

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN NATURE AS THE FOUNDATION OF THE ORIGINAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE AND A SOURCE OF INSPIRATION FOR PRO-ECOLOGICAL ACTIVITIES ON THE INTER-RELIGIOUS LEVEL

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Abstract

Religion in its essence is neither a structure nor an organization, but a relation between man and God. The source of religion is always Revelation - the manifestation of God. Man recognizes this revelation and responds to God in the religious act. The most primal experience of God is a very personal experience of an aesthetic nature, on an esoteric level with an attempt to pass it on an exoteric level. This causes a specific institutionalization of religion which distorts its essence. The institutionalization of religion resulted in the formation of many different religions, confessions in the social, cultural, historical and geographical space with the entire system proper to them: doctrine, worship, organization. It is worth noting, however, that the basic religious experience is related to the contemplation of nature as God's work in which he perfectly reveals himself and teaches us about himself. Many religions agree and have included it in their sacred books. Therefore, this primary experience and its awareness, for people who are looking for levels of common experience and experiencing the presence of God, is important argument for efforts to protect and preserve the natural environment as a natural environment of human life, which protects his existence and his identity.

Key words

God, man, revelation, religion, natural environment, ecological crisis, environmental education

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Introduction

On May 26, 1969, the Secretary General of the United Nations, Sithu U'Thant, presented in New York, at the session of the United Nations General Assembly, the already famous report entitled Man and his Environment. This document became the first official communication to acknowledge the emergence in the history of mankind of a serious global crisis of environmental devastation. This crisis, known as the ecological one, poses a threat not only to the comfort - the quality of human life - of both present and future generations, but also to the further continuation and development of the entire humanity.(Michalski 1996, 99).

The ecological crisis is a consequence of man's conceit and his lack of respect for the natural environment, selfishness and lack of attention to other individuals (Skrenty 315). Man, through his reckless actions, guided by greed and short-sighted policy aimed at short-term effects of use and consumption, destroyed the natural environment, caused the annihilation of many species of fauna and flora, sterilized farmland, robbed forests and natural resources, polluted water and air. It became a source of suffering and a threat to itself as well as to other non-human beings.

The author of the report appealed to representatives of all nations to establish international cooperation and joint intensified efforts to take steps to protect the environment and rational use of natural resources. U'Thant's report not only started an international discussion and contributed to the development of scientific reflection, including on the philosophical and theological level, but also gave birth to a vibrant global ecological movement, which has taken numerous initiatives to educate and shape pro-ecological awareness.

Searching for justification and motivation for actions for the protection of the natural environment directed the attention of many interested in this problem also towards religion.

1. In search of the essence of religion

Although most people consider themselves religious, it is not easy for them to answer the question: what is religion? The problem of defining religion is probably as old as it is. As Prof. Janusz Maciuszko wrote:

The definition of religion is apparently a relatively simple undertaking. Religious people, I think, would put their intuitions and feelings under the defined concept, scientists - believers would try to reconcile their scientific criticism with the postulates of faith, non-believing scientists could even go as far as intransigent criticism of religion for the motives of reason, humanocentrism etc. (Maciuszko 63).

This is more or less a picture of the ordinary beliefs of people, often even educated people, but who are far from a religious discussion. The problem of defining religion is, in fact, an extremely complicated matter and one of the most difficult in the religious teachings in general (Maciuszko 63).

Defining a religion can cause a lot of problems, and trying to determine its essence can cause disputes and conflicts. This is due to the fact that religion is studied and its definitions are constructed within the framework of different positions, on the basis of accepted worldviews, philosophies and different research methods. There are also many disciplines that study the phenomenon of religion in various aspects and try to define and classify it. For example: stories of religions, phenomenologies of religions, typologies of religions, geographies of religions, ethnologies of religions, sociologies of religions, psychologies of religions, pedagogy of religions, philosophies of religions, theologies of religions, comparative history of religions (Lanczkowski).

It is also important to try to understand the essence of religion and define its approach to the subject of religion. For one group of researchers, accepting the object of religion as a transcendent, personal and real being is not necessary for studying religion. They study religions as a specific phenomenon in its multidimensionality. For the other, the starting

point in the study of religions is the acceptance of the object of religion with its inherent qualities of reality, personality and transcendence. (Michalski 2017).

2. Religion in light of non-specific functions

Modern ways of definition are most often associated with reductionist theories of religion, which stem from the rejection of the need to accept the real, personal and transcendent object of religion as the foundation for its proper understanding and study. They see religions only as a social phenomenon, a purely natural, cultural and historical phenomenon. This is appropriate even for sociological theories of religion and religiousness (Ciupak).

A religion understood and defined in this way, reduced to the level of a social-historical phenomenon, can only be studied because of its structure, in its three constituent elements:

- organization - a group of specific institutions, associations and religious associations arranged in a hierarchical way,

- doctrine - a set of specific views that explain these or other problems of sacred and secular life,

- Cult - a set of specific practices, activities which are the expression of religious experiences, acts of worship given to the supernatural forces (Swienko1964, 30- 59).

In the case of religion understood only as a natural social, historical and cultural phenomenon, it is possible to point out, after Henryk Swienko, four characteristic functions, which for us, however, remain non-specific functions of religion:

- worldview functions.

Religion as a specifically shaped form of consciousness explains the mysteries of the world, tries to interpret the processes taking place in the universe, nature, society and man himself. Through the doctrine, it influences the believer's worldview, shapes a specific value system in him or her, and gives him or her motivation to act. Religion as a worldview enters too often into the competence of philosophy and science. With this function in mind, Friedrich Engels described religion as what is 'the general theory of this world, its encyclopaedic abbreviation, its logic in its popular form (...), its moral sanction, its solemn completion, its general raison d'être and

consolation (...)' Religion is the sigh of an oppressed creature, the heart of an insensitive world, as is the soul of soulless relationships (Swienko 1981, 29).

- educational functions.

Religion, having certain ethical canons, personal patterns, orders and prohibitions, shapes the personalities, the attitude of man according to the adopted pattern, resulting from a specific vision of the world and man's destiny. It teaches humility and patience in earthly life, consoling the hope of rewards in heaven, but at the same time it also teaches altruism, love and openness of one person to another. Within the framework of the religious concept of education, there are many contradictory principles and rules that can and have been used by conflicting classes and class interests. The variety of social dependencies and the position of equal social classes in history sometimes result in the same or similar religious ideologies being interpreted differently in different periods. Christianity was at first a 'movement of the oppressed: it was originally a religion of slaves and followers. Poor people and those devoid of rights, peoples subjugated or crushed by Rome' (Friedrich Engels). It was only with time that it became the religion of masters, a means of stabilizing social tensions in the interests of the possessing classes, an instrument of their spiritual reign. When we speak of the educational functions of religion, we are dealing with its multiple links to ethics and morals (Swienko 1981, 30).

- political and ideological functions.

Religion, apart from purely sacred, worldly and educational contents, strives to create a specific social model of life, a model with a definite social and ideological face. In other words, it fulfils the role of leader and initiator or defender of the social order. This function appears fully in national religions, and above all in the religions of the world, universal religions such as Christianity and Islam. Political and ideological functions are fulfilled mainly by the Church as a religious organization. In this case, we are dealing with links between religion and politics and social sciences (Swienko 1981, 30-31).

- cultural and aesthetic functions.

Religion, finally having a widely developed cult side, that is, an expressive side, influences human feelings, shapes the aesthetic and cultural sense, allows a person - at a certain historical level - to live out the ritual of the whole accompanying environment, to satisfy the inner need to experience

sublimity and beautiful. From this point of view, when considering religion, we see its connections with spiritual culture, with aesthetics and art (Swienko 1981, 31).

Such an understanding of religion is not satisfactory, nor are its functions detailed and described. They do not convey an authentic image of either religion or religious experience and allow for the instrumental use of religion as a so-called ideology, which is in conflict with its essence.

The instrumental use of the content and structural parts of religions at this level can serve to strengthen or weaken the social order, the system, become an element of political struggle, a source of conflict and even war, a source of aggression, hatred, intolerance, a justification for crime and iniquity, an instrument of social control, an instrument of power, a guarantor of particular interests (Михальский).

It is not, however, a religion in the sense of its essence, in the proper sense of being in conformity with its peculiar function.

3. Religion in its essence

At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, Friedrich Schleiermacher, a German philosopher and theologian, a mature thinker with a deeply mystical sense of the essence of religion and its object, God, wrote:

Faith has not been a thing for everyone for a long time, it has always been the case that religions were understood only by a few, while millions were in various ways satisfied only with the outer garment that religion was willing to allow itself to be surrounded by because of its accessibility. Especially today, the life of educated people is far from anything that could remind us of it. (Schleiermacher, 47).

For Schleiermacher,

The essence of religion is neither thinking nor acting, but contemplation and feeling. She wants to contemplate the Universe, she wants to see it with all piety in its own representations and

actions; she wants to let herself be permeated and filled with its direct influences with childish passivity (Schleiermacher).

Pointing out the differences between the exoteric and esoteric understanding of religion in Schleiermacher's work allows to direct attention to the other group of researchers who describe religion and in trying to define it in its essence they accept the real, personal existence of Transcendence as its object. This understanding of religion restores its subjectivity. Religion, in this context, is the personal contact of man with God; it is the relationship that takes place between the object and the subject of religion. God - man. It is man's response to God's revelation - manifestations of His existence. It is a conversation between man and God.

In the philosophical and theological interpretation of the genesis of religion, this personal relationship is not the initiative of man, it is not man who creates religion, but God. He is the first to establish contact with man, he reveals himself to him at different times, in different places and forms, he manifests his existence to man, so that man does not feel alone. This revelation has a different character, it can be by word, by sign, by action in the life and history of both the individual and of entire nations, it can be a cosmological epiphany - a revelation of God contained in the work of creation. By revealing himself to man, God gives him the grace through which man reads this divine revelation, recognizes God in him, makes decisions of faith and responds to God in a religious act. At this point, the relationship is established, the religion begins. Man begins his journey to know God more and more, to participate more and more in his life - through prayer, contemplation, through sacrifice, adoration, other religious acts. Man is not the creator of religion, he does not create God, but it is God who first comes to man, religion begins when man sees God in himself, in the world around him, in other people, makes an individual decision of faith and answers his call. Faith is already the work of man, but it was created under the influence of grace. What is important here is the certainty of God's existence, because there can be no religion that has no God, because religion is man's personal contact with God, a personal relationship (Rusecki).

4. Original revelation in nature as a source of religion - one revelation, one God, one religion?

In defining religions as man's response to divine revelation, we assume that the primary foundation of any religion is revelation and its reception by man. This experience of revelation, in a particular way, of the cosmological epiphany - the revelation contained in the work of creation - has a deeply aesthetic character and, at the same time, allows us to draw attention to the universality, the universality and the timelessness of this revelation, which is perpetual. This makes it possible to note the unity and universality of the experience of revelation and of the response to it in the individual decision of faith and in the religious act. In this respect, there is a convergence in religion.

However, many institutionalised religions can be observed in the world. The multiplicity of religions in the nominal sense comes from the fact that this revelation is given to different people, at different times, living in different places, in different cultures, having different life experiences, different knowledge, intellectual level and the possibility to describe the reality given to them.

At the exoteric level - in the process of communication, this individualised esoteric experience of the Supreme Being is difficult to transfer, it can be done on the basis of a common denominator; a mystical experience of God's presence, thanks to which the representatives of different religions know that despite the differences at the institutionalised - dogmatic, formalised level, they confess the same, One God.

Religion, in this sense, is supposed to fulfill primarily soteriological functions, to lead man to salvation, to union with God the Creator, to perfection, sanctification, divinity of man. Through the improvement of man-individual, they are also to improve themselves and sanctify entire communities. This is supposed to affect all spheres of life both in the individual and social dimension of human life. Through the sanctification, perfection and divinity of individuals, the target is to sanctify, perfection and divinity of communities, nations, the whole world.

This sense of unity with God give man a sense of harmony and unity with the whole world, every creature, every human being. There is no place for any war, no fight, because

religion is a relationship, a personal relationship of man with God and, through God, with all creation. Now it becomes understandable the definition of Max Muller, who wrote:

Religion is a spiritual capacity or disposition that, regardless of the senses and reason, and even against it, makes man capable of embracing the Infinite (which occurs) under different names and in different manifestations. Without this ability, no religion would have been possible, no primitive cult of idols and fetishes; if we listen carefully, in all religions we will hear the moaning of the spirit, the struggle for the notion of what is incomprehensible, the longing for infinity, the love of God. (Swienko 1981).

5. Summary

The source of a religion, defined as a relationship between an object and a subject of a religion, is always Revelation-Epiphany. We can speak of different kinds of revelation, but the most original in its dimension, in particular, is the revelation of creation - the cosmological epiphany. Each time, it is not only a specific manifestation of the Transcendence, but it has a very individual - above the institutional, deeply aesthetic dimension.

The basic religious experience is related to the contemplation of nature as a work of God in which he perfectly reveals himself and teaches us about himself. Many religions agree with this and have included it in their sacred books. Therefore, this primordial experience and its consciousness, for people who seek to experience and experience the presence of God together, is an important and above and beyond confessional argument for efforts to protect and preserve the natural environment, as the natural habitat of man, which not only protects his being but also his identity.(Michalski, Wysoczyńska).

As there is one universal revelation of God, there is one religion. As there are many people who individually perceive, read and respond to this revelation, so there are infinitely many religions.

Therefore, it is necessary to speak, not so much about many religions, but simply about religion and to protect the environment, which is not only the work of God and his gift to man, but is his most perfect image, the place of his revelation and meeting with him. As Jurgen Moltman wrote:

To live means to exist in relation to other people, beings and beings. Life is communication in community and, consequently, isolation and lack of relationship means death for all that lives and even breaking down into elementary particles. Therefore, if we want to understand what reality as reality and life as life are, we must know them in their original and unique environment, in their relationships and mutual connections. In doing so, we will also have to understand the opposite of all this. We will understand that everything that is real and everything that lives, each individual being, is a concentration and manifestation of their relations, inter-connections and environment. (Moltmann,38).

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