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WESTERN CHRISTIANITY AND THE GLOBALIZATION-POSTMODERN PROCESSES OF THE MODERN WORLD – TENDENCIES OF INTERACTION

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Abstract. The main trends in the development of the religious sphere of society in the era of postmodern globalization changes are considered, which consist in the increase of the segment of secular culture in society, cardinal shifts in Western Christian denominations, and that are supposed to find answers to the challenges of modern secular society. It is revealed that in the Western world, there is a steady tendency for Christians to become a minority of the population. Religion is becoming a private segment of human existence, but its potential and social significance are increasing.

Key words: globalization, liberal values, postmodernism, post-secular culture, Christianity.

Introduction. The development of technogenic civilization does not exclude, on the contrary, it actualizes the interest of both scientists and the general public in the problems of spiritual culture and its important component, religion. Most of the modern researchers of religion spread the idea that "Radical changes, which take place in the social world, always directly or indirectly affect the content and forms of functioning of the religious complex in society" (Vyhovskiy L., 2005: 33), so today it is generally accepted to interpret religious transformations in a general cultural context. Since it is necessary to define the relationship between postmodernism and the Christian religion, this question is the main one in the works of the famous Ukrainian scientist Y. Chornomorets, who believes that postmodernism and Christianity have many things in common (Chornomorets Y., 2017). Another Ukrainian researcher, L. Vyhovskiy, is convinced that the phenomena of postmodernism and Christianity are opposite (Vyhovskiy L., 2005). The internal processes of Western Christianity are understood by L. Bebeshko (Bebeshko L., 2021), A. Butsko (Butsko A., 2012), O. Buchkovsky (Buchkovsky O., 2018), W. Kasper (Kasper W., 2008, 2019), M. Remery (Remery M., 2021) and other researchers. Cardinal Walter Kasper plays a special role in defining the nature and ways of developing modern ecumenical processes in Christianity. The solution to the problem of what it means to be a Christian in the modern world and what role Christianity plays in it is presented in the works of O. Bila (Bila O., 2018), O. Buchkovsky (Buchkovsky O., 2018), M. Havryliv (Havryliv M., 2022), V. Yelensky (Yelensky V., 2013), J. Ratzinger (Ratzinger J., 2006), and others. In numerous theological works of Cardinal Ratzinger, the positive value of religious values for modern society is proven. The theological thought of modern Western Christianity is studied by O. Holozubov (Holozubov O., 2021) and R. Soloviy (Soloviy R., 2020). Modern social transformations are comprehensively understood, for example, by such secular philosophers as S. Komarek and Y. N. Harari. The purpose of this study is to identify the general trends in the development of Western Christianity today, the reasons for the transition of Christianity into the private sphere, and the ways in which the realities of the postmodern global world influence its development.

Material and research methods. As it is known, historically, the processes of religious transformation were influenced by the spiritual processes of the Renaissance and the Modern Age. Today we can speak about the beginning of the postmodern period, which also brought new types of

religiosity and new forms of interaction between religion and society. The processes of transformation in the postmodern era are inherent in different areas of Christianity, so it is advisable to identify the main trends in the development of the Christian tradition in connection with the transition of Christianity to the sphere of private life and its postmodernization. It should be noted that such a process depends not so much on confessional leaders as on ordinary believers who understand the need to adjust Christian tradition under the influence of the realities of life and emphasize the priority of personal interpretation of Christianity.

Results and Discussion. The social processes inherent in the first decades of the twenty-first century can be characterized as complex and contradictory. This is especially true of humanity's spiritual culture, especially religion. Today we can say with certainty that the predictions of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment regarding the complete disappearance of religion under the influence of scientific ideas have not come true: religion still occupies a significant place in the spiritual, social, and even political space of the modern world, including the Western world. In his book *The Great Return: Religion in Global Politics and International Relations in the Late Twentieth and Early Twenty-First Centuries*" (Yelensky V, 2013), the famous Ukrainian religious scholar V. Yelenskyy conveys the idea of a rapid revival of religion in the modern world and its powerful invasion into the political and international sphere. Examples of this return, according to the scholar, include the Islamic revival, the rise of Catholicism and Protestantism in the countries of the global South, and the growing interest in religion in post-communist countries. In Ukraine, Yelenskyy argues, this religious revival is linked to the search for ways of socio-political and national development. However, the significant role of religion due to the religious upsurge cannot be compared to its position even in early modern times: the number of adherents of Christianity in the Western world is decreasing, and it is not only this. The phenomenon of the decline of active Christians is natural for an information (postmodern) society in which secularization and globalization processes are progressing. Christian theological thought usually evaluates the current model of globalization negatively, while pointing out its inevitability and irreversibility: "Before our eyes, the problem of the coexistence of peoples and the coexistence of religions and cultures has turned into a real problem not only of their mixing, but also of hostility, mutual destruction and disappearance. The process of globalization is a logical consequence of natural processes of development, and it is unstoppable. The hegemony of global supremacy is claimed not only by the strongest USA, but also by other powerful states. Hence the arms race, the seizure of foreign territory, constant conflicts, fear, insecurity, and longing. The most pressing global concerns of our time are: economic crisis and human impoverishment, corruption, exploitation, wars, blatant injustice, the use of "sinful structures" for profit, attacks on life from conception to euthanasia, the crisis of the family, moral relativism, the decline of education and culture, the loss of meaning of environmental responsibility, the "globalization" of diseases, the uncontrolled progress of technologies, persecution for religious reasons and beliefs, deprivation of freedom of thought and speech, aggression of the media and censorship. Of course, a Christian, like any conscious and responsible person, cannot accept this". (Havryliv M., 2022). However, it should be noted that secularization has taken a lot from Christianity, especially the idea of the welfare state and its practical implementation, since care for the poor and needy was inherent in Christian social doctrine; only in the Middle Ages was such care provided by monasteries, and in postmodern times, such functions have been taken over by the state. Since Christianity now occupies a very modest place in the European social space and since the European states define themselves as secular, Christianity permeates almost all aspects of European life, from concern for human rights to environmental awareness to respect for nature and smaller brethren.

Modern Christianity is inconceivable without ecumenical processes. The search for Christian unity today does not mean building a universal church organization, but rather creating conditions for dialogue among the major Christian denominations. Attitudes toward ecumenism within Christianity vary from positive to strongly negative. Attitudes toward ecumenism often depend on the particular

denomination; for example, Orthodox Christians view peacemaking and charitable activities within the framework of interreligious dialogue positively but categorically reject any prayer meetings with non-Orthodox Christians. Catholics, on the other hand, encourage not only humanitarian cooperation with representatives of non-Catholic churches but also prayer meetings, including with Muslims and Jews. For example, in April 1986, Pope John Paul II visited the Jewish community in Rome and prayed in a synagogue. Catholic theological postulates on the ecumenical movement are contained in the Apostolic Letter on the Eastern Churches "Light of the East" and the Encyclical "That All May Be One" (1995), written by John Paul II, who was an ardent supporter of Christian unity and cooperation with non-Christians. Ecumenical processes in Christianity are understood by a significant number of theologians, and among the theological discourses on the subject, the works of Cardinal Walter Kasper, long the head of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, are the most prominent. Kasper, who holds liberal views on many ecclesiastical issues, is convinced that ecumenical dialogue is possible, that its effectiveness lies in the recognition that the Eucharist is the source and summit of Christian life, and that the spiritual unification of Christians is possible in its space.

An important trend in the existence of Christianity in the modern world is the transformation of Christians into a minority, sometimes quite active. For example, in Germany, Great Britain and the Netherlands, the number of members of Christian communities is decreasing, which leads to the improper use of Christian churches, which become burdensome real estate and are often turned into Gothic-style restaurants, cinemas, libraries, museums, etc. Thus, for at least two decades, the Catholic community in Germany has been faced with the problem of what to do with "extra" churches, which number several hundred. "The possibility of secularizing empty churches and chapels sometimes seems far from being the worst option, even for the church itself. Having ceased to be a place of worship, the church, from a theological point of view, ceases to be a church and becomes just a house. And then it's up to the new owners and architects to decide how to rebuild and use it." (Butsko A., 2012). In addition to various shopping and restaurant complexes, Catholic monasteries and churches are being converted into luxury apartments and retirement homes. The growth of the Muslim community has led to a significant demand for mosques, but the conversion of Christian churches into mosques faces certain difficulties, as church foundations are cross-shaped and altars are not oriented towards Mecca.

Various Western Christian communities are also experiencing a shortage of priestly and religious vocations, resulting in a shortage of priests in many parishes. In France, for example, the number of ordinations per priest has been steadily decreasing over the last twenty years: in 2021, there were 130 priests, in 2022, there were 122, and in 2023, there were 88. In other words, the decrease is significant. The lack of priestly vocations in France leads to the reduction of seminaries due to the absence or low number of students. However, there is an interesting tendency to increase the number of priests in traditionalist Catholic communities, but this does not improve the situation significantly. The Catholic community is making proposals to improve the situation, such as ordaining women deacons, allowing priests to marry, etc. The incompatibility of the principle of priestly celibacy with modern conditions is becoming more and more obvious, but its abolition may not significantly affect the increase in the number of clergy since priestly life requires many restrictions from the candidate, selfless service to the needy (ideally), and modern young people, who often profess hedonistic values, are not ready for this.

The practice of "unchurched Christianity" is quite widespread among various trends in contemporary Christianity that have grown on the crest of a wave of criticism of church life. Proponents of unchurched Christianity are disillusioned with the activities of the churches, so they suggest that believers simply be Christians without a clear connection to a particular denomination. However, this position causes concern not only among the hierarchs (which is understandable), but also among the general church community. Thus, the author of the article "Christ without the Church: Relationships Without Rules" proclaims that "to accept what Jesus offers is to accept his church. The question is not whether to accept Jesus and the Church or Jesus Himself, for there is no way to accept Jesus without His Church. Indeed,

according to Christian doctrine, it is impossible to separate Christ from His Church, but the widespread spread of unchurched Christianity today indicates not only the dissatisfaction of a significant number of Christians with the activities of the churches, but also the search for a new identity, the freedom to accept or not accept certain parts of Christian doctrine, and simply that such a Christianity is more convenient to use because it does not require attendance at church services and participation in the sacraments. We can predict that the spread of unchurched Christianity will continue to grow in the future.

The spiritual life of modern Christians can be defined as diverse and syncretic, combining a variety of trends – from the Manichaeism and Gnostic ideas that were widespread in the first centuries of its existence to the latest gender and feminist studies. But history, as we know, goes round in circles. As O. Buchkovsky notes in his article "5 Heresies of Modern Christians" (Buchkovsky O, 2018), Christians today are repeating the same mistakes their predecessors made in the first centuries of the Christian era. Today's Christian believers can sin in Manichaeism, Pelagianism, Gnosticism, Montanism, and Donatism. For example, modern Manichaeans are those who reject sexuality and physicality; modern Pelagians believe that all people are good and decent (which is certainly not true) and that grace is not really necessary for salvation; new knowledge, especially secret knowledge (for the elect), is the idol of modern Gnostics; and belief in instant healing and ecstasy resembles ancient Montanism. Modern Donatists are convinced that there is no salvation for those who once left Christianity, and that the sacraments administered by morally imperfect priests are invalid. The prevalence of such ideas today indicates that the issues of salvation, moral perfection or imperfection, secrecy or mass knowledge are not sufficiently addressed in the space of Christian discourse.

Nowadays, as religion (including Christianity) enters the sphere of private life, the churches are faced with new challenges, first of all the problem of spreading Christian ideas (in theological terms, Christian proclamation), finding ways of coexistence between Christian dogmas and modern science (in this aspect, Christian thought has found the idea that dogmas are beyond rationality and do not need to be proven scientifically), Christian thought has found the idea that dogmas are beyond rationality and do not need to be scientifically proven, that dogmas are beyond rationality and do not need to be scientifically proven), communicating to the general public the principles of Christian family and bioethics, which are often contradicted by the postulates of the so-called postmodern ethics of relativism, and many others. According to Yuval Noah Harari, the crisis of Christianity is connected with the rebirth of the new European humanism in a new world order where the dominance of artificially created beings (algorithms) is possible (Harari Yu., 2019). But this does not mean, in his opinion, the disappearance of spirituality as such (by the way, spirituality and religion are somewhat different phenomena, since religion is capable of institutionalizing the social order, while spirituality, on the contrary, focuses on the need to escape from the world). Modernity is still far from the processes predicted by Harari; traditional humanism exists, as does the spiritual crisis caused by both the defeats and victories of the humanist worldview. Just as centuries ago, people were faced with existential questions of life and death, choosing a life scenario and determining the meaning of their own existence in this world. Christianity tries to give its recommendations to a person in spiritual search, and here another question arises: the problem of the linguistic discourse of Christian preaching, because certainly the terminology of the Cappadocians or Thomas Aquinas will not be fully understandable to the average modern person, and therefore it is necessary to find a language that would synthesize the traditional Christian vocabulary and the latest linguistic constructions, and most importantly, take into account new meaningful phenomena that are spreading in the modern mental environment. Here we can mention neo-Protestant communities that widely use the rhetoric of prosperity, emphasizing that God seeks to give everyone health and material well-being, ideas that are not only understandable to the general public but also desirable in a consumer society. More traditional Christian denominations oscillate between established methods of preaching and theology and modern practices, trying not to lose not only their faithful but also their social relevance. Such processes in the West began long ago, at least in the second half of the twentieth century, and they

intensified in the 1990s when, for example, discussions about women's priesthood culminated in the spread of the practice of women's ordination not only as priests but also as bishops in the Anglican Communion. In Roman Catholicism, discussions about the abolition of priestly celibacy have arisen in recent decades, but there is no growing intention to finally eliminate this medieval practice at the level of church leadership. Both the female priesthood and the abolition of celibacy, according to the proponents of these phenomena, should renew Christianity and attract more "progressive" people to its ranks. It should be noted that in a society of gender equality, the issue of women's priesthood is appropriate, and its implementation in church practice is natural. But can a radical renewal save Christianity in the Western world? The Czech intellectual S. Komarek is sure that such attempts are futile: "The issue of the abolition of celibacy and the ordination of women priests is endlessly discussed in the media, but the question is whether, roughly speaking, a death metal mass celebrated by a lesbian bishop in a wheelchair would help the cause much, since the Anglican Church has long allowed this but is in even deeper decline than the Roman Catholic Church" (Komarek, 2020: 138). In other words, too radical a modernization is not a complete guarantee against decline. In general, modernization for Anglicans is not something purely modern; in the nineteenth century, the so-called "High Church" stood out in the Anglican community for its commitment to the practices of more traditional Roman Catholicism. The breakdown of tradition in Western Christianity is increasingly viewed negatively as a way of atomizing society and depriving it of clear ideological guidelines: "...the freedom gained (from traditions, E.M.) will soon be left to no one as a legacy: society, deprived of what cemented it, turns into a kind of amorphous mess, looking in vain for something to cling to" (Komarek S, 2020: 139). At the same time, the breaking of traditions can be beneficial for Christianity. The choice of faith of an individual can become individual, independent of the traditions of the family or society.

The realities of the postmodern worldview cannot but be reflected in the theological thought of Western Christianity. In the Middle Ages, when Christianity acquired the highest status in society and became the core of people's spiritual lives, the idea of God's rule over the world and salvation through participation in the life of the church community and the church sacraments was generally not questioned, which means that modern and postmodern people will be free from such doubts. Golozubov is convinced that "in the situation of post-secular culture, there is every reason to speak, on the one hand, of an anthropological crisis and, on the other hand, of the exhaustion not only of traditional forms of theology but also of a certain fatigue from the endless demythologization and desacralization of religion and the Church" (Holozubov O., 2021). In fact, if demythologization, which is part of the process of Christian modernization, is constantly carried out, the sacred and magical dimensions of Christianity can be devalued. Despite the fact that today postmodernism is mostly defined as a hostile and destructive ideology for Christianity (the gap between them runs along the lines of identity and difference, consensus and dissent, tradition and innovation, objective and subjective reality, multiplicity and universality of truth, seriousness and irony, etc.), there are many points in which the positions of these systems coincide. Both postmodernism and Christianity are convinced of the relativity of human morality, the distortion of man by evil, the impossibility of understanding truth with reason, and, consequently, the importance of faith and the need for grace, since it is difficult for man to fulfill God's commandments on his own.

Conclusions. Regarding the relationship between postmodernism and Christianity, there is an authoritative opinion about the positive significance of postmodernism in the development of Christianity, since it "played an important role in the self-awareness of the mission and role of Christianity in the twentieth century. The critical attitude inherent in the postmodern worldview has also led Christian churches to reflect on their own mission in the world" (Bila O., 2018). This means that the churches were faced with the question of modernizing both the means of proclamation and their awareness of their own place in the pluralistic world. Today, theological projects are gradually abandoning a purely theological focus and are trying to substantiate anthropological (cultural) issues,

such as the problem of the relationship between gender and the church. We can even foresee a synthesis of theological and secular humanitarian knowledge, which means not only a crisis of theology but also attempts to overcome this crisis.

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