

NAGYPÁL, Szabolcs

Spirituality of Globalisation



Globalisation does not equal to liberal capitalism. Globalisation is a lifestyle we live, an economic system we practice and a culture we create. There are different approaches to it: the liberator says it promotes innovation, the protector says it destroys national identities, the protester says it exploits the poor, the regulator says it spreads better living standards, and the sceptic says it simply does not exist.

GLOCALIZATION

The hybrid word glocalization discloses to us the Janus-face of the whole globalisation-process. On one hand, we can witness the globalisation of local issues (distant wars, faraway disasters); on the other hand, we can also encounter the localization of global issues (greenhouse effect, nuclear armament). Both unification (European Union, Germany), transborder regionalization (EU-regions) and fragmentation (Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia) are valid and vivid phenomena in the global scene. Some diversities might be lost, there are more and more diversities every day.

COCA-COLONIZATION

This double-facedness applies to the expressive term "coca-colonization" as well. While it does mean a kind of global consciousness and citizenship, feeling home everywhere where you find the same old taste, being also aware of the diversity of the surroundings; it also refers to the standardization of commercial tendencies, which impoverishes with sameness. This nickname reminds us to the colonization of most of the two-thirds world but in a new way, by the means of cultural-mental-spiritual pseudo-drugs (according to the original meaning of coca). This kind of totalization makes our existence more shallow and commercialized.

ECUMENICAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

Globalisation happens in various levels and in different realms of life. In the religious field it is marked by the two directions of dialogue, ecumenical (interdenominational) and interreligious. There is the unification process, the birth of the World Council of Churches and different world communions (Lutheran World Federation, World Alliance of Reformed Churches). Nevertheless, the World Council of Churches has almost four hundred member churches, which number is growing every year. Ecumenical agreements create new tensions and apart from the ecumenical spiritual revival, there is a strong fundamentalist spiritual revival as well. It is not surprising that the heroic movement for the reunification of the Church of Jesus Christ started as the great project of liberal Protestantism - this branch of Christianity seems to be the most vulnerable to split. It also explains why at the beginning the Roman Catholic Church was so unwilling to join the ecumenical movement - in this tradition the value of unity has always been kept and it has enjoyed a high esteem.

SYSTEMATIC EVIL

The globalisative process transforms the ethical space in which we live in. Day by day we are confronted with moral dilemmas about our relationship with strangers who are suffering somewhere in the *faraway nearby*. Although it may result in the feeling of no responsibility, the suffering of strangers are at least partially caused by processes in which we are implicated. The global ethics consists of an awareness of the systematic evil which means that even if we have the resources, the system does not allow us to share and to redistribute. This system intends to build us in sooner or later. The most dangerous in the systematic evil is that it can so much distort our moral optics that the sinful forms of life can periodically achieve a certain prestige of normality.

POLLUTION OF INFORMATION

Among the side-effects of the informatical revolution we can mention the pollution of information, which creates the new division between the information-rich and information-poor. The overproduction of truth blocks our receptivity to new ideas, till we perceive only the things that confirm our own options in order to preserve the *status quo*. This results in a descent into vast triviality, the pornography of insignificance.

PRIORITIZATION (DISCERNMENT)

Among these circumstances, the new name of wisdom nowadays is prioritization (or discernment). Our time is a non-renewable resource, which we waste in such overproductive places as the supermarket, or the carpet in front of the television. (An average Western person watches more advertisements in one's own life than a student spends in lectures in a four-year university.) Since the system is either inevitable or we understand ourselves as part of the system, it increases our individual responsibility, we move from the ethics of attitudes to the ethics of responsibilities. The Gandhian model, for example, emphasizes simple living, non-violence, gender equality and respect for the environment. Our desire for knowledge urges us to line up with the means of globalisation (we can make journeys to distant real and virtual places) but in a responsible way, still keeping the distance (being *in* the world, but not *of* the world). We can call it counter-globalisation as well, using the positive sides of the process: the efficiency of high technology, the openness of communication, the sharing of information, the organization of the poor and oppressed to work for change. If we allow ourselves to be globalised by love, it is never a cheap and easy process: as fair trade products are more expensive, fair thoughts are costly in terms of their prerequisites and consequences. Let us be holy and thousands of people will be saved around us. Instead of being tourists, we should be *pilgrims* in re-sacralizing the world.

MONDIALISATION

The neo-Latin version of globalisation, mondialisation emphasizes more the Mother Earth as a macroorganism. *Interdependence* means that we together constitute a bigger whole: "what you did with the least of you, you did it with me". Interdependence needs compassion with the Globe - in that sense, Jesus became global on the cross.

HIERARCHY OF TRUTHS

Christianity has to understand Herself more and more as a minority (the people of the *Narrow Path*), since our horizon has broadened (although this allows us a more self-conscious choice of our own religion and denomination), and we are in fact a minority in the Globe, even if still the biggest minority. But we became minorities in our own realms as well because of the secularization-process. We are called to be the salt of the Earth, witnessing with our life - we should not misglobalise our faith, because it

can lose its taste. This shift requires the end of triumphalism, the metanoia of the rhetorics of supremacy. What we need is not relativity but the hierarchy of truths. It seems that the new gap is not between the world religions but between the religious (committed) and non-religious (non-committed) people. The challenge for the world religions is the question of *compatibility*: the *both/and* way of thinking instead of the methodology of either/or (condemn or commend).

PLANETISATION

Our children will gather together in similar World Student Christian Federation conferences within twenty or thirty years. The topic then will not be globalisation, but Planetisation (or Galaxisation) and Spirituality. The signs of planetization have already appeared with the landing on the Moon (in the sixties), and the process has produced its kitschy or commercialized form as well: this year, in 2001 (instead of a Space Odyssey) we witnessed the first space-tourist (who was definitely not a space-pilgrim). Conferences like this - the meeting of future bishops, enterprise leaders, politicians, media-gurus, professors and artists - are never without consequences. Dialogue is an enormous power: it can change lives, sensitize, conscientize and raise awareness. Let our vision be stronger than the discouraging reality (*live as if*). "Never think that a small group of talented and committed people can not change the world. In fact, it is the only thing which has ever done so." Concerning globalisation, the main question for all of us is what to globalise: and we have a clear criterion for this. We vigorously have to globalize the goods which the more we have the more we share, and the more we share the more we have: love, respect and friendship.

Some of the best books and articles concerning globalisation and religion, which have shaped my way of thinking recently:

ARTHUR Chris, *The Globalization of Communications. Some Religious Implications. Geneva, 1998.*

HELLER Ágnes, *A zsidó Jézus feltámadása (The Resurrection of Jesus the Jew). Budapest, 2000.*

INOUE Nobutaka, *The Information Age and the Globalization of Religion (2001).*

www.kokugakuin.ac.jp/ijcc/wp/global/06inoue2.html

KELMAN Naamah, *Globalization and Religion. www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/interreligious/cd33-12.html*

KURTH James, *Essay: Religion and Globalization (1998). www.indiaworld.co.in/subscribe/rec/stories/july26-20globalrel.html*

NUECHTERLEIN James, *The Politics of the Id. First Things 2000/4. 13-14.*

<http://print.firstthings.com/ftissues/ft0006/opinion/thistime.html>

SHOMANAH Musa W. Dube, *Praying the Lord's Prayer in a Global Economic Era. The Ecumenical Review 1997/4. 439-450.*

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