

*PhD Bashkim Bashkimi*  
[baskimbaskimi@hotmail.com](mailto:baskimbaskimi@hotmail.com)

## **PROCESSES OF ACTUAL DESECULARIZATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**

### **Abstract**

The complex period of globalization, followed by social-economic and cultural modernization, has been supposed to lead to disappearing of the religion. In contrary, all those processes are leading to its revitalization. When we talk about religious processes in the modern industrial and postindustrial societies, as well as the post socialists and the societies in transition, the desecularization becomes an inevitable concept. The process of desecularization, respectively, the religion back up on the world scene is the main characteristic of the modern society. However, that does not mean rejecting the theory of secularization, but its revision. The period after 70's and 80's of the previous century, is the period of religion reviving in the biggest part of the world. This period is accompanied by a strong social and political influence of religion. With the introduction of political pluralism, as well as the change in the legislation, there is considerable relief in the work of religious organizations compared to the period of socialism.

The revitalization of religion began in the early 1990s. Initially, the revitalization process of religion is perceived through the revitalization of the actual ritual behavior. In our country, the emergence of MOC-OA and IRC since its decades of isolation within the framework of privacy and their gradual inclusion in public life has been supported by greater media coverage of religious organizations, as well as a resurgence of religious literature and publishing.

The question arises as to how post-socialist democratic processes affect the religiosity increasing. The results of the researches made in the post-socialist period show that in addition to the old Latent believers who now freely manifest their religion, there is the

appearance of new believers, ie, a real increase of religiosity is evident. Not always the revitalization of religion is the result of only the profound changes in the spiritual life of people in the direction of returning to religion and the aspiration for spiritualization, but the period of revitalization of religion is related to the deep social and political changes associated with the collapse of socialism, as well as the disintegration of former Yugoslavia; respectively, the revitalization of religion is the result of the social, territorial, national and confessional homogenization of the population in the republics within the former Yugoslavia.

**Key words:** religion, religiosity, socialism, secularization, desecularization.

## INTRODUCTION

It was supposed that the complex period of globalization, followed by social-economic and cultural modernization, will lead to disappearing of the religion. In contrary, all those processes are leading to its revitalization. The empirical data on religion in the modern societies have shown that the religion not only has not disappeared, but it has survived by retreating into the privacy and it is becoming one of the main public life creators. When we talk about religious processes in the modern industrial and postindustrial societies, as well as the post socialists and the societies in transition, the desecularization becomes an inevitable concept. The process of desecularization, respectively, the religion back up on the world scene is the main characteristic of the modern society. However, that does not mean rejecting the theory of secularization, but its revision. "It's true that secularization happens fast, but, it's also true that the world manifests an incredible power for surviving." (Blagojevic, 2006:96). The examples in the world show that modernization processes do not lead to the rapid spread of secularization, but on the contrary, it is confirmed the thesis that secularization is not a necessary prerequisite for economic, political and social development. The period after 70's and 80's of the previous century, is the period of religion reviving in the biggest part of the world. The religion and the church are very present in the public life related to many current issues. The period after 70's and 80's of the previous century, is the period of religion reviving in the biggest part of the world.

## THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENTS ON THE PROCESSES OF DESECULARIZATION

During the 80's of the previous century, in the countries of Western Europe appeared a certain revival of the sacred. Respectively, the Catholic and protestant church started to appeared by raising the voice related to important social problems and issues. However, when we talk about secularization in the countries of Western Europe, we can say little about complete secularization, but rather it is a non-church form of religion; it is a matter of believing without belonging. Accordingly, for the countries of Western Europe, the revitalization of religion would rather mean the revitalization of the church form of religion.

A little bit later, "during the 1990s, in the countries of the former socialistic part, people returned to religion, since the collapse of socialism left behind an ideological vacuum. The new, far more favorable conditions for preaching and spreading, lead to the resurgence of religions in Central and Eastern Europe" (Blagojević, 2006: 97).

With the introduction of political pluralism, as well as the changes in the legislation, there is considerable relief in the work of religious organizations compared to the period of socialism. In addition to the changes in the legislation regulating the legal status of religious communities, many educational, cultural and social-humanitarian institutions have also been established and restored. Religion also has an important place in electronic and other media. Churches in post-socialist societies play an increasing role within religious education, moral care, social and human work. Religion also has a significant social and

socio-psychological function, acting as an important integrative factor in the consciousness of every religious individual (Vukomanović, 2001: 82-104).

As we have already said, the revitalization of religion begins in the early nineties of the last century. Initially, the revitalization process of religion is perceived through the revitalization of the actual ritual behavior. In our country, the emergence of MOC-OA and IRC since its decades of isolation within the framework of privacy and their gradual inclusion in public life has been supported by greater media promotion of religious organizations, as well as a resurgence of religious literature and publishing.

The question arises: “How post-socialist societies are predisposed to a successful transformation (modernization) if the traditional values, including religious ones, are on a high level” (Blagojević, 2006: 101)? The answer to this question is of double significance. On the one hand, from the aspect of the social context of transition, the answer to the question is important because without the general acceptance of modern values there is certainly no real success in the initiated processes of Euro-integration. On the other hand, from the aspect of religion and religious-institutionalized organizations in the transition countries, the answer to the above question is also important because the success of the transformation, that is, the modernization of society depends on how religious values are or are not valuable dissonances in the society in which they are exciting. In other words, the religion itself depends on whether it will be a brawler or instigator of the already initiated processes that lead to civil society.

After the collapse of socialism, there is a clash of values, a clash between the traditional and the modern, a conflict that existed in socialism. At the beginning of socialism, the clash was quite radical and later hidden. “It was a clash between the tradition, most often represented in the frame of religion as a legal but suppressed and stigmatized opposition and the socialist regime with modern values which encouraged and the results that it brought within” (Blagojević, 2006: 102).

Historically, after the Second World War in the Yugoslav territories, it became to a breakdown of tradition and traditional consciousness, a process in which religion and the church took a central place. The period of social marginalization of religion and church begins, as well as its material and personnel weakening. The Marxist-Leninist ideology according to which religion is perceived as a form of human alienation determined the place and role of religion in society during the period of communism. The communist ideology that propagated systemic secularization and conducted atheism influenced the stigmatization of traditional, especially religious socially-problematic unacceptable values (according to the point view of the social system), as well as the affirmation of new non-traditional values. “In such unfavorable social situation, the religion and church remain to be guards and defenders of those traditional values against which was unofficially declared war by the atheistic “ (Blagojević, 2006: 103).

After a long and frustrating suppression, in the early nineties of the last century the tradition, respectively, religion is coming back on a triumphal door to the territory of the former Yugoslavia. The religion “on the big door has penetrated into all spheres of public life of citizens. This phenomenon in some way from the private sphere of personality has shifted into his public life “(Matevski, 2013: 43). It is a period in which the socialistic social system is weakening and the nationalist ideologies are spreading; and that have resulted

with the collapse of the SFRY. The collapse of socialism means the return of traditional religion in all Yugoslav republics. The fact that communism in Yugoslavia was a kind of secular religion was undeniable and it played an integrative and identification function. However, with the collapse of socialistic social system, it becomes a period of economic and spiritual crisis of the population, so there was a need to return to religion as a shelter and spiritual security, respectively, as a compensation for the crisis in identity and identification. In that period, the function of religious symbols is present so it gives people a certain orientation in some disturbed relationships in which they live and “that help individuals and groups to adapt to those situations in life that are filled with fear, uncertainty and danger - problems of all kinds” (Šušnjić, 2004: 200). The feeling of insecurity imposes the need of the individual to seek protection by belonging to certain group identities. “The need for belonging to a group and the identification with that group, in the transition period, was found within the framework of religion” (Matevski, 2012: 323-324). Thus, religion restores its social function that has been marginalized in the period of socialism. Also, a religion that is regarded as a phenomenon over everyday life, has always followed human needs, offering imaginary explanations for many questions characteristic for the transition period.

There are certain perceptions in sociology that consider religion and tradition as limiting factors in post-socialist European integration processes. According to some European sociologists and sociologists from the former Yugoslav territories, the negative effect of religion in post-socialist societies is manifested “in several ways: the reaffirmation of religion covers traditionalist antimodernist patterns, it leads to re tradition; religion leads to ethnocentrism; post-socialist society brings religion back to the past, instead of the present and the future; blocks the society in accepting the processes of modernization and rationalization and renews the process of authoritarianism and egalitarianism, instead of encouraging the society of democratization and progress” (Blagojević, 2006: 107). Mirko Blagojević points out that approach would be one-sided if the religion is seen as a limiting factor in post-socialist integration in Europe. According to him, “religion and religiousness have a positive influence in society: the autonomous manifestation of religiosity is expanding as a” right to consciousness “as part of general human rights and freedoms, as well as the realization of several important functions of religion such as psychological-emotional, ethical and anthropological function: religion affects the preservation and strengthening of national identity; it strengthens the cultural and social integration of the community, which prevents social anomy; religion profiles national particularities, identity and self-determination in conditions of more modern globalization, and so on; contemporary neocolonial strategies of the strongest (or strongest) countries in the world” (Blagojević, 2006: 108). Certainly, those are the functions of religion that should be preserved in the future in the processes of the entire European integration of our country.

The question arises as to how post-socialist, democratic processes affect the increasing of religiosity, respectively, whether the revitalization of religion means the emergence of new lanes or only a change in the form of expression of religion from latent into manifestation form? Certainly, the results of the research made in the post-socialist period show that in addition to the old Latent believers who now freely manifest their religion, there is the appearance of new believers, respectively, the religiosity increasing is evident.

Revitalization of religion is possible only if certain social conditions exist previously.

The return (revival) of religion is unlikely in the peaceful flows of social life. It comes to her in the moments of a fundamental social crisis (Matevski, 2009a). Of course, the social events after the collapse of socialism are in favor of the revitalization of religion. The transition period is accompanied by phenomena, demands, as well as open questions where saint answers are not able to fully meet the needs of people. The transition period is a period in which people experience extremely negative experiences. They range from a sense of existential uncertainty and uncertainty caused by the economic crisis to the fear of death caused by war conflict and war psychosis in the areas of the former Yugoslav territories affected by the war conflict. In such circumstances, the universal questions relating to human life and death are inevitably resurrected, respectively, questions for which answers are sought in religion, which is certainly not the case with countries that have not been covered for a long time by the war conflict. They are characterized with an indifferent relation to religion. Confirmation of this is the empirical data obtained after the researches made in the former Yugoslav territories.

## CONCLUSION

Desecularization as a social phenomenon basically represents a gradual up taking into the sacred in the established saint environment, the process of returning believers to the churches, celebrating religious holidays, or emphasizing religious movement. The crisis in a secular society manifested in all forms of human division and organization imposes the need for returning to religion. De-categorization determines the creation of new, but at the same time strengthening the already existing religious communities.

To fill the frame of the revitalization of religion, we should also point out that there are negative phenomena, or abuses of religion, for daily political and national purposes. Such phenomena are most present in environments with a heterogeneous religious and ethnic composition. Of course, by changing the legal regulation, the state undertakes acts that regulate the attitude of the state and religious organizations.

Some authors believe that, the religion itself depends on whether it will play the role of a brawler or an instigator of post-socialist transformations. After the collapse of the communist value system in the society of post-socialism, there is an anomaly, ie a conflict between traditionalism and modernism, a conflict that exists in socialism itself. That conflict was between the tradition, represented in the image of religion as a legal, but also pressed and stigmatized and socialist regime with the values that it incited.

However, in our societies the religions and traditions are so intertwined and connected phenomena so that many elements can even be identified. After the Second World War there is an attack and a breakdown of tradition and the traditional consciousness in which religion has a central place. At the beginning, this breakup was presented on the public and ideological scene, and later in other areas of social and political life. New non-traditional values were affirmed while the traditional ones were stigmatized. However, religion and religious organizations managed to preserve the role of guards and defenders of those traditional values against which was officially declared war by the atheistic culture.

In this context, it was emphasized the question about the perspectives of the processes of de-secularization of the states that were created by the breakdown of Yugoslav society and the collapse of socialism, the processes that are most intense in the period of gaining independence. Depending on the fact which former Yugoslav republics will be able to restructure economically and politically and thereby raise the standard of living of the population, the processes of de-secularization will slow down as soon as possible. Not always the re-vitalization of religion is the result of only the profound changes in the spiritual life of people in the direction of returning to religion and the pursuit of spiritualization, but a period of revitalization of religion is related to the profound social and political changes associated with the collapse of socialism and the collapse of the former Yugoslavia, respectively, the revitalization of religion is “a result of the social, territorial, national and confessional homogenization of the population in the republics of the former Yugoslavija” (Blagojević, 2005: 384). Also, socio-political developments as well as national and confessional homogenization or segregation of the population have their further impact on intensifying the processes of de-secularization in the Republic of North Macedonia.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ацески, Илија. 1995. Општеството и човекот во транзиција. Скопје: Експрес.
- Бакими, Башким. 2009. Религијата и Младите. Охрид : Коста Абраш.
- Berger, Peter. 1967. *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Bešić, Miloš i Đukanović, Borislav. 2000. *Bogovi I ljudi religioznost u Crnoj gori*. Podgorica: Socen.
- Blagojević, Mirko. 1995. *Približavanje pravoslavlju*. Niš: JUNIR, Gradina.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2005. *Religija I crkva u transformacijama društva*. Beograd: Filip Višnjić.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2006. *Savremene religijske promene u Srbiji i proces integracije u Evropu*. Beograd: Filozofija i društvo, br.1, 95-111.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2008. *Religiozna Evropa, Rusija i Srbija juče i danas-argumenti empirijske evidencije: slučaj Evropa*. Beograd: Filozofija i društvo, br.3, 275-294.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2009. *O sociološkim kriterijumima religioznosti – koliko ima (pravoslavni) vernika danas*. Beograd: Filozofija i društvo, br.1, 9-36.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2010. *Aktuelna religioznost građana Srbije, Religioznost u Srbiji 2010*, Beograd, Hrišćanski kulturni centar, Centar za evropske integracije, Fondacija Konrad Adenauer.

Vukomanović, Milan (2001), *Sveto i mnoštvo-izazovi religijskog pluralizma*, Beograd: Čigoja štampa.

Weber, Max.1968. *Protestanska etika i duh kapitalizma*. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša i Svjetlost.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1976. *Privreda I društvo I i I*. Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša i Svjetlost .

\_\_\_\_\_. 2000. *Sociologija religije*. Sarajevo: Kru-Zak .

Dirkem, Emil. 1963. *Pravila sociološkog metoda*. Beograd: Savremena škola.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1982. *Elementarni oblici religijskog života*. Beograd: Prosveta

Đurić, Mihajlo. 1964. *Sociologija Maksa Vebera*. Zagreb: Matica Hrvatska.

Dorđević, Dragoljub. 1990. *O religiji I ateizmu*. Niš: Gradina.

Elijade, Mirča.1981. *Okulizam, magija i prirode kulture*. Zagreb: Grafički zavod Hrvatske

Elijade, Mirča.1984. *Traganje za izvorima religije*. Beograd: Kultura

Eljade, Mirča.2005. *Istorija na veruvawata i na religiskite idej*. Skopje: Tabernakul.

*Enciklopedija živih religija*. 2004. Beograd: Nolit

Матевски, Зоран.2005. Религијска толеранција у мултиетничкој и муликонфесионалној Републици Македонији. *Религија у мултикултурном друштву*. Нови Сад: Филозофски факултет, 59-64.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2005. *Sociological Analysis of the Religious Situation in Macedonian Post-Communist Society*. In Anthology: Religion and Politics, Blagoevgrad: South-West University “Neofit Rilski”

\_\_\_\_\_.2009. *Some Aspect of the revitalization of religion in Republic of Macedonia after its independence*. In Anthology: Culture in transition – transition in culture. Krakow: Jagiellonian University – Institute of Sociology.

\_\_\_\_\_.2009. Запознавање со религиите. Скопје: Македонска искра

Šušnjić, Đ.1990. *Teorijske orijentacije u proučanju religije i ateizma*. Zagreb: IDIS.

\_\_\_\_\_. 1995. *Znati i verovati*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa.

\_\_\_\_\_.1998. *Religija I*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa.

\_\_\_\_\_.1998. *Religija II*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa.

\_\_\_\_\_. 2004. *Ribari ljudskih duša*. Beograd: Čigoja štampa.