

CHRISTIAN VALUES AND PUBLIC SPHERE: GIUSEPPE LAZZATI'S PARADIGM

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Abstract: Human nature is both political and religious. Like politics, religion has numerous forms that always coexist. Modernity is regarded by many as the disappearance of religion from public sphere, but today it is obvious that faith is a part of public reason. The relationship between religion and state is uniform in the democratic spaces. State must assure liberty and safety to its citizens. Religion is not any more a structuring element, but a source of motivation in public sphere. Religious values are criteria for political choice. In European Union the Christian traditions must translate their values in a secular language, which is possible through institutional activities or personal statements. After the Second World War, in Europe, Giuseppe Lazzati was an important actor of public reason, developing significant values within his activity as a Christian and a political man. He loved God and the city. He has projected a paradigm of building *la città dell'uomo* (the citadel of man) in connection with human dignity of the Bible (an embodiment of faith and politics). It stands for that the Christian faith can offer one of the best patterns in the construction of the common good, even the community is secular and in a context of pluralism.

Keywords: religion, secularism, public reason, modernity, politics, public sphere, Lazzati

SECULARIZATION AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Aristotle description of the human being, namely, *zoon politikon* is undoubtedly one indissoluble, but of the same kind can be considered that of *homo religiosus*. Was there ever a *civitas* without religion? The answer is obsolete and revitalization of the religious phenomenology traditions in last decades invalidates any doubt. Moreover, any form of government was justified by arguments that belong to the religious space. Religious values are fundamental to any public sphere. Religion cannot be considered an opponent to political modernity, being a treasure of resources. The relationship between religious traditions and

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the state takes today a quasi-uniform form. Ferrari¹ identifies the following features of this pattern: state neutrality regarding individual religiosity and public activities, liberalism of religious options and secular institutions have jurisdiction over the confessions.

Christian values inspire the public reason. With the Enlightenment, the ideas of Comte, Spencer, Durkheim, Weber, Marx, Freud and industrialization religion began an itinerary that seemed to have as goal its disappearance from public sphere, but hermeneutics of secularization reveals that *sacrum* has persisted. The identity of divine was questioned and religion assumed new positions in relation with individual and society. Secularization, in the opinion of Taylor, represents that the faith is restricting in the area of individuality; religious practice lacks vitality and the possibility of assumption or rejection of the religious beliefs.² The last interpretation can be considered the most obvious manifestation of contemporaneous secular process. The causes of these mental deviations were determined by conceptual changes within elite groups and the Protestant Reformation hermeneutics that were born, anthropocentric vision of moral order and discipline based on mutual benefit. The transformation of modern and contemporaneous era is considered as the stage of the disenchantment of the world.³ Taylor identifies three main characteristics of this society: political society is a tool to ensure the quality of life of individuals; political society allows individuals to provide services that ensure their safety and free trade; the purpose of political society is fixed in terms of individual rights.⁴ This vision of moral order produced a profound transformation of the social imaginary.

Modernity means only the exit of religion, abandoning a model in which religion was a structuring one. The new role that religion plays in modern societies is not circumscribed by concepts such as laicization and secularism. For Gauchet, the first term would describe the evolution of the relationship between the Catholic Church and state, and the second, the role played by church in the Protestant

¹ Silvio Ferrari. "The New Wine and the Old Cask: Tolerance, Religion and the Law in Contemporary Europe." *Ratio Juris*. Volume 10, Issue 1 (March 1997), pp.75-89.

² Charles Taylor (2007). *A Secular Age*. Cambridge, MA/London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

³ Marcel Gauchet (1998/2006). *La Religion dans la démocratie: parcours de la laïcité*. Paris: Gallimard. Romanian translation: *Ieșirea din religie*. Bucharest: Humanitas.

⁴ Charles Taylor, *op.cit.*

countries.⁵ Manent believes that separation of church and state is the mark of modern democracy.⁶ The highlight of separation between the two entities is represented by the Second Vatican Council, when religion starts to be absorbed by democracy and institution ceases to be an objective truth which believers must obey to.

The role of religion was diminished by the rational vision of the world.⁷ Both Weber and Durkheim built axioms about secularization, determining the endpoint of the disappearance of religion from the public, on supply and demand. This disappearance was given also by Mills: sacred will disappear everywhere, except private domain.⁸ Secularization as an autonomous phenomenon in political or social space was shaped by other theories. Luckmann considered secularization as a consequence of broad social change rather than a decline in religious sentiment.⁹ For Wilson religion, along with saving purpose for which it will exist because no socio-political system cannot fully meet the requirements of human being, has many other functions that vanish but under the pressure of modernity. Thus religion is no longer a factor of social integration of communities, and justice is self-legitimizing without influence of religion. Secularization is an evolutionary phenomenon that consists in the gradual rationalization of life dimensions.¹⁰ Berger found that secularization is shirking of some social parts from the authority of religious symbols. The subjectivity of secularization is given by withdrawing his authority in the sphere of individual and his objectivity consists in reducing radicalization of traditions to the religious identities.¹¹ Quantitative decrease of participation to public religious practices was the argument

⁵ Marcel Gauchet, *op. cit.*, pp.11-12.

⁶ Pierre Manent (2001/2003). *Cours familier de philosophie politique*. Paris: Fayard. Romanian translation: *O filosofie politică pentru cetățean*. Bucharest: Humanitas, p.36.

⁷ Max Weber (1934/1993). *Die protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr. Romanian translation: *Etica protestantă și spiritul capitalismului*. Bucharest: Humanitas.

⁸ C. Wright Mills (1959). *The Sociological Imagination*. New York: Oxford University Press, p.33.

⁹ Thomas Luckmann (1967). *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Religion in Modern Society*. New York: Macmillan.

¹⁰ Bryan R. Wilson (1966). *Religion in Secular Society. A Sociological Comment*. London: C. A. Watts.

¹¹ Peter L. Berger (1967). *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company.

for which Acquaviva considered the secularization as a loss of sacred meanings in the public sphere, but not in personal space.¹² Reinterpretations of the role of secularization have realized Inglehart and Norris. According to them, due to the study of statistics, people live in vulnerable environments focusing on religious values. And because poor societies are more frequent, it can be concluded that the number of people who assume religious traditions today are more numerous.¹³ Some years before, Berger believed that secularization theories are erroneous,¹⁴ and Stark and Finke argued that secularization is a sophism.¹⁵

CHRISTIAN VALUES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Democracy is a political system that allows to his actors the participation in shaping public sphere. The Christian religion can play a bigger role in the public sphere, if it is recognized as a partner in the implementation of certain public policies. According to Rawls, this area is defined in democratic societies by the fundamental political questions, political figures, political concepts and their content application and the criterion of reciprocity.¹⁶ The relation between the public and religious tradition in modernity is subject to radical change, a reality that could lead to a so-called ultra-modernity.¹⁷ The latter can be regarded as a process of demythologizing modernity. The role of religious traditions in the public space is stripped of their sacred and dogmatic content, and exposed to juridical in public manifestations. However, religion remains a primary component of public space

¹² Sabino S. Acquaviva (1975). *L'eclissi del sacro nella civiltà industriale: dissacrazione e secolarizzazione nella società industriale e postindustriale*. Milano: Edizioni di Comunità.

¹³ Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart (2004). *Sacred and Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 3.

¹⁴ Peter L. Berger (1999). "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview." In Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics*. Washington, DC: Ethics and Public Center and Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

¹⁵ Rodney Stark and Roger Finke (2000). *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. University of California Press.

¹⁶ John Rawls (1997/2011). "The Idea of Public Reason Revisited." *University of Chicago Law Review*. Volume 47, nr. 3/1997, pp. 765-807. Romanian translation: "Idea de rațiune publică reconsiderată". In Camil Ungureanu (ed.), *Religia în democrație*, pp.25-55. Iași: Polirom, p. 27.

¹⁷ Jean-Paul Willaime (2004). *Europe et religions. Les enjeux de XXI^e siècle*. Paris: Fayard.

because its phenomenology is communitarian even if modernity interprets it as an individual, personal and private choice.

Political and legal claims of religious traditions have become more pronounced in Europe. Religious traditions argue in public debate and take over tasks, providing information and motivating their followers in political positions. The religious actor defined their concepts in terms of political and legal rights. Liberal state must protect all religious proceedings and exempt religious citizens from the obligation to operate a clear distinction between secular and religious reasons in the public sphere.¹⁸ After leaving post Marxism ideology, Habermas presented a post secular model of democracy in which the religious values play an important role and place in the center of the concept of rational dialogue relationship between religion and democracy, without abandoning secular principles of religious freedom, namely, state neutrality and the separation of church and state.¹⁹

Christianity was and remains a religious tradition that incises the life of city. Even the Saviour's condemnation was a politics fact (*John 18, 14*). The faith in Jesus Christ sets the public sphere *agora* (*Acts 3,35ss*) The Christianization of the empire was a political act. Therefore, it can conclude that attempts to separate the religion and *res publica*, which had as its climax the French Revolution and the *Concordat* of 1801, represented the beginning of an unsuccessful test. Thus, the public sphere has been, it is and will be marked by Christian faith and its values expressed either through institutional activity, either through personal action. Christian Churches communicated its social and political ideology fundamentally through councils, respectively through the work of charismatic people. The turning point of the doctrine of the Catholic Church was the Second Vatican Council, which put the people through its documents in the heart of the *ecclesia*. This council not only affirmed the need to involve religious values in every aspect of contemporary culture, but also cultivated individual Christian involvement in the public sphere. On this itinerary enrolled Giuseppe Lazzati's biography. He lived like a *laicus*, a Christian and a politician. His motto was: *I want to be faithful to God and history*.

¹⁸ Charles Taylor, *op. cit.*, p.73.

¹⁹ Jürgen Habermas (2003). "Zu Begriff und Rolle religiöser Toleranz in westlichen Gessellschaften." *Dialog* no. 3 (Institut für Islamische Bildung/Hamburg), pp. 65-79.

This man of history was born in Milan, 22 June 1909; he was professor and Rector of the Catholic University of Milan, a member of Catholic Action; he founded “Cristo Re” Institute; he was a guest of the Nazi concentration camp from 1943 to 1945, and deputy from 1948-1953. Lazzati died on May 18, 1986, and was declared venerable in 2013. It needs one more miracle to be announcing *sanctus*. His paradigm is *la città dell'uomo* (the citadel of man), the political construction of a *civitas* on biblical measure of human being.²⁰ *Civitas humanitatis* is a place of politics and Christian spiritual values. This polis is seen not only as an urban location, but also as a network of human relationships. At its foundation lies a person, valued in anthropological, historical and ethnological terms. The politics must have as the subject and the beneficiary the man and his evangelical dignity. The politics must absorb and interpret the spatial-temporal requirements of man. The ethnological dimension must embrace all humanity, taking into account cultural differences. The manufacturer of such *politeia* should be prepared in politics, be a lover of justice and truth, a source of the common good.²¹

The identity of a *fideles Christi* is not defined by elitism, but by the hermeneutics position built on the dignity of human existence. Moreover, the Christian community should be through its way of being and acting, a master of life style that cultivates truth, simplicity and charity.²² By doing this, each individual Christian should avoid duplication of individuality by assuming the feelings of Christ (*Philippians* 2,5) that gives a unique existential style. Christian's action is a *virtuous medietas* between the temptation of separation from the world and the compulsion of the religious in any space. The relationship between religious and secular citizens is formulated in the author's spirit of *Letter to Diognetus*, Chapter VI: *As the spirit in the flesh, so are Christians in the world.*

Religion and politics will coexist because both are intrinsic to the human being, to his intellectual and spiritual phenomenology. In the contemporary context, the openness to God involves a split from the structures of a closed world. Believer breaks the immanent order to

²⁰ Augustin (1998). *De civitate Dei*. Romanian translation: *Cetea lui Dumnezeu*. Bucharest: Scientific Publishing House.

²¹ Giuseppe Lazzati (1985). *Laicità e impegno cristiano nelle realtà temporali*. Roma: Ave, p. 135.

²² Giuseppe Lazzati (1984). *La città dell'uomo. Costruire, da cristiani, la città dell'uomo a misura dell'uomo*. Roma: Ave, p. 61.

join to another one more comprehensive. The adherence to Christian order is not intended a repudiation of democratic civilization, but a loyal opposition to modern and post-modern system, which aims to release the person from his aporia through the Gospel, able to inspire axiological solutions worthy by man.

Through his entire thinking and activity, Giuseppe Lazzati may be considered a model of synthesis for a spiritual man in the city, a pattern of experiencing both religious values and society's demands, a Christian in a human society with a secular public sphere.

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