

“BABEȘ - BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY
THE REFORMED THEOLOGY FACULTY
“Ecumene” Doctoral School

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN POSTMODERNISM
Doctoral Theses Summary

Coordinator,
Prof. Univ. Dr. Molnár János

Doctorand,
Cristian – Marius Munteanu

CLUJ-NAPOCA
2019

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Key words:

Church, secularism, postmodernism, Bible, spirituality, objective truth, society, mission.

Abstract

The church occupies its place in society's environment and in individuals' universe, no matter in which manner is perceived. The church represents *something*, even if the meaning of that *something* may vary from overwhelming dimensions of the interest implied to its unfelt and insignificant presence. The role of the Church is a subject that may stir up a vast interest both for theologians and for the uninitiated public, due to its practical and theological implications. Very often, the Church and its role are matters of public debate, mainly for reenergizing the latent powers of the Church or for making the society aware of the fact that the Church still has something to say, beside its secondary motivations. Even if the role of the Church is, at times, translated as confessional, the teaching about the Church must be approached biblically, leaving alone the subjective options.

The surveys bring to light an alarming low level of formal membership of the population to the religious organizations, matter that determines both specialists and the uninitiated to affirm that the voice of the Church is slowly fading away and it will diminish to its extinction, among so many social offers. Despite some data that points out the high levels of spiritual interest among the population, going through the recent sociological studies, that were cited along the research, it is definitely proved that the declared spirituality cannot be found in Church attendance, that a certain religious affiliation will not lead to concrete fruitfulness either for the individual, for the Church or for the society and the point of view about life is not influenced by a certain formal religious identity.

Through the present academic undertaking the author proposes himself to analyse first of all the influence that Postmodernism exercised in society in general and in the role of the Church especially. This research study is more actual than thought of due to the fact that the active or passive representatives of Christianity are letting go of the guilt of the visible Church helplessness blaming everything on Postmodernism. The collocutors unload all their chronic frustrations on several terms used obstinately in the decades of the new millennia: „postmodern” and „postmodernism”. Beside the almost exclusive blame of the Postmodernism, for all the harm caused to the Church, unfortunately the frequency with which these terms are utilized is inversely proportional to the number of occasions that researchers are saving to understand the deep meaning of the words used as leitmotiv.

When we place the sociological data in a contemporary, postmodernist frame of understanding and interpretation, the result may lead us either toward the annihilation of all hope or at the resuscitation of optimism. In what manner does Postmodernism affect the spirituality of Christians, liturgics and missionary activities, and also the essence of the relations that Christians develop with their fellow citizens? Does Postmodernism affect the manner in which the Bible is interpreted and then applied by the Church? What theories, practices or projects should define the role of the Church nowadays? In what terms is the dialogue between the Church and society carried? Is Christianity a philosophical alternative to the postmodern paradigm? How should the disinterest of the Christians towards the Church proposals and the diminishing numbers of worshipers to the public services be interpreted? Should the Church re-launch itself in its actual position and reaffirm itself in a triumphant manner, in a modern style, its dogmatic and exclusivist message and its supreme statute, its privileged position by which it started out in history? Should the Church forsake its honourable position, where it was placed by Jesus, and give up on its role trainer taking over the relativist statute of „one among many voices“? Is the Church today forced to choose between the two, or does postmodernism offer a third alternative? The present research has tried to answer these questions and many more like them.

The importance of the subject in knowing the domain

The dilemmas that the Church encounters are complex. In order to understand the present context, we need to follow its roots all the way to their spring. Therefore, this research paper has passed briefly through the historical periods that the Church crossed and that have marked either the Church's teaching or its practice, and sometimes both. The historical overview has examined in summary the different stages and philosophies that were distinguished in society, evaluating in what manner and to what extent did they impact the perception of the Church about itself, as well as its role in the eyes of the possible recipients. The recent changes and the religious trends of the contemporary society have been analysed, the manner in which this relates to divinity and the Christian teaching, summed up in a term so complex in meaning and so laconic in rendering – *secularism*.

The present research paper has tried to contribute to the deeper understanding of the semantics of the terms, without claiming to be an exhaustive approach, just cutting through

their content and stopping to understand the impact these concepts create in our world and the manner in which the Church makes reference to this reality.

The central hypothesis of the research study

The research paper emphasises the impetus and the complexity of the postmodern phenomenon, that seeks to reveal if the Postmodernism is or it is not relevant for the Church current activities and it is an invitation to a theological re-analysis in order to identify, give an account for and reaffirm the divine springs of the Church provenance.

The author proposed himself to supply the believers and the church leaders with materials for the current situation analysis and for building new avenues of action. Regarding the target public, the research is not addressed only to the academic environment, but has in mind both the current situation from a local church, that needs to discover, be aware of and take its responsibilities that derive from the *raison d'être* of the Church, and the general public Christian and non-Christian. The main objective of the research is to encourage the Christian reader towards an actual understanding both of the Church's state as well as of its role in the postmodern context, especially in the European space, where the postmodern challenges are felt stronger and where their decoding and settlement is seen as an emergency.

Methodological considerations

The basic discipline that provided the general frame of the discussion in the present subject is Theology, starting from the author's conviction that the Bible is God's revelation and the unique source of the religious truth and practice. During the research, from the desire to capture the reality in a fare manner and in order to offer realistic solutions, there have been inserted philosophical, historical and sociological points of view, expressed in a common manner, inclusive in the theological aspects in order to facilitate the access to as many as possible categories of readers.

The literature that addresses Postmodernism is vast, therefore there have been browsed and analysed points of view of those who have different perspectives on the given subject: those interested in Postmodernism and its positive effects on the Church, those who examine it attentively and highlight its weak parts as well as of the indifferent ones, who do not even believe in Postmodernism's existence.

This study is built on the foundations laid by former research, yet it addresses Postmodernism from the perspective of the manner in which it influences the Church and especially its role, aspect that has never been developed consistently until now. Many studies have been done on the postmodern concept on one side and the Church on the other side addressing various dimensions belonging to them, the role of the Church in the postmodern society must be well-defined and properly expressed.

The first chapter, *The Impact of Secularism on the Church Activity*, analyses briefly what is happening in the contemporary society, from the perspective of the manner in which spirituality is understood and lived. It describes the frame of the discussion about the role of the Church in contemporary era, starting from the obvious disinterest both of the believers and of the ones uninitiated to God and the Church, the institution that represents Him mainly. There was an attempt to define the conceptual and practical phenomenon that highlights this lack of religious preoccupation – *secularism*, from a bivalent perspective: The Church point of view and exterior perspectives. The contemporary man, tributary to current conceptions, in his pursuit for development, knowledge and rulership of the environment through his own capacities, rejected the religion as a plausible option. This tendency points out a return to the devil's initial intentions after the Creation, the alienation of men from the credible sources that were filled with development potential or man's refuge in the worst case, in a religious scepticism induced in general by man's alienation from God in search of a surrogate of communication with the supernatural, defined strictly personal. The gradual loss of the absolute domination of the Church in the religious spectre along history equated to a disoriented approach of the society and of the culture and with a departure from the biblical track, benchmark of behaviours. The Church suffers also from a burdensome deficit of image that has come so far up to the loss of both influence and its function as benchmark. The second move was an attempt to define *secularism* from various theological perspectives, traditional and protestant, discovering that, fortunately the deficit of religious orientation does not inhibit completely the search of man for the spiritual, for love, for soul development, sincere relationships, sustainable values, etc. The chapter continues with an incursion in the traits of the secular mind, trying to underline the fact that in postmodernism *secularism* has a different form of manifestation. This presupposes interest for spirituality but aversion toward the religious forms and institutions and preoccupation for values that in the past were expressed only by the Church.

The second chapter, *The Ideology of Society from Premodernism to Postmodernism*, starts out retrospectively, from the Premodern roots of the traits of the actual world, crossing through Modernism and its influence upon the Christian spirituality and faith and it ends at the philosophical springs of Postmodernism, analysing the contributions of Nietzsche, Derrida and Foucault, up to the significant modification of the contemporary points of view about life. In the period of Modernism, the world was considered an immense machinery that ranted and exaggerated trust in the power of reason and the capacity of science to solve the existential dilemmas and the daily problems of humanity. During that period, the Church had to affirm courageously and consistently the faith that her future is her prime concern, investing with perspective and waiting for the best from tomorrow.

With no pretence of an exhaustive definition, the present understanding of Postmodernism was analysed and especially the relevance of this concept for the Church, underlying the dogmas of Postmodernism, the relations that exist between these and the Church teachings and the potential communication bridges that could be built between the two. Postmodernism is a notion that is hard to nail down in a precise definition, so much as its proponents have different views, more or less relevant. The term is vague, and the definition it is not adequate to the Postmodernist ideology. Rather than being defined the Postmodernism was analysed through the values and concepts promoted, among the most used are pluralism and change.

The Postmodernism does not believe in progress and does not wait for any improvement of the parameters of existence. If something is changing, this happens simply as a fortune, without any connection to a direct cause. The postmodern current is brought to the front by a crisis of authority, by disbelief in the all-encompassing affirmations about the truth and knowledge and by the deceptions caused by the grand narratives of Modernism. If in the Pre-Modern society the authority was considered unquestionable and non-negotiable, aspects picked up in the great theological themes of the Bible presented preferentially in Modernism, in Postmodernism the influence of a person or an institution, generally accepted, in diverse spheres of social life is fragmented, arguable and can be challenged. Therefore, it could be considered that Postmodernism is in fact a virulent reaction to Modernism.

The major search of the postmodern society is authenticity, both personal and of others and the community, which they offer and where they have the sense of ownership through participation.

From the relations' point of view, the relations have priority over the construction of an objective safety by the exhaustive investment in the superiority of the personal ideals and concepts. The immediate context is crucial for postmodernists, to the detriment of philosophical ideas of the suitability of knowledge to their object or of generalization, each one's perspective defining exclusively the notions of good and evil. For the postmodernists, the reality is presented and defined in a subjective manner, not through a revelation from outside, and the so called understanding of reality is in fact the result of an interpretation, that is in its turn is transitory. When the postmodern individual has to choose between the authority exercised by third parties from outside and gaining of personal experience, obtained by a perseverant exercise, he considers the personal experience as being more important than authority. More than that, when a set of dogmas is placed on the evaluation scale, with the personal experience on the other side, the personal experience wins the contest.

The third chapter, *The Biblical Role of the Church in Society*, examined from a theological and practical point of view the definition of the Church, its biblical functions and its major responsibilities, suggesting the biblical models of the Church, without confessional interpretations. The Church was founded by Jesus Christ and is constituted from the believer's gathering who assume an identity defined by Jesus, built on the sacrifice of the Son of God and mandated to glorify God and lead people to salvation. Having a divine origin and universal character, the Church is also invested with the authority to fulfil the original plan of God, which was formulated in different terms "make disciples of all nations". (Matthew 28:19). The nature of the Church is emphasized through the metaphorical expressions used in the New Testament: *The Body of Christ, God's People and the Temple of the Holy Spirit*.

The objectives of the Church are internal and external. Among the internal objectives we may count: worship – safeguarding the life in the Body of Christ and consolidation of the believers as a people of God. Among the external ones are: serving the society – as a social personification of the Kingdom of God and Evangelism – sharing the hope and the theological truth about God. The major responsibilities of the Church are the

permanent disposition toward service and the capacity to adapt both the language and the way of facing constant changes. The models that the Church should use in service are those of a messenger, who proclaims a message and a servant, who transforms the churches in an expression of *deaconship*.

Any discussion about the church must start with the objectives God had in mind at its creation. The Christian Church was born out of passion for people that defined the Deity exclusively and that aimed toward the saving transformation of the final destiny of the people on Earth. But, in its passing through from one generation to another, from the Author to His disciples and from these to contemporaries, the saving passion has lost its sense and intensity. In order to resuscitate the love for the eternal wellbeing of people, the leaders of the Church must be reminded of its original objectives, so simple yet so incandescent, and so neglected yet so powerful. The Church must restate in a powerful manner its former identity and zeal for the works of God. Only a simple recognition at an intellectual level of the present critical situation will not bring automatic improvements. A conscious assuming of God's vision, through an accurate theology may revive latent energies and gather dissipated hopes. The theological dimension is supported and followed by an adequate religious experience, of a spiritual dynamism and moral physiognomy calibration that animates the vision. It is not sufficient for the Church to highlight the value of knowing the right doctrine. The neglect of the practical aspects of religion, that transform the individual's personal life and then, by direct influence the others who are present in the context, erodes the Christianity bringing it down to a theory that lacks the force of persuasion. As a direct consequence, the church becomes a theological enclave, deprived of the joy of starting out saving interactions. The intellectual assumption of this vision does not determine automatically the launching of certain actions. The Church responsibilities and its service models are not assumed rationally. The experimentation of the truth is the most attractive part of the religion. The Christian Church was born as a result of a spectacular personal, transformational experience, that have extended toward groups and finally toward the entire known world of that time. Therefore the responsibility of the present Christian Church is to shoulder this responsibility of heralding and serving, mentally and whole heartedly that makes the faith live and convincing.

The third chapter represents the crux of the research paper. This places the definitions and duties of the Church next to the postmodern social and religious context

described in the first two chapters. As a result, the next two chapters used the definitions, functions, models and the major responsibilities of the Church, in order to customize a Church offer, specific for these times.

The fourth chapter, *The Church in a Postmodern Context*, analyses both the Church daily life (membership, message, and philosophy of life) and the theological answers the Church must create, practice and offer both in a theoretical frame and by its missionary practices. There have also been suggested ways of the Church's relating to the postmodern culture, proposing various manners of engaging in contemporary dialogs, through creative manners of transmitting the message of the Church in the discussed context. The Christian Church is passing through an extremely critical period, emphasized both by the lack of preoccupation of the church members for new spiritual ideals and by the disinterest of those who do not belong to the religious spheres for any church proposal. The statistic situation of the Church must be analysed in a responsible and visionary manner. This undertaking may bring the last argument in favour of the final abandon of the "Church" Project or it may open the eyes of the interlocutors toward new possibilities of introducing the Church among the options they take into consideration, in a society that is missing sustainable landmarks. The recovery chances of the Church will grow directly proportional with its interest in a fare diagnosis and an urgent return to the normal functional parameters, by assuming its biblical mandate, by renewing its offers to the public, by increasing its attractiveness from many points of view and by changing the sense of its actions from centripetal to centrifugal. The Church cannot continue promoting an agenda against postmodernism, but rather it should seek ways and means by which it might become relevant in the cultural reality it activates. The Christian life cannot be separated from the principles it preaches even if they might seem unpleasant at times, burdensome, embarrassing or too demanding. The Church preaches neither the generalization of comfort nor the diversity's convenience, but the unicity of the contemplative options toward God.

The fifth chapter, *The Role of the Church – Service Models*, suggests concrete modalities by which the Church exercises its role of opinion leader and exponent of certain saving solutions for the world that is in a philosophical drift, analysing the key priorities and offering some recommendations on how should the Church carry out its mandate. In a postmodern culture the Church is pressed hard to gradually contextualize, because the postmodern non-believers have to cross two precipices before uniting their destinies with

the Christian orientation. The first precipice is the cultural one and the second is the one of the Gospel. No matter how strange it might look at the first contact with the Christian elements, the Gospel seems strange due to the subjects addressed but also due to the solutions it proposes. In the role that the Church plans to prove, it must mobilize all its creative energies in such a manner that all that it designs and launches – worship, training, and mission – might be perceived as pertinent and actual answers. The perspective, from which the Church regards these realities, may change also its relation from danger to opportunity. The Church has a choice either to hide behind its personal agenda, maintenance projects or traditional predictable initiatives for saving the appearance of an active institution, or taking a reforming step forward assuming its mission as opinion and action leader for which it has both a mandate and resources.

The change is not up to negotiation, even if it is expensive. The Church cannot change, but those that comprise it, can. At the junction where the Postmodernism crosses ways with the Church two challenges are present. The first is a deeper investigation of this issue from a biblical, philosophical, anthropological and cultural perspective. The second is the integration of these subjects in the universe of faith fact that would create an impact upon the manner in which we live our faith toward others both at an individual and at a community level.

Conclusions and further developments

The purpose of this research has not been to critic the Christian Church, but to reaffirm its role. The Church was initiated by Jesus Christ to indicate, in an appropriate and saving manner, the way to salvation. In its bi-millenary history, the Church witnessed historical convulsions, theological disputes and social unrest that affected together or separately, the fluent course of its specific activities.

The research paper began describing the condition and the religious traits of the contemporary world, highlighting the fact that the Church voice is less and less heard, on one side due to the low level of formal religious affiliation to the religious organizations, and on the other side due to the anachronistic renderings of the Church. The Postmodern Era gathers around the Church unique challenges, never met in history at such intensity up until now.

The present paper highlighted the fact that postmodernism is an aspect of the current daily life that can neither be negated, nor be overlooked. Concerning its approach it is extremely important that the Church must avoid a corpora blame game of Postmodernism and should fructify the re-calibration chances, asserting in a fresh manner its identity in contemporaneity. Some are asking if the Postmodern Era has not been already outgrown entering already in a Post–postmodern one. The reasons of this preoccupation are coming from the return of the spiritual interest among the masses of people, fact that could be translated as a re-birth of the traditional values and perspectives. The Church must bear in mind the reality that the interest has been diversified in the post-industrial society, beside the institutionalized Christianity, numbering also the independent Christians, repudiated from the Official Church and also the so-called intellectual Christians, captivated by the Christian teaching, but without any bonds with the organized Church.

Postmodernism offers the Church great and unique relaunching perspectives. First of all by the lessons that it must learn about the assertion of its historical roots and its divine identity, and then through the adjustment of its working tools, through the calibration of its promoting methods and through the adaptation of its messages to the desperate needs of the contemporary public. This paper has highlighted several aspects that have in mind the Church as an institution and the individual role of the believers.

Regarding its institutional profile, the Church has a prophetic role, and it is not exerted through the enforcement of certain points of view upon others, neither through verbal expressions, no matter how profound they might be. The reforming and saving mandate of the Church is accomplished through a humble yet convincing life, influenced by the preached truth and expressed through deeds of love that augment the efficiency of Christians' subsequent presentations. The Church is, in its essence, called to promote the Good News through verbal expressions and incarnation, starting with a mutual need: the world needs the Church message, and the Church gets exactly the frame in which it can exemplify the concrete message it has. If the Church subordinates itself only to a social, popular agenda that heralds the equality of chances and the social justice, it will lose its moral guaranty and will betrays its calling.

Another role of the Church is to speak persuasively and battle for its spiritual and emotional healing. Only a holistic performance of the Church, by word and deed may bring back the lost credibility and validate its societal presence, assigning great spaces for the

miraculous interventions of the One who founded the Church and died for it and honours the Christians who serve very close to God.

The Church has no chance to return in actuality through enforcement. The postmodern people are extremely reserved toward any type of explicit authority. Its power and proponents, as well as their correctness and honesty in their speeches are looked upon with distrust. Without knowing the precise motives behind this prudence, it is sure thing that the leadership style accepted by postmodernists is not that of a charismatic leader, all-powerful and perfect, but the one who embodies the model of a servant leader. At the same time, the faith and the optimism of the leader that passes on life giving energy are fundamental elements for the postmodern searchers. Their leaders do not only establish guide lines but convey power for change through their own example. More than that, the Church exercises its role as leader in society also by what the Christians accomplish, as a result of the example and inspiration received from their leaders, through the sessions of specific training.

Regarding the practice of individual religious rights, in a context in which the absolutes and the relatives can cohabit at the same time and person, the Church must abandon the absolutist modernist expectations that forced religious points of view and respect the right of each individual to agree or disagree on a given issue, to adhere or not to a point of view and to preach or not a certain conviction. In this manner, the religious liberty is granted as an inalienable right, both for the one who presents as well as for the receptor of the message. At the same time, the Christians are called to witness the absolute ethical norms presented by Jesus Christ in the midst of a doubtful moral approach and of a debatable interpretation of individual rights.

The local church must reflect the nature of the Church in general, as a community of fellowship and mutual up building. The Church must not promote an artificially created fellowship for saving the appearances and filling in the liturgical emptiness, but one that has in the centre the believer despite the shortcomings provoked or the number of perplexities for which he needs an answer. For all these, the Church must be adaptable and flexible, especially as on one side it cannot give proof of a complete knowledge of God and His way of speaking with people, and on the other side, God and not the Church establishes and fulfils the criteria of salvation and of entrance in the Kingdom of Glory. The Church must let go of “activism” and start “making disciples”, in order to have an objective

justification for each of its programs, to permanently innovate in order to meet most of the people's needs, to renew its worship, all of these, under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit that leads to energizing the believers who understand their mission and live out passionately their transforming mandate.

In Postmodernism the Church is limited also in its lively presentation of its main instrument of identity, authentication and apologetic promotion – the Bible, due to the great question marks carved out in the minds of the public from the period when the Church justified with the Bible certain social abuses and political interferences. The postmodernists do not view the Bible as a flawless guidebook, and its purpose is exercised, in their opinion, only through consistent hermeneutics. For a postmodern world that appreciates the free and unlimited exchange of ideas, the abandonment of the supremacy of reason and the inference with the supernatural, the Christianity may only be relevant from an intellectual point of view. The Church has the duty to present the Bible closely related with Jesus of the Bible, who valued the community relations. The Bible encourages us to experiment the communication with God and the growth in Christ. The Church Mission will not be, at first, to convince the target public to accept elements of dogma, but rather to offer to people the possibility to experiment the fellowship of a community of faith and communion. This first step will be followed by a daily and ascending modification of the personal spiritual parameters, which will consolidate it gradually as the community relations will test it out.

Regarding the role of the Church for the contemporary individual, Postmodernism must not be viewed as a secondary phenomenon, which takes place in the outskirts of society. The Postmodernism influences the entire culture, so that, when someone identifies himself as *postmodernist*, he accepts thereby that his paradigm about life modifies his habits, definitions and thought processes. Regarding the social presence of the Christians, the paper sought an answer to the question if the actions of the Church and the deeds of the Christians are sufficient arguments in favour of the Gospel, or if the Good News needs to be passed on through words too. The ideal answer came through Jesus Christ: He preached and provided his disciples with a message that needed to be preached, because the good deeds need also a theoretical basis. When Jesus sent his disciples in mission, he offered them both gifts of service as well as gifts for preaching. The preaching is the explanation granted for the good deeds, and these prove the authenticity of the preaching. Therefore the two, the service and the preaching certify each other. In order for a Christian to overcome

the inherent difficulties of a dialogue carried out on such coordinates, he must avoid the absolutist pretensions regarding the theoretical and practical aspects of his faith. Instead the validity of a presented truth resides in its practical demonstration. Therefore the Christians who are tempted to continue sharing the teachings of the Church in a modernist style are required to address practically oriented apologetics, by exemplifying in their own lives the lessons taught. Only in this way, the postmodern dialogue partner may test out the capacity of a teaching if it offers what it promises. Thus, the Church receives the challenge to prove through its representatives, the transforming power of the Gospel, as well as the disposition of the Christians to live out the practical message of the Cross of Christ, through his sacrifice for others. The Christian must understand what immense responsibilities he bears in a world rent out by conflicts and circumspect to the theoretical teachings, deciding to be “a living letter”, offering to the curious, the uninitiated or in total disarray a personal illustration of the story of redemption, exhibited both through the manner and the content of personal and public worship as well as through his incarnate apologetics.

In Postmodernism the expression of everyone is encouraged and the pretention of superiority of a certain understanding is dissuaded, the key of interpretation being everyone’s point of view. Each individual is considered capable to contribute to an ample understanding of the truth in debate and at the same time, encouraged to choose from the diversity of understanding what attracts or convinces him. The automatic merging of certain opposed point of view is, also, a key element for Postmodernists. Therefore, in a world where the authentic hope is missing completely being replaced by an optimism that is lacking foundations, the Christian must manifest authentic spirituality, friendship and a healthy vision regarding the future. The hope is a decisive element in the ensemble of tools the Christian wants to use to accomplish his mission of service. One of the roles of the Church is to live out *the hope* both individually and at the community level and help out that this notion may carry inspiring messages in a world that is weakened spiritually and disoriented. The Christian has the role of testifying the Gospel not only as a valid truth for the person, but also for the public.

In the contemporary religious landscape, the conversion is a discussed and disputed matter, both from the freewill perspective of each worshiper, exercised through his right and obligation to decide his spiritual track, as well as from the freedom of conscience perspective, implying each one’s right to express his convictions and feelings. The

postmodern climate, seems open towards the most radical decisions, therefore the Christian should not forget that his messages must have a finality, which quantifies itself before everything else through the improvement of the internal parameters of each individual, before the improvement of any frame, environment or context.

The Church must use its chance to evaluate the theory and practice of its mission, to seek an answer to the question if its believers' lack of missionary disposition is a consequence of the postmodern influences from a society that replaced preaching with dialogue and evangelism with witnessing, or is a result of the loss of personal sense of mission, that could have the potential to save first of all the messenger. The believers must understand that if they are expected only to "transfer" towards others certain religious traditions, issue disowned by Postmodernism, or they must present a basically teaching accompanied by personal experience. Here we meet an important chapter that is worth developing later – what should the priority be in the Church mission: the individual Christian life or the assertion of the faith? The practical value of Christian ethics or the dogma? Can the proclamation type of evangelism be legitimate in the eyes of postmodernists or should it be replaced with a dialogue for everyone, manifesting mutual respect listening to the other's points of view, having in mind the desire to clarify the wrong understandings, so that each one might remain in his "camp", but still trying to contribute together to the wellbeing of the community, by assuming certain social values, a kind of productive interaction between the Church and the society. Another element that is worth studying in depth is the manner in which Postmodernism influences the discharge of the Church role towards the affirmation of certain propositional truth about the presentation of the practical dimensions of the Christian faith. The open declamation of the Christian truths tends to be replaced with the beauty of the inter-religious dialogue, the toleration of other points of view seeming to be more valuable than the expression of saving statements. The apostle Paul transmits to the Christians the exhortation to be ready to present the grounds of their faith to anyone asking. An aspect that is worth studying in depth is to whom should Christians speak, if the postmodernists are not interested in religious theories and therefore they do not ask questions about other's creeds? Another domain that is worth studying is the role the Church should play in the ecological endeavour of society. How does the Church answer the desperate call of society that finds out that the resources are used up with an alarming recklessness? Should the Church express its point of view regarding the

protection of the environment, or should it focus exclusively on the salvation from sin and the Kingdom “that shall come with power and glory”?

Another value of Postmodernism is the accent placed on otherness, as an awareness of others’ presence, manifested through their contribution to the common wellbeing, casting away every fear that might rise from the manifestation of diversity. The recent developments of the online social media multiply the premises of the creation of a virtual community, either at the expense of the classical churches, or in their complementarity. Therefore another field of future exploration regarding the role of the Church is if the virtual groups may also be real ones, more concrete, if the obstacles met by the virtual group might be removed. Do the online churches present an alternative to the traditional communities’ already in existence or the physical presence in a certain place is mandatory for the worship experience?

The Church is oftentimes described as the Body of Christ. The implications of this definition are complex, therefore we cannot leave aside from our future preoccupations regarding the role of the Church, the postmodern answer to the traditional notion *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*. When analysing both the idea of salvation, as well as the manner in which we achieve it, this traditional postulate seems to find itself in a striking contrast with the contemporary points of view. First of all the study of the biblical basis should be required and only then, the analysis by comparison of these with the historical points of view that stress the formal belongingness to certain institutional structures, highlighting also the role of the Church as a family gathering.

Another interesting research study might be addressing this subject (The role of the Church in Postmodernism) from a perspective that is exclusively exterior to the Church, analysing the philosophical, social, pragmatic points of view of the postmodern society.

In conclusion, we hope that the Christian readers might be made aware of the final mandate that, through the Church, Christ has transmitted to all His followers and that they may feel again the burden and the pleasure to present with enthusiasm and persuasion the messages of the Church for a world found in complete chaos. The Church exercises its main roles of messenger, servant and prophet by living out the principle of Jesus Christ. The role of the Church is to share joy and unity through its amazing spirituality, to convince by its spiritual power, to mobilize for action its believers and together with them to act in favour of the society. This Church has once been a reference and must be revived. The

fragmentation produced by the modern individualism both in personal lives (public and private life), as well as among people, may be dissolved by a communion of the believers who need to be taught to fructify the community opportunities created by Postmodernism. The first step is to either live out their spirituality, that cannot be developed in isolation and neither concentrated only on public relations. The first extreme leads toward the life of a hermit, and the second toward the social activism. The ideal promoted by the Church must aim at changing the environment and the improvement of the relations with others, by the development of the personal relation with God. Postmodernism creates for the Church the chance of fresh spiritual affirmation, as a modality to present the Gospel. In order to catch it the Church needs to adapt its means and language to such a period, so that it might not lose irreparably this opportunity.

Does the Church have a future? Can the Church prevent the sliding on the fast forward descending track of secularism? The answer is an enthusiastic “YES”. How? First of all through relevance to the contemporary culture, in front of which cannot remain unchanged. Through fostering a healthy and responsible spirituality and by promoting genuine worship that changes the daily life of the worshiper. These may become indirect missionary tools, but efficient ones. The Christian will not chase early fruit, but he will invest love in an unconditional a non-discriminatory manner, without waiting for something in exchange, and will accept the fact that the challenges of this age regarding the values and objectives must be addressed with adequate methods. Now, more than in other moment of history, the Church has an essential role to fulfil: the incarnation of the Gospel and the exemplification of Christ’s model, through the transfer of faith, as influence, toward any other domain of life. In order to accomplish this, it will put forth effort to find out the most actual avenues to communicate its apologetics in an authentic manner – practicing a contemporary faith, supported by a biblical conformity regarding the spirituality and worship of the believers.

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