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**THE STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY BETWEEN POSTMODERNISM AND
CHRISTIANITY IN EUROPE**

SUMMARY THESIS

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SUMMARY OF THESIS

Keywords

Postmodernism, Christianity, supremacy, skepticism, metanarrative, nihilism, deconstructionism, relativism, pluralism, globalization, morality, identity, authority, tolerance, culture.

Background

The subject of the research paper is the struggle for supremacy between postmodernism and Christianity in Europe. I mention that this paper is not an exhaustive study, but one in which I tried to observe the appearance of postmodernism on the stage of history, then I followed the implementation of its ideology in all areas of human life, which led to the emergence of the divergence between postmodern ideology and Christianity, thus engaging postmodernism in a life-and-death struggle for supremacy over Christianity. At the end of the paper, we identified both the negative impact of postmodernism on Christianity through the implementation of postmodernism in Christian theology and the positive impact brought by the development of digital technology.

As we look at the course of history, we see that a transition has been made from theistic ethics in premodernity, to rational ethics in modernity, and then to the ethics of diversity in postmodernity. The pressure on Christians is very high because according to this (postmodern) ideology, the individual builds his own system of moral values and principles, coming into direct conflict with the Christian who lives according to the systems of values and moral principles implemented by God in Holy Scripture. Christian living according to Holy Scripture offers the individual both inner peace and peace with God.

I chose this subject because I wanted to study postmodern ideology, making a trip into history, to identify the defining elements of this philosophical trend, to observe the relentless struggle of postmodernism against Christianity and to identify some solutions for preserving the Christian faith in this cultural context. This struggle for supremacy between postmodernism and Christianity is not only carried out at the ideological level, but also through the means and tools used by postmodernism, the abolition of the landmarks of Judeo-Christian civilization, the reshaping of human thought, the ideological control of the individual, the abolition of morality presented in Holy Scripture and the liberalization of sexual relations. In this context, the Christian becomes inconvenient in implementing the new world order and postmodernism envisages the repression of Christians both by defamation and isolation, and by deprivation of freedom of expression or expression of one's convictions.

Even in a historical period it has not been so well managed to mask adversity against Christians as in this period of postmodernity. Openly promoting tolerance, acceptance, but through the wrong understanding of freedom, through given laws, through education and information systems, there is a constant attack on Christian principles and values, and so today the Christian must choose between holding to these moral values or renouncing them and embracing all the "*values*" promoted by postmodernism.

This thesis aims to follow the main lines of theological argumentation of the struggle for supremacy between postmodernism and Christianity in Europe. In this regard, I have studied articles, treaties, directives and laws of the European Union, philosophical works and theological works. I then considered their use in relation to the issue being addressed and endeavored to verify the authenticity of the sources to which I had access, respecting the views of historians, theologians and philosophers, even when I disagreed with them. I also considered the interdisciplinary correlation and my own interpretation in which I consulted various documentary material in the field of theology, legislation, and philosophy following the leading thread, represented by the establishment of the conflict between Christianity and postmodernism, the methods used by postmodernism in the struggle for supremacy over Christianity and the impact of postmodernism on Christianity.

Summary presentation of the work

The present work contains four chapters, which are the major steps in the theological, philosophical and historical evaluation of the struggle for supremacy between postmodernism and Christianity in Europe.

In the first chapter, we set the general framework for the discussion of postmodernism starting from its origins and then followed the way it developed. In order to understand postmodernist thinking, we had to make a trip through time, and so we started from the period of premodernity, where we saw that the church and the state exerted a strong influence on people's lives. The most prominent person of that period was Thomas D'Aquino, who opened the door to a justification of God's existence by human reason. He suggests that our intellect can logically prove that God exists. Thus the transition from premodernism to modernism could be achieved by opening the way to the denial of God's existence and the enthronement of man.

Then I looked at the modern period where I saw how the Renaissance brought about a significant change by emphasizing reason and science, then the Enlightenment advocated individual freedom, and thus began to separate religion from politics. This split between religion and politics has been exacerbated with the industrial revolution, which has radically changed modern society.

The defining elements of modernity were: "*progress*" – which rejected what was old and focused on scientific and technological knowledge, "*secularization*" – which emphasized escape from the control of the Church and the emancipation of man, "*rationalism*"—which claimed that one could attain truth by reason and thus renounced the acceptance of divine revelation and then "*positivism*"—which held that the discourse on God, soul, or immortality was not verified and therefore meaningless.

Representatives of modern times were René Descartes, Isaac Newton, John Locke, and Immanuel Kant, who opened the way for criticism of Christian dogma in the light of will and reason. Thus man could evade the authority of God by the power of the will,

and gradually men abandoned the landmarks of the Christian faith and emphasized the cult of reason which opened the door to relativism, pluralism and globalization, defining elements of postmodernity.

Then I made a foray into postmodernism, a localization of its appearance in history. The transition from modernity to postmodernity was smooth, so the delimitation between the two “*cultural currents*” at first could not be easily observed. Postmodernism gradually gained various valences under the influence of the philosophical or theological framework it adopted. Although postmodernism is an *anti-label current in itself*, and some philosophers have sought to prove that it is ineffective to fit it into a form or to define it, during this chapter we have sought to give a definition of the word “*postmodernism*”.

In this analysis, I mentioned some of the representative philosophers of postmodernism from America (Richard McKay Rorty and Calvin Otto Schrag), from France (Jean François Lyotard, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida), from Italy (Gianni Vattimo), from Germany (Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger) and from Romania (Emil Cioran, Lucian Blaga and Mircea Eliade).

The transition from modernity to postmodernity was influenced by Nietzsche, nicknamed the “father of postmodernism”, who through his theories strongly opposed modernism, arguing that language cannot convey ultimate reality, but only interpretations of facts, and tried to nullify the notion of sin or Christian values. This door left ajar by Nietzsche to postmodernism was opened more strongly by the French theorists Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Michel Foucault attacked the Enlightenment's belief in the objectivity of knowledge and was interested in unmasking the power behind the text through hermeneutics, and Jacques Derrida, nicknamed the “father of deconstruction”, tried to replace logocentrism by rejecting the belief in fundamental truth.

Gianni Vattimo also distinguished himself in philosophy by analyzing nihilism from a positive perspective, and outside the philosophical sphere, for supporting the rights of sexual minorities from the position he held as a member of the European Parliament. Then Edmund Husserl, announces the break with tradition and focuses against naturalism and historicism, arguing that we can know the world only through

reason. Emil Cioran then embraced deconstructivism, anti-fundamentalism and nihilism, criticizing absolutist rationalism, technical automatism and universalist humanism. Lucian Blaga embraced the postmodern resurrection of metaphysics. He proposed a new theory of knowledge through “*ecstatic rationalism*,” a new theory of culture based on the idea of man’s creative destiny, a new metaphysical vision, which has as its central concept the idea of mystery. Mircea Eliade, on the other hand, emphasized the concept of sacred space and time. In his view, sacred space is the center of the universe, while sacred time is a repetition of events from the origin of the world. Archaic human beings were oriented in time and space, and modern human beings are disoriented. He believed that man was looking for his own hidden forces, which he could not control.

In the second chapter I continued the analytical approach, following how postmodernism was implemented through the legislative support of the European Union for the support of sexual minorities and through culture, and then I saw the points of divergence between postmodernism and Christianity. The European Union's legislative support for supporting the rights of sexual minorities, gender identity and the introduction of sexual education in schools aims to prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and ensure the rights of sexual minorities. In providing legislative support, the European Union relies on Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Council Directive 2000/78/EC, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

By promoting postmodernism to gender identity, a person’s gender is not considered the biological one (the one a person is born with), but is the gender he chooses at a given time. Depending on a person’s chosen identity, we can talk about binary identity (lifelong recognition as a woman or a man), non-binary (identifying their gender more difficult, feeling at the same time woman and a man), and other people choose fluid gender identity (he changes his gender over a period of time.)

In order to reduce negative reactions to sexual minorities, the European Union supports sex education in schools, and in these classes, children will learn sexual anatomy, sexual relationships, the consequences of an active sex life and tolerance towards LGBTQ+ or gender-changers. Due to legislative pressure to implement sex

education in schools and kindergartens, our children are assailed with all sorts of premature information for their cognitive level and emotional need. Thus, looking at their bodies, they observe the biological sex they were born with, but they are taught that they can choose their sex differently from their biological one, pretending to be what they are not.

In the second phase of the analytical approach, in this chapter, we followed the way in which postmodernism was implemented through culture (here we referred to art, literature and music), promoting pluralism, globalization, materialism and nihilism. Culture has become a mixture of styles and languages, taken over in an attempt to rediscover history and tradition. In literature, the postmodern writer fragments the text so that there is no continuity of the text, musicians are no longer concerned with feeding the soul and intellect of the listener, but they aim to produce an emotional effect. So music addresses our senses and its assessment is limited to how well I feel.

Through culture, postmodernism has been implemented by promoting pluralism (according to which the different idea is not worse, as the personal idea is not superior to others), which has helped to open up various contemporary cultural and artistic perspectives. Then, by promoting globalization, the feeling of freedom of cultural diversity, freedom of communication, freedom of movement was created, thus giving up territorial, cultural, religious or communication boundaries. Going further, we saw how postmodernism was implemented by promoting materialism, focusing on the study of matter, believing that everything can be reduced to material and objective aspects. Postmodernism was then implemented by promoting Nihilism, starting from denying the existence of God or Judeo-Christian values and implementing the Nihilist worldview, that nothing makes absolute sense.

In the final part of this chapter, we looked at the points of divergence between postmodernism and Christianity and began with a different understanding of the concept of truth. Christianity claims the existence of an “*absolute truth*” concerning God and Christian morality, while postmodernism claims the existence of a “*relative truth*” based on the idea that there is no absolute truth. Then we looked at the different understanding of the concept of freedom. Christians hold that the true freedom of man is given by respect for divine perceptions, while postmodernism sees man’s freedom by doing what

he likes, and from a postmodern perspective, by the power of the divine. no man can be compelled to do a certain thing or to refrain from a thing which pleases him.

Another point of difference between postmodernism and Christianity is the different understanding of the concept of tolerance. Christians understand tolerance as a manifestation of love for those other than themselves and see the limit of tolerance where Christian principles are violated. Postmodernism sees tolerance as agreeing with what is claimed and claiming that its opinion is accepted. The pressure exerted on Christians by postmodernism is to renounce the absolutism of faith and the claimed exclusivity toward salvation (through faith in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ). Man now has the opportunity to select from among religious beliefs, those ideas or truths which suit him, which satisfy his immediate needs, material or spiritual. Postmodernism, in its position, wanted to shake itself off from the “tyranny” of the Christian faith, giving autonomy to human conscience, violently denying any form of belief in absolute truths universally valid for all people, promoting the relativization of truth.

In the third chapter we continued our analytical approach, observing the methods used by postmodernism in the struggle for supremacy over Christianity and we focused our attention in the first part on the redefinition and reinterpretation of terms by postmodernism such as family, abortion, homosexuality, equality of gender. This process, specific to postmodernism, of "*deconstruction*" and "*reconstruction*", starts from the denial of a static or rigid concept and the acceptance of continuous evolution and adaptation to social, cultural and technological changes in the contemporary world. Until not long ago, the family was defined by the freely consented marriage between a man and a woman. Today, postmodernism has redefined the family, accepting several forms of cohabitation, such as cohabitation, same-sex family, single-parent family, or family with parent 1 and parent 2.

Then we saw that postmodernism redefined and reinterpreted abortion, homosexuality and gender equality. If we had known before that abortion was a child-bearing with the consent of the mother and father, today abortion is redefined as freedom of choice. The mother is in charge of her body and therefore she decides whether to give birth to a child or not. While homosexuality was previously condemned by the morality of society, today postmodernism has redefined and reinterpreted homosexuality, so that

same-sex intimate relationships are seen as a right to be happy, a different lifestyle, regardless of the consequences.

From a Christian perspective, God instituted the family, and this is a pillar of sustaining the health of a society. The most aggressive struggle given by postmodernism is aimed at redefining the traditional family formed by the freely consented marriage between a man and a woman. In fact, this struggle of postmodernism is to destroy any reference to God in society by destroying Judeo-Christian values. The healthy family is an inalienable right of Christians. A healthy family is a foundation for a healthy society. Christians also support the right to life based on the principles of the Holy Scriptures and consider abortion as a violation of these values. The concern of Christians is to find alternative solutions to abortion such as adoption and providing material and psychological support to mothers on the verge of abortion. Then, Christians claim, according to the Holy Scriptures, that homosexuality is a sin and at the same time they are urged by the teachings of the Bible to show their love towards all people. By showing love, Christians have the role of helping these people see divine love and understand that they need to change their lives and behavior.

In the final part of this chapter, I analyzed another method used by postmodernism in the struggle for supremacy over Christianity, namely that of aggressive propaganda through media and internet information systems, which led to the construction of a virtual world, the isolation of the individual of society, reshaping the thinking of man and building a system of censorship of the individual. We have entered a digitized era where we are assaulted by a multitude of information and unless we try to protect ourselves in selecting them and develop principles and criteria for evaluation of information, we will be easy prey for postmodern propagandists. People have become addicted to the virtual world, as a man is addicted to drugs, because postmodernism through the virtual world has created the illusion of complete freedom to acquire absolute power, which is very tempting. In the virtual world people can create virtual identities and interact with other people or "*other virtual identities*" in a different way from real life. By hiding behind the "*virtual identity*" man can bring to light intentions and concerns that in the real world he would be ashamed of, taking into account the label he wears.

Through the media and internet platform, postmodernism projects its ideology into the human mind by easily manipulating and influencing people's way of thinking, thus controlling the masses of people. Within the relaxation of the virtual world, postmodernism aggressively penetrates through subliminal messages to implement its ideologies in people's minds. Man cannot keep up with the understanding of the huge amount of information, gradually replacing the ability to think, carefully select information with the fulfillment of needs such as curiosity, the desire to feel good. The reshaping of individuals' thinking through the media and the internet is due to the relaxed attitude people adopt when they spend long time in front of screens. In this relaxed state, people trust that the information they receive is truthful and thus can be easily manipulated. Then I saw how postmodernism, through aggressive propaganda supported by the mass media and the internet, led to the implementation of the system of censorship of individuals in which the total subordination of man to postmodern ideologies is sought. This system of censorship has led to conformity, so that it can monitor and manipulate the way people live their lives. People are controlled by the broadcast information, by the addictions acquired after spending long time in front of the screens.

In the fourth chapter I continued the analytical approach, observing the impact of postmodern ideology on Christianity. This ideology has influenced both negatively and positively Christianity. In the first phase of our analysis, we dealt with the negative influence of postmodernism on theology. In this sense I presented various theologians who have somehow promoted postmodernism in theology such as: theologians from America (John Dominic Crossan, Mark C. Taylor, Paul Van Buren and John D. Caputo), from England (Nicholas Lash and Graham John Ward), from France (Jean-Luc Marion), from Germany (Jürgen Moltmann, Karl Barth and Rudolf Bultmann) and from Croatia (Miroslav Volf), then I watched as these theologians influenced by postmodern ideology sought to subordinate the theology to postmodern thought.

Due to the influence of postmodern philosophy, John Dominic Crossan tried to implement Derrida's deconstructionism, then Mark C. Taylor and Paul Van Buren implemented the "*theology of God's death*", inspired by the spiritual phenomenology promoted by Nietzsche, Hegel and Derrida. John D. Caputo implemented the "*theology of weakness*", then Jürgen Moltmann emphasized the rejection of a fixed idea of theological dogma, which claims to be absolute or definitive truth about God, and Rudolf

Bultmann proposed a program of New Testament demystification, influenced by Heidegger's philosophy.

The incursions of postmodern ideology into theology have led to the loss of reverence for Scripture. If until not long ago, the reference to the Bible was like a "*letter of love*" from God to people, and Christians approached it with respect, with reverence, now because of the distrust in the special revelation of God in Scripture, the interpretation of the Bible in terms of historical reason or the interpretation of the Bible in terms of postmodern plurality, Christians have gradually lost their reverence for it. But things don't stop there, Christians have lost their reverence for God himself. They have lost reverence for divinity by diminishing respect, by lack of holy fear for Him, thus creating a rift between church life and everyday life.

After the loss of reverence for the Scriptures and for God, Christians entered into a crisis of their identity, and losing their identity Christians reinterpreted the notion of morality, the notion of sin. If until not long the moral norms were given by the perceptions of the Holy Scriptures and were normative for Christians, now sin is no longer regarded with such gravity, and the fact that God does not immediately intervene to punish iniquity and sin, causes Christians to be more tolerant of sin and to renounce the moral norms supported by the Bible. Also, another incursion of postmodernism into theology is the loss of the concept of authority. From an early age we are taught that we have rights that must be respected, and believing that we only have rights it is hard for us to accept and respect the authority established by God in the family (parents), in the school (teachers), in the country where we live in (the legislative apparatus and the executive apparatus) and in the church (the priest).

In the second part of the chapter, we looked at the positive effects of postmodernism incursion on Christianity by creating the opportunity to relate to contemporary culture, creating opportunities for evangelization, creating the opportunity for more effective reading of the Bible in digital format and creating opportunities for Christian socialization.

Through the use of internet, Christians have the opportunity to promote the Christian faith and provide spiritual support to people who need it. Evangelization in the postmodern period requires more than a rational argumentative presentation in favor of

the Christian faith, it involves the recognition of a person's individuality so that the Gospel can respond to the current needs of each individual. Digital Scripture has also enabled Christians to have access multiple versions and languages that we can access anytime and anywhere, not needing to have Bible in physical format, which allows us access to additional functionality, through which we can highlight certain favorite verses, let us mark passages or make notes, thus personalizing our experience in deepening the Word of God. Then we saw the advantages of technological development in Christian socialization, by creating virtual Christian communities, and using social media platforms that provides the framework for Christian communities specific to needs and age.

At the end, I synthesized the results of the work and drew some conclusions. The struggle for supremacy between postmodernism and Christianity in Europe is a real struggle that affects us all and this struggle has succeeded in polarizing us, thus creating an irreconcilable distance between the two camps. Christians believe in the existence of absolute truth that is God. They believe that they can come to know the love that transcends knowledge, and this relationship with God goes beyond mere statements about Him. This is an experimental truth, which does not exclude the objective truth.

Then Christians are called to come out of the state of ignorance and to be more active in educating their children, to be interested in what they learn in the school setting, of their forced indoctrination with the agenda of sexual minorities. We as parents sent our children of good will to a school institution, but our surprise is that now, in postmodernism, they come home indoctrinated with postmodern ideology, they support it and consider us backward and retrograde parents. The mission of the Church is to create the framework in which to present the education of children from a biblical perspective and to prepare both parents and children to face the challenges of current education. Through thesis and antithesis one can reconstruct in the thinking of young people the image of spiritual education and restore the beauty of Christian teaching. This Christian teaching repositions us in relation to self, community and God.

European Christianity must understand the value of biblical morality, be aware that this biblical morality is actually the practice of faith and the beauty of life. The European Christianity of the 21st century must understand that postmodernism, trying to destroy

Christian morality, practically seeks to destroy the inner values of humanity. It is the responsibility of Christians to fight the postmodern ideology, holding the absolute truths and at the same time creating bridges between the world of biblical Christian faith and these very new problems, very challenging and difficult that postmodernity has brought.

Postmodern philosophers and theologians, on the one hand, and European Union legislation, on the other, who have tried to implement the ideology of postmodernism and support the rights of sexual minorities in the struggle for supremacy against Christianity, have failed and will not be able to stop Christianity, because the Lord Jesus Christ said that the Church will not be overcome: "*And I say to you: you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it*"¹, because Christ is its head, as the apostle Paul mentions in his letter to the Colossians: "*He is the Head of the Body, of the Church. He is the Beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence*"².

¹ Cf. Matthew 16,18.

² Cf. Colossians 1,18.