fundamentalism is trying to restore their ancient order by cultural, ideological and physical violence.

In this way they can explain the attack Daesh against editorial magazine Charlie Hebdo from Paris in 7 january 2015, like a form of hatred directed against cultural Europe, not only against the European citizens [8].

The Manifest violence is also dictated by the crisis of identities in the face of the avalanche of phenomenon of globalization and relativization of religions, the progressive secularization. This identity questioned by postmodernity made possible the emergence of fundamentalist currents, generating a reinterpretation of it in an always fluid global context. terrorism as an extreme form of violence directed against the innocent has a pathological component from a psychological point of view.

Terrorism as irrational action is driven mainly by the pressure of the fundamentalist group of which the terrorist is part. In the context of a particular management of terror that the group wishes to establish against a government or a delimited group, terrorism uses reason and technical means in a way that manifest both fear and hatred, crossed by a feeling of inability to achieve one's own ideals.

## 5. A CULTURAL APPROACH

With an Europe fragmented by many religious and political movements, crossed by the non-religiosity currents, the progressive process of desacralisation and the multiculturalism are realities that are in opposition to the religious fundamentalism.

Religious pluralism, accentuated by the phenomenon of immigration in the ten recent years , has brought with it a series of solutions and a series of difficulties . Among the benefits effects of religious pluralism need to remember out of the isolation of religions and amplification of dialogues. Whole cities were confronted with the installation of large communities of Islamic population in Europe, and this work has made it possible cracking the existing enclaves, developing a interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

On the other hand, the negative effect of this phenomenon is the religious relativism, manifested in all religions, both at the level of morality, but also from the point of view of knowledge, with evident effects both at the level macro, but also micro social [9]. The results of this reaction are important for the construction of personal and community identity. In fact, religious fundamentalism is active in the cultural space and has a key role in reconfiguring religious identity, both in the community and personally.

Demolishing a series of values considered degrading for the individual and society, these fundamentalist movements try to rebuild an atypical modern society. This reconfiguration is exercised between two extremes: non-religiosity and radicalism, both of which exist in the modern society.

Fundamentalist movements have similar objectives, related to the structures and values of modernity. Christian fundamentalist movements show a certain opposition to globalization, secularization and secularism. So, in essence "the fundamentalisms are great narratives but dishonest, in competition with other large honest narratives: secular humanism and religious pluralism" [10].

The tendency towards individualism is evident in all the manifestations of the person, in his attempt to reconfigure his own identity, in accordance with his own individual values. The same tendency is highlighted in the specific delimitations of the fundamentalist religious community: rites, morals, concepts, own traditions, in opposition to those that are of modern origin.

Modernism initiated a continuous process of reconfiguration of culture, social space, and religions. Postmodernism continued this process in an organic and accelerated way through a reinterpretation of culture and religions. In this approach, there was a current of privatization of religions, with its isolation in the private space, excluding it from the public space.

Globalization, as a constantly expanding phenomenon, has generated axiological debates and updated new concepts such as: religious pluralism, religious intolerance, religious exclusivism, religious tolerance, inclusive society, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, etc. All these key concepts are the fruit of up-to-date modernity and can provide a credible perspective on building an inclusive society. The inclusive society means a construction in which every individual and every religious or ideological community feels welcome, by cultivating the freedom of each social actor, but also by empathy and pluralistic dialogue.

This type of society, without being a utopian construction, can be one in which individuals and communities contribute actively, personally and like community to the building of a society capable of fertile dialogue.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Overall, it is curious that a number of political ideologies have become pseudo-religions, while some beliefs tend to become religious ideologies. The European democracy, the States of Europe can combat this phenomenon, with churches implicating religions generally, to facilitate the genuine dialogue and to eliminate the violence in our contemporary societies, violence exercised against members, both the fundamental movements, and their own little communities.

Against multi-culturalism proclaimed by Charles Taylor, one of the solutions of this inclusive society can be the integration of the immigrants as individuals, not as an ethnic community, or religious community. This way can be a means of integrating and fertilization of own culture by the immigrants in Western Europe. Religious intolerance of fundamentalist movements is incompatible with the rule of law, and governments must use the tools at their disposal to create an inclusive society through interreligious dialogue.

The participation of each community in the life of the cities is exemplarily expressed in a Christian literary fragment from the second century, still valid today, the "Letter to Diognetus". The anonymous author of the letter outlines the basic principle of coexistence of Christians in a hostile Roman world: "Christians participate in all the tasks involved Roman state, are loyal and active, do not show any form of violence against anyone in any way, respecting the Christ adage: "give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to the God what is God's ..." (Matthew, XXII, 21). [11]

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