The Faith-Based Organization in the Post-Secular Society

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Abstract: Faith-based organizations have begun to be analyzed from the point of view of the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided with the re-emergence of the religious element at the forefront of public discourse, and the recognition of the partial failure of policies for forced separation of social services from the religious element, as well as their secularization. This trend, started in the US, quickly became an important one in the UK and generally in Europe, where religious communities were reconsidered as partners of public social services (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012; Dinham & Lowndes, 2008). This change, in the sense of moving to a post-secular social assistance, comes in the wider context of post-secular society, at least in part recognizing the role of religious communities as a depository of traditions and a facilitator of community energies, a source of motivation for human resources and, in general, the promoter of the public good (Dinham, Furbey, & Lowndes, 2009).

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Introduction

Faith-based organizations have begun to be analyzed from the point of view of the efficiency and effectiveness of services provided with the re-emergence of the religious element at the forefront of public discourse, and the recognition of the partial failure of policies for forced separation of social services from the religious element, as well as their secularization. This trend, started in the US, quickly became an important one in the UK and generally in Europe, where religious communities were reconsidered as partners of public social services (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012; Dinham & Lowndes, 2008). This change, in the sense of moving to a post-secular social assistance, comes in the wider context of post-secular society, at least in part recognizing the role of religious communities as a depository of traditions and a facilitator of community energies, a source of motivation for human resources and, in general, the promoter of the public good (Dinham et al., 2009).

Faith-based organizations in the post-secular society

A first recognition of the social importance of charitable and social activity, particularly the one of faith-based organizations, is the appearance in the United States of Law no. 104-193 on Personal Accountability and Harmonization of Employment Opportunities from 1996 (US Congress, 1996), where the provision entitled "Charitable Choice", in Section 104 of the Act, significantly changes the historical relationship between the religious community and the public sector, while opening the door for the mixture between religion and state social services (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002). Through this provision, religious organizations can receive public funding in various forms, without having to diminish the religious freedom of the recipients of assistance funded by this program (section 104, subsection b).

Before this law was issued, a faith-based organization from the United States of America had to remove all religious symbols in the room where the service was offered; to give up any religious ceremony (such as prayers before meals); to accept all customers - even those who opposed suppliers' beliefs; the way the staff was hired had to reflect society as a whole and not the spirit and belief system of the organization, comply with the rules of the government contract, and separately include an internal income code (section 501, subsection c, point 3); had to be a nonprofit organization, a position that subjected faith-based organizations to public control and the same laws and regulations that applied to secular non-profit organizations. These conditions were enforced in order to ensure the separation of the

state from the Church. A series of faith-based organizations have adopted as a strategy a secularization of their programs and the social services they provided, so that they could benefit from access to public funding. According to the normative act above, a religious organization can preserve its religious character, including its statutory definition, development, practices and the expression of its religious beliefs (subsection d, section 1). The Government can not restrict religious expression or practice of faith-based service providers, by forcing them to change their internal governance or to remove from their property any "religious art, icons, scriptures, or other symbols" (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002).

These legislative changes have been introduced with the purpose of actively involving religious congregations and faith-based organizations in the provision of social services. Recognizing the social potential of these organizations, as well as the failure of secularization and the complete separation of the state from the Church with regard to implementing public policies, was a first step in recognizing the post-secular character of today's society. Faith-based organizations, as well as religious cults, remain an important component of civil society, so their role in sectoral policy-making (Frunză, 2011) must not only be recognized by the state, but their involvement must also be supported, due to the special capacity that faith-based organizations have to mobilize community resources, especially social solidarity resources, difficult to access by other organizations, whether public or private.

Nevertheless, the cited studies (Cnaan & Boddie, 2002) show that until that time few faith-based organizations have used public funding permitted on the basis of this law, either because the officials of those organizations did not know the provisions and meanings of that law (Ticu, 2013), or due to the conservatism and reticence of some of them who, in the desire to preserve their religious integrity (Cace, Cace, & Nicolăescu, 2011) and do not suffer different forms of secularization, show reluctance to establish public-private partnerships in providing social services.

Great Britain also enacts, during the rule of Tony Blair, legislation aimed at increasing the role of religious communities and, in general, of faith-based organizations in different branches of social life, including social services (Stunell, 2010). FBOs are considered key players in mobilizing local and community resources, including those focused on volunteer actions (Baker, 2012; Saeger & Stephens, 2005; Soteri-Procter, Locke, & Lukka, 2003).

Regarding the main social activities offered by religious congregations, Cnaan (1999), analyzing the work of 113 congregations belonging to various religious cults operating on the territory of the United

States, concluded that it implies: most frequent, provision of food, including cooked meals, for poor or homeless people, offering of clothing, participating in religious performances, organizing community sales, but also recreational programs, attending festivals or religious music shows, organizing the public celebration of religious holidays (Necula, 2015). However, the research shows that within some congregations, unique social services have been developed to reflect the particular needs of the social community served by that congregation. Another research, conducted by Grettenberger (2000) on 400 congregations belonging to the Methodist cult, highlighted that the cult mainly offers emergency help, in the form of food, clothing and occasional financial aid. The Methodist Church has as target groups for the development of philanthropic activities and the provision of primary social services the children, the young people and the elderly belonging to different vulnerable groups, while excluding from the services offered a number of vulnerable groups such as gay or LGBT communities.

Chaves and Tsitsos (2001), in a study of 1236 US congregations, showed that in general the congregations are engaged in charitable activities that involve limited contact with people in need, and the services they offered do not deal with cases in a holistic manner, covering the needs of the beneficiaries as a whole. This approach contrasts with the potential that religion-based organizations have to offer complex services, based on mobilizing latent community resources and the intrinsic motivation of the organization's staff. However, these resources of faith-based organizations can be more easily used, when moving from general and occasional charitable services, to social services, both primary and specialized, where longer-term interaction is needed with the beneficiary, based on a service plan (Graddy & Ye, 2006). Such services, which involve a certain degree of specialization (Ignătescu, 2013), are more able to produce long-term transformations in the beneficiary's situation, and are more likely to solve, at least partially, their problems than providing material aid consisting of food, clothing etc., that make it easy to get out of an immediate crisis, but usually do not allow a homeostasis to occur in the recipient's situation. Graddy and Ye (2006) show, on the other hand, that of the 5544 services provided by organizations of various types, including those based on faith, only 15% are emergency aids and transitional assistance.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) are more involved in this type of service than other NGOs. 63% of the analyzed FBOs also offers this type of aid, while the specialized services offered by FBOs are limited. This situation is generally explained by the the fact that volunteers tend to get involved more easily in providing occasional aid than in long-term care services and in

the fact that they do not require activity-dedicated headquarters, with appropriate facilities, and the Church, whose position is well known in the community, can be the place where aid are distributed. Specialized social services (Sandu & Unguru, 2013), when offered, are complementary to primary help provided in crisis situations. However, it is noted that over 50% of congregations offer counseling services because of the spiritual value that most Christian cults give to the interpersonal dialogue and relationship between the counselor and the beneficiary.

Religious communities have played a key role in providing social services to different categories of vulnerable people (Jawad, 2012). For example, most social services for homeless people in the UK currently have or have had a religious affiliation in the past (Clope, 2011: 237-253; Cloke, Johnsen, & May, 2005, 2007). FBOs have been brought back to the attention of the public policy agenda over the past decade under the influence of post-secular social movements, in particular through the Faith-Based Initiative promoted by the Bush Administration and subsequently extended by similar legislation to other states, including the United Kingdom. This policy aims at more active involvement of religious communities, and generally of FBOs, in the provision of social services, due to the increased efficiency of these organizations in mobilizing social resources at community level.

A qualitative research on the role of FBOs in providing social services for homeless people in the UK explains how the idea of faith, the key element for this type of organizations, is being welcomed by social workers and how it is reflected in their social practice (Gavriliuță, 2011). The results highlighted the fact that, although the term of faith is interpreted in many ways by the interviewed persons, in most cases its impact on practice is diminished, and social practice became secularized in the course of collaborating with various secular social care agencies, the reference to faith being rather historical, as a part of the cultural heritage of the social workers and the organizational culture of the association. This model corresponds to the idea of a faith-originated organization (Sider & Unruh, 2004), but that currently acts as a secular organization, where the beneficiaries feel very little or no difference in the services received. In these cases, the boundaries between the way a faith-originated organization and the secular organization proceeds are blurred, although the authors of the study emphasize the importance of faith in the motivation of social workers and the potential value of spiritual support and counseling, when they are offered - in the case of faith-permeated organizations (Johnsen, 2014; Sider & Unruh, 2004) (n.n.).

A number of research questions are being launched by the authors of this study about the particular ways in which recipients of social services provided by the FBOs feel the religious element and whether it has a beneficial added impact on their social condition. Another challenge is to determine the ethos that guides the assistant practice under these conditions.

Particularities of the charity professionalization process

If traditionally charity means providing resources, usually financially, to persons difficult situations, through charity acts, its professionalization is aimed at a social activity oriented towards specific goals of eliminating or diminishing vulnerability and risk situations, through resources obtained through charity. Voluntary activity is typically specific to charity works, as retribution for the provider is seen as inappropriate when charity activities are carried out for people in difficulty. This type of volunteer activity (Conradson & Milligan, 2006) is generally appropriate when the contribution, even major in terms of financial value, is distributed to the beneficiaries immediately and directly to solve an immediate need or problem (Gavriliuță, 2002). When looking for a long-term solution to a social problem, the model based on volunteering is difficult to implement, as it requires the continuity and specialization of the activities rendered, therefore a professionalization (Terec-Vlad & Cucu, 2016). As such, the philanthropic ideal of supporting people in need (Popoviciu, Birle, Olah, & Popoviciu, 2012) is preserved, but working methods are becoming more specialized and, implicitly, professionalized. Often, professionalization of charity is done through the establishment of organizations that carry out the proposed social mission and benefit from the resources made available through donations etc. (Damian, Necula, Sandu, Iliescu, & Ioan). This is the case for foundations through which some corporations act, for example in the case of corporate social responsibility.

A first feature of the "professionalization of charity" is identifying and understanding of the need for professional services provided by professionals who apply methodologies considered professional in providing social services that remain motivated by charity and philanthropic attitude. Professionalization of services involves hiring people trained for the type of services that are to be offered, in this case social assistance services. Employing professional managers is seen as a first step towards the professionalism of charity services (Broadbridge & Parsons, 2003; Parsons & Broadbridge, 2004). Adelina Broadbridge exemplifies the idea of professionalization of charity through the evolution of charitz shops in the

UK. These social shops strengthen their position on the market by professionalization, employing managers and professional shop assistants, without sacrificing their initial charity mission, and thus exemplifying the functioning of a hybrid, both charitable and professionalized practice.

Traditionally, charitable work is carried out through volunteering. This mode of intervention is indicated when the resources offered by the philanthropic act are generally intended to solve a unique problem and come to meet an immediate need. Offering a scholarship, a donation, a hot meal etc. are able of immediately and effectively mobilize the existing resources to solve the problem.

When solving the problem requires long-term strategic action and the beneficiary may be a group of individuals with the same problem, undetermined at the time when the charitable decision was taken, it is usually intended to be implemented through a specialized organization to carry out the service in place and in the philanthropist's name. He appears as a sponsor, a mecena etc., but he is no longer directly involved in the distribution of resources that he makes available. This model works, for example, for corporations that run corporate social responsibility programs and establish an organization - a foundation - to implement a range of social projects with the funds made available by the corporation, but also with other collected funds. This model allows the professionalization of services, in the sense of bringing together professionals, who providing the services on behalf of the organization and, indirectly, of the sponsor. The sponsor can have a series of tax deductions and exemptions that will in turn motivate him to sponsor or donate. His involvement in social activity is indirect, and most of the time he takes part in some of the activities symbolically. As regards the selection of the beneficiaries or the actual ways of offering the services, the sponsor has a small contribution or no contribution at all, and the activity is left to the professionals. His presence at this moment is indirect, his role being more and more a symbolic one, while preserving in some situations the role of financial contributor, if the sponsorship is a continuous one.

The tension between the preoccupations for the performance of a faith-based organization's charitable mission and the provision of more professional social services has fueled the development of social assistance based on religious welfare traditions, which are intertwined with social responsibility (Sandu & Caras, 2013) which has become the subject of rational, evidence-based public policies.

The same model for the functioning of social activity is considered to be valid for faith-based organizations, through which the

professionalization of social services, originated in the charitable mission, is carried out by the religious organizations.

Professionalization of charity through social services provided by faith-based organizations

A first question concerns the spiritual value of the social assistance practice (Siedenburg, 1922). Those who respond negatively appreciate that the purpose of the act of assistance is social welfare and social integration of the beneficiary, and that the assistential practice is not intended to do good, as is the case with philanthropic activities, that is, the service of God through confession of faith, prayer or charity. From a secular point of view regarding social services, it is considered that social services are the result of the evolution of public policies aimed at reducing social inequities (Sandu & Caras, 2013), ignoring in both situations the value that the exercise of the social worker profession has for the practitioner himself, to the extent that professional vocation is built as an expression of deep, humanistic, religious values.

Referring to the development of social assistance in completing the charitable practices of the Catholic Church, Frederic Siedenburg (1922) pointed out that social services had emerged to correct the social inequalities generated by the Western Christian social order and to intervene where the mere offering of charity perpetuates those social inequalities or even generates dependence on the charitable support offered to whole categories of vulnerable populations. As such, in such a perspective, the emergence and development of social services offered by faith-based organizations (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013) represents a professionalization of charity, but generates a particular way of understanding the assistential profession, infused with values such as compassion, mercy, willingness to serve the Other, but which include in their sphere the values of social assistance: respect for human dignity, rejection of social inequality, especially the one expressed as inequality of chances etc. Professionalization of the practice of social assistance provided in faith-based organizations or even by social assistance services directly coordinated by cult institutions does not preclude the pursuit of philanthropic activities in accordance with their charitable mission, but rather brings along nuances and personalizes them for certain categories of recipients to meet their particular needs and the specific social vulnerability to which the services are addressed.

Faith-based organizations continue to play an important role in providing social services, although their role in constructing the welfare state

is often challenged. B. R Crisp brings into discussion the role of these organizations, starting from examples from different countries and in the context of diverse religious traditions, identifying a series of opportunities and challenges in the development of the social services sector offered by religious organizations (Crisp, 2014). Sociological literature that addresses the role of faith-based organizations in providing social assistance services addresses a number of issues such as the relationship between these organizations and the state, as well as the development of their partnerships with public social services, ethical dilemmas and possible conflicts of values between social assistance offered by religious-oriented organizations and the professional practice of social assistance, especially in multicultural contexts and of religious pluralism, possible tensions between ethical obligations contained in professional ethics codes and religious teachings specific to the religion to which the organization belongs (Horstmann, 2011) and , most of the time, social assistants involved in providing social assistance services also belong to (Crisp, 2014).

In the sociological literature, as well as in public health domain literature, social interventions by faith-based organizations are examined, which are often the first to which victims of domestic abuse turn to (Beaman-Hall & Nason-Clark, 1997). A series of research shows that women who declare themselves to be profoundly religious, involved in abusive couple relationships, are more reluctant to end such a relationship, precisely because of the traditional moral values that put the family at the center of Christian life (Horton, Wilkins, & Wright, 1988: 235-246). A series of research discuss the role of faith-based organizations in social intervention regarding adolescents who were abused by their family, including in cases of domestic violence, but also in physical, symbolic or even sexual violence (Li, Fernandez y Garcia, Freedman, & Miller, 2016). In these situations, especially when the abusive partner is nor actually married to the abuse victim (Black et al., 2011), but with whom the victim cohabits de facto, it is considered necessary to have emotional support, socially, but also spiritually, and faith-based organizations can provide such support, especially if they develop these kind of services for victims of family abuse or even crisis support services (Gillum, Sullivan, & Bybee, 2006; Silverman, Raj, Mucci, & Hathaway, 2001).

The specialized literature highlights the role of religious organizations in working with young people, especially in the support of personality development, by creating the feeling of religious belonging, but primarily of the sense of belonging to a community (Lytsch, 2004: 9) - which makes this type of organizations to have a set of tools to enable the

adolescent to be reconnect with his family and, generally, the community he comes from (Li et al., 2016), while allowing the community to fulfill their social mission for those adolescents.

Differences between social assistance services provided by secular organizations and faith-based organizations

Although social policies in different countries increasingly emphasis on the role of faith-based organizations, there is little research to highlight the differences between the services offered by these organizations compared to secular ones. Graddy and Ye (2006), analyzing the social services offered by faith-based organizations in the United States, conclude that faith-based organizations are much more focused on providing social services than their secular counterparts, when these services are understood as acts of service. These organizations operate primarily on the basis of a humanitarian-charitable and volunteer mission, playing an important role in transition assistance, generally being primary services or multi-service guidance and are limited to interventions that use their unique strengths, based on quick and easy access to solidarity resources existing in communities and active mobilization of community members.

The secular suppliers, both public and nonprofit, offer instead a much more comprehensive set of services. The results suggest that faith-based organizations have a modest and limited role in providing social services in the US, as they are mainly complementary to the efforts of secular providers of social services (Graddy & Ye, 2006). However, the social services provided by faith-based organizations can not be substituted for the national social services system, offered mainly through specialized public institutions and by secular or secularized NGOs in public-private partnership, services offered by providers with a declared religious affiliation being effective in completing the services offered by public organizations, and may also be ideal candidates for establishing public-private partnerships while preserving their religious orientation, but with compliance with national quality standards in social services.

Philip Giligan and Sheila Furness, while discussing the role of religion in social assistance, refer to this as a resource for the support of the beneficiaries, but without considering the beliefs and religious values of the social workers themselves (Giligan & Furness, 2005). The transformative capacity that religious belief can bring to the recipient correlates with how the social assistant himself refers to religious or spiritual values (Caroll, 1998).

A series of studies quoted by Graddy and Ye (2006) show that in various particular areas of social services, faith-based organizations may be even more effective than other NGOs or public institutions, because on the particularities of faith issues involved in the selection and recruitment of the staff, in the way they actually provide services, generally in their organizational culture. Because faith-based organizations and their staff, who are believers of that congregation, consider social work as a form of spiritual calling and mission, makes them have a high degree of intrinsic motivation for their work and another vision of the results they obtain compared to other service providers (Etindi, 2002). This sense of spiritual mission given to social practice leads service providers from faith-based organizations to devote more time to a beneficiary, by providing support until real and profound changes occur in the beneficiary's situation.

Research on the relationship between work commitment and self-esteem, described as flourishing, shows that this is mediated by the subject's way of reporting to values, especially to humanities. The research involving 144 Catholic nuns has shown a direct dependence on their commitment to helping the needy and their personal development in the professional environment (Ariza-Montes, Molina-Sanches, Ramirez-Sobrino, & Giorgi, 2018). Personal development in a professional context is enhanced by correspondence between job features and personal skills. The commitment to work has been understood as a positive mental state of connection with the work done, and through flourishing, self-perceived success, satisfaction with one's own activity, self-esteem, the sense of having a superior goal of one's own activity. These results may be correlated with those outlined by Schwartz, who showed that values associated by the individual with what is important in life, and which are defined by him as being desirable, are perceived as a transcendent goal that varies in importance, but which binds together the principles that are guiding the individual's life and social personality. Values have a special relevance in religious settings, especially those involved in social services offered to disadvantaged categories of people, where the interaction between the professional and personal roles of the individual is conditioned by his personal set of values (Schwartz, 1994).

Another difference in approach is the emphasis on interpersonal relationships and on transforming the social worker into a mentor for the beneficiary, encouraging him, and at the same time provoking him to make transformations into his own life. This contrasts with the provision of standardized services, based on financial efficiency as part of case management.

Differences between social assistance provided by secular organizations, especially by non-governmental ones, and those established by various religious cults or by private individuals with various religious orientations, which are statutorily translated into the work of the organization, are highlighted by a number of researchers such as Helen Rose Ebaugh, Janet S. Saltzman, Paula F. Pipes and Martha Daniels (Ebaugh, Saltzman, Pipes, & Daniels, 2003), who examine the differences between them in terms of variables such as the organization's mission and goals, funding sources, priorities in their program, organizational culture, and social service provision (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014). A series of research seems to show even increased efficiency of faith-based organizations from the point of view of the services offered to the beneficiaries compared to secular NGOs (Ebaugh et al., 2003).

A comparative research conducted in Lithuania between the specificities of social assistance provided by non-governmental organizations and religious organizations (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014) identifies a number of differences between the assistant practices:

1. There are significant differences in the motivation of practice, especially the increased level of self-motivation of people who work in faith-based organizations, which can be attributed to the personal religious values of social workers in those organizations, which are strong resources for selfmotivation.

2. There are also differences in the inclusion of potential beneficiaries in the target group and the decision to provide social services to them. The inclusion of potential beneficiaries in the profile of the target group has primarily influenced the decision of social workers in secular organizations, rather than those of religious orientation - Christian, in the case of the mentioned study - to provide social services to their respective beneficiaries, while the social workers in faith-based organizations have been first of all convinced by arguments such as the beneficiary's motivation and values. Compliance with institutional rules is a modern value, congruent with secular practice, while solidarity and altruistic Christian values have been reflected in the priority given to beneficiaries who were motivated to receive aid, i.e. to those who felt in need, and called for the social assistant's support.

3. As far as the evaluation of cases requiring social assistance is concerned, professionals of religious organizations develop it rather by themselves, while their colleagues from the secular organizations prefer team evaluation. This difference can be attributed to the different trust that organizations of both types place in individuals, as faith-based organizations

develop easily broader interpersonal and professional ties based on trust, due to members sharing the same values.

4. In organizations with a religious profile there is a predominance of working methods in groups, through mediation and direct financial support. Giving value to communication in Christian communities would explain the first two methodological differences, while obtaining financial support more easily by Christian organizations is due to their increased capacity to mobilize community resources. The predilection for working with groups of beneficiaries can be attributed to the Christian value given to the group, especially to the one that brings together vulnerable people. Also, the preference for mediation is due to respect for the Christian value of forgiveness, which is rather accomplished by the reconciliation between parties. We believe that another possible explanation for the predilection for financial support may come from the tradition of philanthropic activity of the Church, which consists of, among other things, material and financial assistance for the poor.

5. There are a number of differences between the practice of the two types of organizations in terms of involvement of other people in solving cases, as friends and representatives of other organizations are included as a resource in the social services offered by faith-based organizations to a greater extent than in secular ones. Family members are equally included among resource people for the success of the intervention. Including friends among resource persons can be explained on the basis of a call to the community - especially the faith-based community - to solve cases, and the involvement of other organizations can be understood as the participation of faith-based organizations in networks of organizations set up within or in the proximity of the same Church.

6. As regards to the assessment of social intervention, in the case of faith-based organizations, more emphasis is given than in secular NGOs, to issues such as developing self-esteem, social integration of the beneficiary - but with an insignificant difference that may be random - empowerment of the beneficiary and the achieved positive change, while in the case of secular organizations a higher score than the religious ones was obtained on indicators such as: reaching, even partially, the purpose of the intervention and satisfying the needs of the beneficiaries. The pragmatic orientation towards achieving the objectives of the intervention can be explained by the preponderance of public funding sources for secular organizations, that condition the granting of funding to achieving results, while religious organizations, focusing on community support, emphasize the human

dimension of the intervention, such as empowering beneficiaries, self-esteem and the level of social integration (Reneve & Dunajevs, 2014).

7. A significant difference between the representatives of the two types of organizations arises from the importance they give to beneficiaries, which is much higher for faith-based organizations, as beneficiaries are perceived as very important by 75% of the staff, and only by 45% of the staff in secular NGOs. The importance of beneficiaries for social workers who share Christian values can be understood in the sense that the person in need is transfigured into the person of Christ, who clearly expressed that the good done to a person in need is indeed a good work for Jesus Christ.

Both secular and religious organizations who provide social services use reference to religious symbols and terms in their social practice, even though they are rarely found in secular organizations. This allows Giedrė Reneve and Eugenijus Dunajevs (2014) to draw attention to the fact that secular social welfare organizations are in fact only secular in terms of mission and goals, but the practices and the way social assistants relate to the beneficiaries are dependent on the inner values to which they adhere, as in many cases the values are of a spiritual, Christian nature.

This post-secular understanding of the particularities of social assistance provided by Christian organizations allows the construction of working hypotheses that in a post-secular society, professionalization of charity occurs through the development of faith-based organizations, as a sequel and completion of philanthropic activities, that do not disappear, of professional social assistance services, based on the humanist vocation of social assistance and on a series of particular values of Christian nature, which are customized in order to be in line with the general ones of social assistance.

Social assistance provided by faith-based organizations is conducted within the limits of state-imposed quality standards, but the particular emphasis placed on the value of the beneficiary as a person, on communication and communion with him is what distinguishes professional practice based on secular religious values from its secular counterpart.

Conclusions

Post-secular society does not dispute the separation of the state from religion itself, but the removal of religious affiliated stakeholders and, with them, of significant publics from the social dialogue, thus constituting an element of democratic deficit. Recognition of the social role of religion since the 1990s took place primarily in the US and the UK, and later spread

throughout the world. The social role of religion is exercised through a particular component of civil society, called the faith-based organization. There is no unanimously accepted definition of this type of organization in the literature, but it is mainly considered that such organizations include those affiliated with religious cults or who, in their mission, even historically, have declared values and practices that originated in religion or spirituality in general. For the present work, we have included in the operational definition of the FBOs both the organizations established within the Church, as well as the social services provided directly by parishes, bishops or deaconesses.

The transition from singular and undifferentiated charitable activities to specialized services is a process of professionalization of charity, but social assistance is complementary to the philanthropic activities of worship institutions. Two distinct phenomena are described in the literature, the first one being the secularization of services provided by FBOs, under the necessity of collaboration with other organizations, including public ones, and the conditions imposed by the quality standards at a national level, respectively by the need for financing of social services and, as such, compliance with the financier's requests. The second phenomenon described in the literature concerns the particularization of the social assistance provided by FBOs as a Christian social assistance, which is based on Christian values embodying those specific to the ethos of secular social care. Social assistance provided by FBOs is understood as a particular form of social action, called faith-based social action, which emphasizes the intrinsic humanism of social assistance and a particular ethics of care as a social-spiritual mission of the social assistant to the utilitarian orientation based on case management, that characterizes secular social care.

Reviewing the close link between the development of social assistance worldwide, the work of the Church, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant, or mainly the Orthodox at a national level, allows the understanding of the professionalization of social services offered by the Church as a continuous, partly interrupted process after the communist period, but resumed after the Revolution of 1989 and which integrates into the social mission assumed by the Church, in correlation with the evangelical teachings and those of the Holy Fathers of the Church.

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