

The religious man as a total man

We can not speak about man without speaking about his religious dimension, even if there is a tendency to value man only as a biological or social being. Thus, an essential component, the religious one, the one that gives true dignity is denied. Therefore, Father D. Stăniloae in this Christian anthropology began with the God-Man Jesus Christ, with the redemption brought by him, and not with man in his autonomy, i.e. taken apart from the communion with God. We can not understand man without the contribution of the religious anthropology.

When speaking about the religious man as a total man, we are obliged to take into consideration his view of *the homo religiosus*. The Romanian scholar, Mircea Eliade, imposed the human consciousness of the 20th century a new typology, that of the *homo religiosus*, of the total man, who has as a main landmark the sacred and who lives in a world of symbols. Referring to this man, in an interview with Paul Barbăneagră, Eliade showed that man was created as living the experience of “the other one” (*das andere Ganz*) and his way of being in the world is characterized by the experience of the sacred. The opening towards the sacred makes the *religiosus* man able to know himself by knowing the world. This dual knowledge is essential because it makes him a “total man”. Man reveals his human existence, his deepest and most creative dimensions in this *homo religiosus*. In fact, the discovery of *homo religiosus* means the discovery of the man of all times, because, history does not record any moment when this human typology ceased to exist, the sacred being a constituent of the human being, and therefore, the reference to the sacred becomes constitutive for the human living, a constant in his passage through time.

In Eliade’s opinion, only the religious man has access to a full knowledge of the world, a world marked by the mystery of the sacred. In this context, the aim of the history of religions is to investigate what results

from the encounter of the human with the sacred, that is, the typology of the religious man, the total man. For me - said M. Eliade - the history of religions reveals "total man" in the sense that we find, even at the most archaic peoples, a spiritual dimension that continues throughout the history of religions. *Homo religiosus*, the total man, the interesting anthropological approach proposed by Eliade, the Romanian scientist, seems to be the legacy to posterity.

Human existence in his highest religious expression that is the holy, is one without breaks, without discontinuities, for only such a person who reconciles through Christ can live both in time and beyond time, in eternity. Only such an existence deserves with dignity the name of plenary being, fulfilled, complete and total.

The religious man assumes a specific world of existence, which is expressed in many forms of religious form that history reveals to us. He is recognized by his lifestyle. Whatever the historical context in which he lives, the religious man always relates himself to an absolute reality, sacred, which transcends this world, where, however, he manifests himself. The religious man is a man who lives at the same time (the) two realities, a physical, biological one and a spiritual one. Only in this sense he can be understood as a total man, integrated simultaneously in the cosmic rhythms, meant to uncover the mystery of the presence of the sacred in the world. In this way, man lives a continuous revelation (for the theologian being just the natural revelation, completed with the supernatural one) to his nature starting to become not only transparent but carrying values.

The religious man lives a religious experience, he's in a series of existential situations that put him against the Transcendent. Through various situations that we assume, we manage to get into his spiritual universe. These situations have left traces. After all, the history of religions is the history of *homo religiosus* seen in the existential reality of his beliefs, of his experiences and of his behavior. This man believes in the sacred origin of life and the meaning of human existence as participation in a reality that goes beyond this existence.

Thus, *homo religiosus* is the man who learns about the sacred, and this reveals to him as something totally different from the profane. The sacred manifests itself as a power completely different from that of the natural powers. To designate this manifestation of the sacred perceived by the *homo religiosus*, Eliade uses the term hierarchy. In terms of structure, the

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act of manifestation of the sacred is always the same: a mysterious act, the manifestation of a reality “completely different”. This manifestation is the mysterious element which is the *sui generis* nature of any hierophanies.

If the religious man appears from the perspective of the history of religions as a historical and transhistorical man, what does the other man, the areligious one, mean? For Eliade, this man refuses transcendence, accepts the relativity of “reality” and reaches to question the meaning of existence. This human type is to be found especially in modern Western societies. He builds himself desacralizing the world. “The sacred is the obstacle, par excellence, in his freedom” - will say Eliade. He descends from the *homo religiosus* through a process of desecralization, but retains many traces of the religious man whose heir he is, because Eliade does not believe in an absolute desecralization of the human being. He has hidden the religious mythologies behind the secular mythologies, and has graded the religious rituals into apparently true secular processions. Desacralization led, in fact, to the birth of ideologies, of the political mystics, of certain secular movements that use different techniques of initiation and the nostalgia of the origins.

Even if the religious man typology has become an irrelevant one in a society that does not want to know God, man’s salvation from the monsters of his own soul and the monstrosities of modern society can not be imagined without anchoring human in the transcendent, in God. “If God does not exist, everything is ashes” - said M. Eliade and he was right.

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