The Critique of Secularism by Talal Asad as a Chance to Look for New Ways of Proclamation

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Abstract: In democratic societies, it is taken for granted to withdraw religiosity from public life. In this paper, we point to Talal Asad's critique of this taken-for-grantedness. Using his genealogical method, he attempts to find the origin of this relegation of religiosity to the private sphere. The concept of secularity, he argues, is primarily an expression of the power of those who insist on enlightened reason. At the same time, secularism becomes, in a sense, a new religion, the only one acceptable in a democratic society. While we point out the causes of the secularization process, we also point out the aspects that are problematic in such a conception of religion. The Church's response must take into account the process of secularization, but it must not fall into the same logic that led to this process in the first place. We point out the danger that the separation between the sacred and the profane, the physical and the spiritual, is increasing even in the new religious movements. We therefore propose a form of proclamation that involves the whole person and addresses him or her in everyday life.

Keywords: secularism, Talal Asad, religiosity, proclamation, Church

Rodney Stark begins his book on contemporary religiosity with this statement: "The world is more religious than it has ever been" (Stark 2015). In his sociological research, he makes a pretty good case for this initial assertion. All of us who work in the field of pastoral care would find it hard to agree. Experience shows that religious participation is declining. Empty churches speak for themselves. The declining number of the sacraments of initiation and other statistics also point to declining religiosity, or at least we are quick to conclude that. The concept of secularism[1] is quickly invoked to explain this situation. We often conclude that it is almost impossible to talk about God and religion in public today. "We are all imbued with a general belief that is a kind of practical atheism" (Sesboüé 1999, 19). In reaching such a conclusion, a distinction must of course be made between the so-called Western world and other parts of the world. Even when the new *Directory for Catechesis* (PCPNE 2020, 103) speaks of contemporary culture, it refers to the secularization that is supposedly

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[1] The terms secularism, secularity and secularization are difficult to define. Many researchers try to define them in their own way. If we look at it from a Christian perspective, secularism is directed against everything that is fundamentally Christian (Napiórkowski 2014). Secularization itself is here understood as a process that takes place primarily in the social sphere of political, economic and administrative life. The process of secularism, on the other hand, is understood as a process of change in the life of the individual and the community as a result of secularization.

typical of the Christian world: "Over the course of the centuries, nonetheless, those societies shaped by Christian culture in particular have arrived at a cultural crisis resulting from an exaggerated secularism that has led to a false concept of autonomy. The only criteria accepted have been those based on social consensus or on subjective opinions, often in contrast with natural ethics" (Sesboüé 1999, 103). Secularism is understood as a crisis of the entire culture that stems from a false understanding of autonomy. The individual has the first and last word. It is the value of a pluralistic society, the freedom to choose between different value systems, which is supposed to be the basis of a modern liberal society (Donegani 2017, 26), which the *Directory* identifies as the cause of a crisis of the whole culture (PCPNE 2020, 103). On the other hand, it is good to recognize that modern democracy, human rights, and pluralism of values emerged in the environment of Christianity: "It is Christianity that has established in history this indifference to difference in order to preserve the dignity of every human being" (Donegani 2017, 36). In this universality and plurality of the world, secularism is understood differently. Certainly, for the proclamation of the Christian Goods today, secularism is a danger, as the new *Directory for Catechesis* mentions. However, the emphasis in that text is on 'excessive' secularism. On the other hand, a certain level of secularism has made possible the pluralism that is the basis of Christian humanism.

We will try to show, through a critique of secularism as presented by Talal Asad, that this concept is very much tied to the Christian tradition and far from being neutral and plural in terms of religiosity, as various liberal political communities try to show. We will also try to show how, precisely in secular society, the phenomenon of radical alienation from the world is increasingly developing through contemporary religious life. The various renewal movements in many religions are increasingly turning inward, condemning the secular world and largely even hostile to a pluralistic democratic society. Stark notes that religion is increasingly distancing itself from traditional Christian rationality. "Belief in unchurched spirituality is especially prevalent among the young, who are given to belief in paranormal phenomena such as premonitions and UFOs. (A similar tendency to embrace esoteric and magical beliefs has been reported for students in Germany and Austria, as well as in the Netherlands.)" (Stark 2015) It is therefore important to look at the issue of secularism not only from a sociological and religious perspective, but also from a pastoral perspective. It is precisely the covenant that all Christians received in baptism to proclaim salvation through Jesus Christ that obligates us to do so. In times of crisis, which secularity certainly represents for the believer, we are obliged to seek new ways of proclamation (Morel 2020, 11).

1. The Genealogical Method of Talal Asad

Raised in Pakistan and educated in Catholic schools, Asad, studying in England, quickly discovered a hidden and unconscious disdain for other cultures and especially for the religious in a self-proclaimed open cultural-scientific space. Although he and Jose Casanova, as one of the best known and recognized authors of the definition of the secular, often contradict each other, he clearly establishes the starting point of Asad's critique,

> The ideological critique of religion developed by the Enlightenment and carried out by a series of social movements throughout Europe from the eighteenth to the twentieth century has informed European theories of secularization in such a way that those theories came to function not only as descriptive theories of social processes but also and more significantly as critical-genealogical theories of religion and as normative-teleological theories of religious development that presupposed religious decline as the telos of history (Casanova 2006, 17–18).

The critique of secularization is particularly understandable in terms of the Marxist critique of power that Assad discovers upon his arrival to Europe. Secularization, he argues, approaches religion through the covert expression of social power. He uses the genealogical method to demonstrate this. If Friedrich Nietzsche explored the emergence of modern morality in this way, and this method was consolidated by Michel Foucault, Asad uses it to understand the development of the anthropological method of participant observation of both concrete life and the elaboration of theories about it.

When it comes to secularity, secularism, and secularization, critical anthropological genealogy can hardly be a substitute for social and societal research or history as found in modern history textbooks, but rather a way to explore from our present all the unpredictable situations that have befallen us. The goal would be to question our current taken-for-grantedness while maintaining the assumption that some of what is analyzed is nonetheless real. The desired anthropology would thus move away from a characteristic defined only by research technique, i.e., the method of so-called fieldwork, focused on local particularities and their dense description, as envisioned by Clifford Geertz. It must return to the direction outlined by Marcel Mauss, "the systematic inquiry into cultural concepts" (Asad 2003, 16–17). Indeed, Asad argues, conceptual analysis is as old as philosophy, "What is distinctive about modern anthropology is the comparison of embedded concepts (representations) between societies differently located in time and space. The important thing in this comparison is not their origin (Western or non-Western), but the forms of life that articulate them, the powers they release or enable" (Vries 2006, 117).

In his genealogical research, Asad asks how modern society came to understand religion as such. He notes that even the general definition of religion is historically conditioned. This makes a truly general – universal – definition impossible. Especially since the quest for universalization, for general definitions, is also historically and culturally conditioned, as it goes back to the development of the Western understanding of the social sciences (Asad 1993, 29). The speech – discourse about religion is at the same time embedded in other debates and understandings in society. "Discourse about religion has a history and that history determines how the concept of religion gets applied" (Kessler 2012, 204).

Speaking about religion, whether from the perspective of an anthropologist, a sociologist, or a philosopher, is always a conceptualization that takes place within a particular hermeneutic framework. This starting point must be explored, because only in this way can we discover the sources of power that determine the rightness or wrongness of certain arguments, definitions. Even the search for general definitions is conditioned by a certain background and this background must be broken down genealogically. Asad describes this as follows, "More generally, I tried not to describe historical development here in terms of a linear sequence of ideas, as Casanova and other sociologists often do ('Protestant Reformation' as a cause and 'secular modernity' as an effect), because a genealogical investigation presupposes a more complicated web of connections and recursivities than the notion of a causal chain does" (Asad 2006, 210).

Genealogical research for its own sake is pointless. It tries – which is the task of anthropology anyway – to understand the life of modern man and society in relation to religion. It does not ask about the universal role or origin of religion. Asad tends to ask a different set of questions: What are the conceptual and ideological assumptions through which the modern West (and anthropology in particular) thinks about religion? What is the history of power through which this way of thinking has emerged? And in what ways-conceptual, institutional, ideological-has the contemporary Western understanding of religion fundamentally changed the way of life of the people it has conquered and dominated (Scott 2006, 139)?

2. The Origins of a Secular Understanding of Religion

Before presenting Asad's critique of the understanding of religions, it is important to emphasize that he himself does not see secularism as a kind of continuation of the development of 'world history' or as the opposite of the religious. Rather, to him the two aspects, the secular and the religious, overlap and are in many ways interdependent (Schlerka 2017, 122). In particular, it is the transfer of the role of power in society that underlies the change in the understanding of religion since the dawn of

modernity. "The point I would stress here is not merely that religion and the secular interpenetrate, but that (a) both are historically constituted, (b) this happens through accidental processes bringing together a variety of concepts, practices, and sensibilities, and (c) in modern society the law is crucially involved in defining and defending the distinctiveness of social spaces—especially the legitimate space for religion" (Asad 2006, 209).

The intertwining and entanglement of the understanding of religion and the secular outlined above is one of the first points of a kind of deconstruction of the general definition of religiosity that ignores the historical conditionality of their own findings. In his critique of contemporary understandings of religion, Asad carefully demonstrates how the universal definition of religion proposed by Geertz is based on a conceptual architecture that is heavily steeped in developments in the early modern period when treating Christianity and therefore has limited scope when analyzing other traditions.

> Importantly, the problem he identifies in Geertz's model is not simply its privileging of one religion (Christianity) at the expense of others, something that might be overcome by a careful elimination of its specifically Christian and eurocentric assumptions. Rather, the very idea of religion as a universal category of human experience owes directly to developments within seventeenth- and eighteenth-century theology, and specifically to the emergence of the concept of Natural Religion—namely, the idea that religion is a feature of all societies, evident in the universality of systems of belief, practices of worship, and codes of ethics (Scott and Hirschkind 2006, 6).

The anthropologist, who by definition must be concerned with concrete life, is further cornered by the emphasis on the experience of religiosity in this commonly accepted definition of religion. It is precisely the shift to personal experience that has greatly contributed to the "expelling" of religion from the public sphere.

The fallacy of universalizing personal experience as the basis of the religious points to the problematic nature of secularism. In its development, secularism was based on the idea of a personal experience of the religious and a kind of inner personal faith. When Asad critiques this, he assumes the personal experience.

> For example, it was one of the things that, you know, having been brought up as a strict Muslim, that first made me skeptical about some generalizations in Geertz's conception of religion. The proposition that you have to believe and once you believe, other things will follow didn't make sense to me given the way I was brought up. That personal knowledge of Islamic tradition enabled me to begin questioning the way in which religion was being conceived of in this universalizing framework (Asad 2006, 282).

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The personal experience of belief, which has a firm place in William James' (2015) attempt at a scientific definition, is one of the possible sources for contemporary understandings of secularism as well as secular society's relationship to religiosity.

Geertz's understanding of religion is therefore limited, both because it is based on a particular Christian tradition that sees religion primarily as a dimension of belief, of faith; and partly because it is based on a modern understanding of the development of the concept of 'natural religion' – which in turn is conditioned in particular by the philosophical views of Immanuel Kant. Here belief is understood as an inner, autonomous mental dimension, which for Asad is fundamentally a legacy of Protestantism. The anthropological background that Asad brings to his theoretical thinking leads to a holistic view of religiosity – it cannot be limited to some kind of 'private' sphere of psychic experience or symbolic understanding of religious truths.

Contrary to the growing anthropological tendency to view culture as fundamentally textual – as a system of symbols, as Geertz put it – Asad insists that the meaning of symbols must be understood in relation to the practical context in which they operate and the forms of social discipline through which particular readings are permitted and enacted. "When anthropologists or historians approach cultural phenomena as texts to be read, they are in a sense adopting the stance of modern theology, one that takes religion to be fundamentally about the affirmation of propositions expressed in symbolic form. Can we know, Asad asks in this essay, what [religious symbols] mean without regard to the social disciplines by which their correct reading is secured?" (Scott and Hirschkind 2006, 7). The basic anthropological method of fieldwork increasingly led him to conclude that we cannot apply the same criteria to all environments and all times. Religiosity, of course, is a dimension of its own that, in its historical conditionality, requires reflection on the path to that understanding for a true understanding.

Asad's objection to general definitions of religion and to Geertz is not that he neglects the influence of religion on action (or power in action),

> but that he conceptualizes the symbolic realm of culture as being separable at the outset of the analysis from action in society—and that he then attempts to reconnect or re-engage culture and social action in an ad hoc or ex post facto fashion. This analytical fallacy, it is claimed, leads to others in Geertz's scheme, the most serious of which is a separation of thought from (social) action, resulting in what might be called cognitivism, which might be defined as the claim that thoughts are in the mind to begin with and only need to be expressed through symbols or signs in order to be communicated and acted upon (Caton 2006, 35).

The advantage of a cognitive understanding of society as a whole is questionable because it does not really consider concrete life – and in concrete life it is behavior that counts. It is in action, in behavior, that power is expressed – and the locus of

power is at the heart of the problem of the relationship between secularism and re-
ligiosity. Geertz accepts, as already derived from Max Weber, the idea of "symbolic
action." It is a kind of intrinsic motivation – a support for personal and social ac-
tion that arises from a symbolic constellation (Anter 2014, 15–16). If secularism,
in a sense, leaves freedom to the personal symbolic constellation of the world and
one's being, this is not the case in public life, and it would be useful to accept one of
the major criticisms of Geertz's approach – its apparent lack of concern for the prob-
lem of power influencing decision-making at both the individual and community
levels (Caton 2006, 41). If we take Assad's historical imprint on the understanding
of the secular seriously, the question of power, especially in light of the genealogical
method, must also be seen in this perspective. The claim that the shift of the religious
from the public to the private is a social achievement, culminating in the liberation
of human beings in their fundamental dignity as persons, is largely based on the ar-
gument of power. And we do not even question its supremacy. "In the European
context, secularization is a concept overloaded with multiple historically sedimented
meanings that simply points to the ubiquitous and undeniable long-term histori-
cal shrinkage of the size, power, and functions of ecclesiastical institutions vis-à-vis
other secular institutions" (Casanova 2006, 16).

3. Religion as a Specific Way of Socialization

Asad seeks to explore and understand the secular in two ways. In doing so, he follows
in part the changing grammar of concepts central to modernity in terms of meaning,
namely the secular, the sacred, religion, and myth. He locates these concepts within
the social and political geographies of state power, disciplinary practice, and aca-
demic discourse. Through this genealogy, Asad challenges the ideology of "secular-
ism" and the grand narrative of "secularization" central to anthropology, liberal na-
tionalism, and Western domination of the world, which he describes as pre-modern
(Shulman 2006, 154). Power that is not obvious and often unrealized is often more
powerful than power that is direct and visible. Thus, the concept of power that Asad
explores in the relationship between the secular and the religious is premised on
two central assumptions – first, that modernity, and even more so postmodernity, is
neither fully coherent nor clearly delineated, and that many of the elements that are
considered to be the result of the last few centuries have their origins in relations to
the history of peoples outside Europe; second, that the project of modernity is not
primarily about the recognition of truth, but about the recognition of a way of being
in the world, and – Asad immediately adds – "Since this is true for every epoch, what
is distinctive about modernity as a historical epoch includes modernity as a politi-
cal economic project" (2003, 14). Indeed, this political project is intrinsically linked

to the secular as its ontology and epistemology (Asad 2003, 21). These philosophical – or in Ludwig Wittgenstein's sense "grammatical" – questions would be central to anthropology, as it is a discipline that from its inception has sought to understand the unusual in non-European cultures. And it seeks to record, often literally record, the meaning and impact of religion in particular cultures – not least through the genealogical formation of their own "others." When the anthropologist engages with religion, this "other" is always examined in light of the "modern" and "secular" heritage. Yet despite this open and pluralistic approach, the question arises as to how it is that the world commonly believes that certain cultures are better, more democratic, and more progressive. We should not ignore, Asad said, that the U.S. has repeatedly tried to promote a single and only correct model of society throughout the world. If this project has not succeeded on a global scale, if it has led to further instability rather than homogeneity, it is certainly not because those who have the power to decide the affairs of the world reject the doctrine of a single human destiny – a transcendental truth – for all societies (Vries 2006, 116). Rather, the conflict between different understandings of society is to blame. This is not just a failure of understanding at the level of cognition – it is about life itself, about political power and domination.

> Something that I gained from Marx very early on was the recognition that structures of domination need not be rooted directly in force or consent, but in what at that time I called "structural exclusion," something independent of what people might consciously think. Both force and consent were states of consciousness, but they were of minor significance, I thought, for explaining structures of domination—both political and intellectual (Scott and Asad 2006, 249).

Asad compares this inner attitude of obedience achieved by the dominant culture to the attitude toward a loved one. A person who is overwhelmed by love for someone lives in the conviction that he is living the same truth in his relationship with that person. He is simultaneously internal and external, with himself and with the loved one. Of course, both the physical and the emotional and mental contexts in which this relationship is embedded must be right for the individual to identify with them. Power, in this case, manifests as a match between the individual's capacity and all the practical conditions that have helped to shape a concrete personal desire and realize it in a way that is reflected in that relationship (Asad 2006, 213). If we generalize this to social conditions, it is understandable that signs, symbols, in themselves do not explain human recognition (acceptance) of authority, but rather how people have learned to make, feel, and remember signs. Or (in another key) how they perceive the signs of a loved one when they fall in love (Asad 2006, 214). Perceiving signs and integrating them into one's life is a process of socialization. It is a process of transferring the "old," familiar, habitual way of coping with life to new situations.

Even though modern society emerged from a tradition of religiosity, today it more or less believes that it has freed itself from it. This process is the basis for the creation of an autonomous subject and a democratic political order. Democracy is good in itself, but Assad is afraid of the power of the liberal state, mainly because it promises to fulfill the 'will of the people,' which derives from Kant's justification of individual autonomy. It is not so much that there are good and bad motives for actions to liberate and redeem people – what is dangerous is the insistence that there is no need for violence and revenge in secular "redemption" today. "I argue that the idea of political redemption is grotesquely out of place in the secular world, a danger to politics and a parody of spirituality" (Asad 2006, 237). In our modern world, where democratic politics is often presented as the highest public good, God is not dead but, in his view, has reincarnated as Man – that is, in a multitude of morally self-governing people united in a politics that could easily be called "transcendent" politics. Therefore, liberal democratic states, which seem to represent and defend humanity as a whole, can decide the question of life and death. They want to generalize birth policies and regulate health care, determine just wars and prescribe international jurisdiction, and conduct various kinds of armed interventions with humanitarian overtones (Asad 2006, 237). For this very reason, it is worthwhile and necessary to trace the evolution of the concept of secularism. Even more important is how it functions today: It is taken for granted and also determines attitudes toward the Other, especially toward a religiosity that "refuses to move with the times" because it supposedly clings too closely to tradition.

Tradition is also a space where one experiences the diversity of times and confronts a variety of memories and challenges for today (Nežič Glavica 2019, 195–96). This gives learned habits a certain weight of authority and openness. Therefore, as he puts it, genealogy is a way of (re)narrating history by tracing unpredictable events that came together to create a seemingly natural evolution.

> But tradition, of course, is not just a matter of argument—indeed argument is mostly peripheral to it. Tradition is primarily about practice, about learning the point of a practice and performing it properly and making it a part of oneself, something that embraces Mauss's concept of habitus. Of course this doesn't mean that the traditional disciplines by which particular virtues are cultivated always produce what they are designed to do. Even the monks I wrote about in *Genealogies of Religion* knew that well when they employed the idea of original sin, and all confessors knew (or at any rate were supposed to know) about the fragility of human virtue (Asad 2006, 234).

Tradition brings with it a greater self-confidence and a firmer notion of moral and epistemological location in embodied and historical contexts. According to Alasdair MacIntyre, our lives take the form of an embodied dramatic narrative, and so from the perspective of tradition, every assertion in its concrete context must be

understood as the work of someone who understands himself and has held himself accountable for his expressions in the community. This has a history through which a very particular shared set of capacities for understanding, evaluating, and responding to the individual's utterances has emerged (Scott 2006, 144). In MacIntyre's conception of tradition, Asad emphasizes the possibility of different interpretations, the space of argumentation in receiving what has been handed down. The old notion that tradition means something unarguable, and as its counterpart the new enlightened age of argumentativity, is therefore untenable. The adoption of tradition is not an automatism – every religion presupposes the failure of education, of socialization. Therefore, tradition is first a help and then an orientation for common life. What disappoints Asad in MacIntyre is his neglect of the body:

> Because argument is itself interwoven with the body in its entirety, it always invokes historical bodies, bodies placed within particular traditions, with their potentialities of feeling, of receptivity, and of suspicion. So much of this is part of everybody's experience of what argument is about. We know it's not a matter simply of "the mind." Argument is always rooted in temporal processes, it's always embodied (Scott and Asad 2006, 288).

Asad shows that in the liberal understanding of religiosity, belief, as a purely spiritual process is the core of religion – and as private, intimate, truly one's own. This understanding of religiosity goes back to the sharp distinction between mind and body introduced in the early modern period. It was also taken up by certain Christian theologies. As the language of religion changes to conform to the modern Christian vision of life, not only does the way of life change, but the body and its senses change as well.

> One crucial aspect of that is the distinction between a "real" self (subjectivity) and the self that is conventional—the "apparent" self. Another is the sharp distinction between the materiality of the body and the meaning-producing mind. The language of the "real" self and its external appearance is itself closely connected to sixteenth- and seventeenth- century reforms in European Christianity that afforded possibilities for secular developments (Asad 2018, 90).

This shift of rationality and the placing of the religious in an inner dimension is not, in his view, typically Christian:

> But, you know, Christians right from early modern times have disputed this distinction. […] The body, of course, is enmeshed in traditions of cultivation. Not just the physical body, but the body in its capacity to sense things, to be persuaded and convinced. So I'm less interested in the body simply as the object of a certain kind of domination, something about which a lot has been written. This interests me less. I've often said that taking

the idea of "the docile subject" to mean the worker who is exploited by capital, the woman who is oppressed by patriarchy, is all very well, but it's not that sense that interests me in the first place. I point to the etymology of "docile," that is, "teachable." So I'm interested in "the docile subject" as someone who is teachable and therefore as someone who has the capacity to be taught. A taught body is one to which "belief" (as a conscious supposition of what is the case in the world, or as a proposition to which one assents) is at best secondary (Scott and Asad 2006, 287).

The ritualization, the learned behavior, is the core of the teaching of religiosity. This is also what is happening with secularized modernity: It introduces its own conception of the body, its own behaviors that are ritualized and unconsciously accepted in the process of socialization. Every time we are confronted with a new challenge and what we have learned does not work, this "ritual" is questioned and new ways to apply it are sought – and so we create a new tradition. For this reason, tradition, according to Asad, is more fluid, time-dependent, and open-ended than most definitions of culture – and it looks not only to the past but also to the future (Scott and Asad 2006, 289). It is in this role of tradition that the adoption of patterns is central, and it is not mechanical but dynamic. Such a process of tradition is also inherent in secularism. It is said to have arisen from the above-mentioned shift in the understanding of the religious toward an emphasis on inner experience, which is losing force in public discourse-due to the prevalence of a mathematical, positivist worldview. "The philosophers have only interpreted the world, in various ways. The point, however, is to change it. That slogan works most efficiently when the secular language of mathematics translates reality into numbers by which it can then regulate and reinvent the world" (Asad 2018, 133).

The mathematical view has triumphed over uncertainty. It has enabled humans to order the world as they wish. But Asad argues: "so I maintain finally, not only mark the triumph of mathematical calculation and secular reason; they also point to a dark future: the certainty of climate change and environmental destruction and the probability of nuclear war" (Asad 2018, 10). And perseverance is on the side of those who endure uncertainty, which is always one of the fundamental dimensions of the strength that comes from a life of faith.

4. The Mission of the Church in a Secular Society

If we assume that Asad's analysis of the secular is correct, then we can gain certain points of reference for our pastoral and catechetical work. Asad's arguments are similar to what the *Directory for Catechesis* states and what Pope Francis points out. Of course, these are not demands that arise directly from theology, but they can give

direction and new emphasis to practical theology. First of all, we find the focus and the demand for attention for our topic: "it is important to pay attention to the secular condition of adults" (PCPNE 2020, 262).

Pope Francis similarly points out the consequences of secularism for the faith of modern believers:

> The Catholic faith of many peoples is nowadays being challenged by the proliferation of new religious movements, some of which tend to fundamentalism while others seem to propose a spirituality without God. This is, on the one hand, a human reaction to a materialistic, consumerist and individualistic society, but it is also a means of exploiting the weaknesses of people living in poverty and on the fringes of society, people who make ends meet amid great human suffering and are looking for immediate solutions to their needs. These religious movements, not without a certain shrewdness, come to fill, within a predominantly individualistic culture, a vacuum left by secularist rationalism (Francis 2013, 63).

The secular society project, subject of Assad's critique, which was supposed to resolve social conflict by separating religiosity from public life, has largely failed. On the one hand, it has not solved the insecurity of life that Pope Francis calls secular rationality; on the other hand, it has given rise to religious movements that are far from the ideas of a democratic society that the process of secularization sought to introduce. Our goal is not to offer solutions to social issues. Starting from an analysis of the critique of the secular, we can only point to the possibility of a more authentic proclamation of the Church.

First of all, Asad sees the problem of defining religiosity by mere belief, by inner experience. In this, at least a certain part of the Christian tradition has neglected corporeality. It is therefore more and more necessary to include the whole person in the proclamation. The Catholic Church has always stressed the importance of popular piety. This was largely passed down from generation to generation through bodily habits that had a deeply religious content (Stegu 2022, 709). The sacraments themselves are based on this. They are always about bodily signs, about the involvement of the whole person. Pope Francis even mentions this as a possibility for a new evangelization: "Expressions of popular piety have much to teach us; for those who are capable of reading them, they are a locus theologicus which demands our attention, especially at a time when we are looking to the new evangelization" (Francis 2013, 126). The first opportunity for a more time-appropriate proclamation could be better integration of corporality in pastoral work.

Attention to popular devotions and corporeality must not lead us to be too quick to adopt the highly successful methods of the various American evangelical renewal movements, which might be called Pentecostal. In their opposition to liberal, secular society, they increasingly adopt precisely this division: religious-sacred, as opposed to non-religious-damnable. In such religiosity, the whole body is central, but only as

a medium of experience. It is full of emotionality, healing processes, conversion experiences, while life turns. "The sacred becomes tangible and concrete, in a physically touching way: through stirring music, through miraculous healings, through ascetic rules of life – everything is somehow meant to document having direct access to the sacred and thus being on the right side in the existential concerns of life – namely, the side of God" (Schüßler 2018, 236). Secular society no longer offers the certainty it promised. We can therefore conclude with Stark that it is full of religiosities that reflect the restlessness that the age of the enlightened mind brings.

In response, our proclamation must not be afraid, offering ritual as a tool deeply rooted in religious history, but often locally familiar and existentially plausible, consisting of exorcisms, incantations, and acts of signs that can respond to people's fears of sorcery and their need for protection. This is a far cry from the freedom that salvation through Jesus Christ brings. What we can learn from Assad's critique of secularism is the need to pay attention to a religiosity that embraces the whole person and integrates him or her into daily life. At the same time, we must be careful not to fall into the mapping of the secular process in the Church: only our beliefs about faith are sacred and we must profess them according to the proper rituals; everything else, the worldly, is damnable. Faith in the Incarnate God clearly shows us the way out of secularism and religious renewal movements that fundamentally reject everything worldly. Such faith obliges us all the more to raise families who will live their faith in all its naturalness and find in it a place of integral expression (PCPNE 2020, 260). They will raise children who will accept, critically of course, the integral role of religion through the rituals of the home and then in the Church.

Translated by Matej Bevc

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