Social Services Offered by Faith- Based Organizations in the Post-Secular Society

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Abstract: Christian ethics of care has its roots in evangelical teachings and consists in helping the poor, the suffering, the prisoner, the orphan, the old people, the widows and, in general, the one who is humble, experiencing incapacity. A series of papers show that, at global level, 90% of charitable staff work as an employee or volunteer in religious organizations or faith-based organizations (Crisp, 2014: 11). Recognizing the social importance of the activity underwent in faith-based organizations comes in the context of reconsidering the role of religion in society and recognizing the failure of complete separation between secular society and religion, in the context of a post-secular society (Barbato & Kratochvil, 2008; Habermas, Blair, & Debray, 2017).

Keywords: *social services; faith-based organizations; post-secular society; ethics of care; charitable activity.*

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Introduction

Christian ethics of care has its roots in evangelical teachings and consists in helping the poor, the suffering, the prisoner, the orphan, the old people, the widows and, in general, the one who is humble, experiencing incapacity. A series of papers show that, at global level, 90% of charitable staff work as an employee or volunteer in religious organizations or faith-based organizations (Crisp, 2014: 11).

The post-secular society

In the last decade, the separation of roles between the state and the Church is increasingly questioned. This idea is one of the foundations of social-political modernity. The increasing role of religious movements, whether Christian, Muslim, Jewish or even New Age syncretism, in shaping the public agenda and in the background of the democratic deliberation process, leads more and more sociologists and thinkers to the conclusion of the failure of the factual separation of the state, with all its institutions, from religion. Religion is not, in the present society, only a private matter of the individual and their family, and religion has to take its place in the public sphere. Jurgen Habermas (2008) and, together with him, a series of other thinkers (Brieskom, 2010: 24-35; Reder, 2010: 36-50; Ricken, 2010: 51-58), consider that society has reached the point of militant secularism and is ready to recognize the role of religion in the public sphere. This impelled and unrealistic absence of the voice of religious people in conducting communicative action through public dialogue generating consensus at the social level is an element of democratic deficit, in the sense that Habermas appropriates to the term.

Participation of religious orientated stakeholders

The debate on the participation of religious guided stakeholders aims to get an answer to the question of what is and what should be, realistically, the place of faith-based organizations and, through them, of religion in today's society, and on what philosophical, sociological and political powered grounds we should recognize their role. Habermas (1996, 1998) believes that the role of religion in society should be recognized as such, but ensuring respect for private life and democratic access for people who do not share the same religious beliefs or for religious minorities. Radical liberal secularism is represented, in opposition, by thinkers such as Rawls (1993), who believed that religion does not belong to the public sphere and should

be maintained at the private level. Braeckman points out that the debates on the role of religion in the public sphere are primarily about the moral cognitive and epistemic contents of religion, when in fact the fundamental dimension of any religion is its ability to build communities from a symbolic point of view, thus establishing them from an identity perspective (Braeckman, 2009: 279-296).

The social liberal model vs. the model of social assistance based on faith

A series of research about a possible theoretical model for post-secular social assistance, based on a spiritual rhetoric, not necessarily religious, is compared to the modern, secular liberal one. The congruence between the two models is highlighted in terms of social assistance practice compared to faith-based social action, practitioners of both models showing their criticism of the neo-liberal welfareist model and of the positive attitudes towards practices derived from the ethics of care model (Gilligan, 1993; Noddings, 1989).

Deconstruction of charity

Some contemporary sociologists develop the thesis that the deconstruction of charity (Sandu & Caras, 2013) as a religious value that has constituted or regulated the reference to Christian attitudes toward the other, constitutes today's foundation of restorative social policies, of social work professionalized as social action and of the secularization of charitable practices, as well as the constructive foundation for a contemporary social metanarration from the perspective of a secular society or a knowledge society. The deconstruction of charity in postmodern society aims at moving from the charity model based on philanthropy to the one of the assisting state, based on socially-institutionalized and mandatory solidarity, as well as on the professionalisation of social assistance (Sandu, 2016: 32-33).

After a period of reluctance towards the social services offered by various religious cults or religious organizations (Horsburgh, 1998: 17-23), starting with the first decade of the 21st century, the scientific interest in charitable work offered by organizations with a religious profile, but also for their social assistance services, has grown in a significant way (Crisp, 2014), bringing into question the social responsibility assumed by these organizations and the social cohesion resources that they can mobilize.

Social Christianity

Social Christianity defines the collective and organized efforts of Christians to contribute to the progress of society, inspired by Christian principles, especially in solving what was called the social problem or, more precisely, the problems of workers in modern capitalist societies at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. For Bartolomeu Stănescu, politics and morality are two (unique) sources of authority in society; it is the policy that establishes the social, and he gives great importance to the two American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century. Social forces, economic relations, or religious beliefs influence individual behavior, which means that the Church is seen as part of civil society, not as an aid to state bureaucracy or as a power tool of the political regime. Metropolitan Bartolomeu Stănescu had, over time, as his biographers say, several identities: social theologian, politician, Christian social scientist. He is, according to Cătălin Raiu, the first and only Romanian hierarch who "assumed a constructive dialogue with modernity" (Raiu, 2013: 29-62).

Bartolomeu Stănescu tried to create a socio-political perspective of Christian-Democratic inspiration. In his research work he moves toward the limit between social Christianity and durkheimian sociology, with preference for social theology. These themes of study included, in addition to the Orthodox beliefs, reflections on rationalism, capitalism, or the nature of socialism or liberalism. He is guided by an ethic of responsibility, especially for the Christian politician, who spoke from the Senate tribune. In understanding modernity, the same Bartolomeu operates with different, sometimes dichotomous concepts: freedom and authority, conversation and perfection, natural and divine right, individualism and egalitarianism. It is about outlining the tensions and relations between the Church and the state, between the spiritual, under the theme of Christian theology, and the patterns of political modernity, as well as the projects assumed by the Orthodox Christian hierarchs, who see themselves as being responsible for the whole society from a triple hypostasis: hierarchical, political and intellectual (Raiu, 2013).

Today we talk about the religious institutions (Mihăilescu, 2000: 222-228; Onicov, 2003: 149-170; Sandu, 2014: 32-33; Schifirneț, 2002: 26-33) as institutions whose main purpose is to organize cultural activities and believers' relations with the clergy. In some circle, only the institutional role of the Church dominates. What is taken into account is the organizing, the hierarchy, aspects of economic and organizational culture, while spiritual and

community aspects are neglected. The Church is primarily the union of believers around the Sacraments, as Horia Roman Patapievici (1996) appreciates. In today's developed societies, religious institutions have lost much of their influence. Social assistance and charitable institutions remain tangible evidence of a widespread social transformation that the Church has produced in time. Here we also mention philanthropic institutions, temporary local associations, associations for orphans, for the protection of the environment, leisure and entertainment institutions, cultural and educational institutions etc.

These institutions deal with solving problems that do not fall within the main social institutions' activities. Depending on the cultural space in which they it activates and the degree of secularization of society, the Church continues to formally or informally develop various charitable and social services. In an increasingly secular world, this area becomes one in which churches legitimize themselves and make their presence felt in the world. In Romania things are different due to cultural factors and a higher religiosity of Romanians, according to opinion surveys. In our case, the Church continues to manifest itself through the faith of those who form it, and at the same time conceives this faith in its concrete, activist dimension.

At the same time, a number of authors make refined distinctions regarding this theory that concerns the social doctrine of the Church and the contemporary equalitarian and uniformizing discourses. In a society built on the principle of charity, even if the poverty alleviation is reduced, inequality is a moral and normative background, since a disadvantaged person can not legitimately claim to be helped. Thus, in the relationship between the benefactor and beneficiary, the disfavored only benefit from the favors or the help they receive from the mercy and compassion, or generosity of the other. Under these circumstances, a relationship of dependence is inevitably established, which violates the principle of equality (Colotelo, 2005: 455).

The socio-economic model of charity

From the point of view of economic rationalism, charity translates into a redistribution of resources from the upper layers of society to those in the lower layers, from the rich to the poor. This is the specific case of philanthropy, in the meaning of charity work, generally performed by those who have the surplus for those who are missing (Colotelo, 2005: 455-458). The more a society is flattened in terms of social structure, the more difficult it is to speak of philanthropy and its institutionalization.

Generally, charity tended towards a form of institutionalization where social conditions were stable, without segmenting this behavior in time and space. Institutionalized charity includes, in its first line of activity, a particular category of associations, humanitarian or fund-mediation, as well as other associations that carry out resource-based missions through fundraising campaigns for various social purposes, from individual or institutional donors, individuals or private companies (Saulean, n.d.).

Faith-based organizations (FBO)

The term faith-based organization emerged in political rhetoric and public policy in the 1990s, being at present a topic of interest for social policies around the world (Kramer, 2010: 342-360). Extensive use of the term is generally at the expense of a commonly accepted definition of it (Popp, 2012). A first criticism concerns the fact that by using this term, specific differences that are related to the religion to which one organization is affiliated or the other become homogeneous, whether we are talking about religious cults as religious organizations (Frunză, 2012) or about associations and foundations that included a series of religious elements in their statutes etc. (Jeavons, 2004: 140-145; Sider & Unruh, 2004: 109-134), and also about the fact that the specifics of the programs of such organizations are not taken into account, as such organizations, through cooperation with other secular organizations or other religions choose to implement a more secularized content, in order to have convergence points with the latter (Hosu & Frunză, 2013).

Clarke and Jennings (2008: 6) define FBO as organizations that have been set up from sources of inspiration and guidance of a religious or faith-based nature, including those generated by a particular interpretation of faith, which belongs to a school of thought based on acts of faith. This definition includes organizations that are configured to function in accordance with principles derived from religious beliefs, are originated in religious or spiritual traditions, but do not include the pursuit of religious activities of a cultural nature particularly.

In this direction, cult organizations should be separated from those that offer faith-based services without functioning as cult organizations per se (Howarth, 2007). The differentiation is poorly operational, since religious organizations, such as congregations, parishes, archbishops, organize and carry out services of different natures themselves, including social services, which qualify them to be categorized as faith-based organizations (Fountain & Feener, 2017), as defined by the Faith-based Initiative, which is a set of

normative acts implemented in the United States, Britain and countries from Western Europe, which liberalized the access of cults to public funding for social programs.

In this paper, we use the broad-based FBO term, which includes cult organizations, including archbishops and parishes, only from the perspective of social services (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, Bragaru, & Purcaru, 2011) offered by them and their internal organization, without referring to the other activities with a specific religious content, which are not the subject of this research. Another limitation for the use of the term FBO comes from the fact that it includes both large, transnational organizations or groups of organizations of common origin, in the form of a faith-based initiative, but also minor social communities, reunited into a parish or a local humanitarian associations, with a transparent but blurred religious affiliation (James, 2009). FBO are considered to be one of the major providers of social services globally, as they are also involved in political construction activism, including social policies, sometimes challenging the secular system (Beaumont & Cloke, 2012).

Religious organizations (Shaw, 2017) are entities with or without legal personality, based on common religious beliefs (Conovici, 2013), which perform social, educational or cultural activities (Bielefeld & Cleveland, 2013: 442), „articulated directly or indirectly, primarily or secondarily as forms of manifestation of those beliefs"(Constantinescu, 2012: 9-11). The autonomous organizations (Necula, Damian, Caras, Sandu, & Vicol, 2013) with religious profile are formed as associations and foundations, which operate under Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 and who, either by title or by mission, self-define themselves as having a religious profile (Constantinescu, 2012). Statutory values are declared to be religious values (Barnard, Homer, & Wild, 2008), in the case of faith-based or humanitarian organizations, or having a religious or spiritual origin (Cojocaru, Cojocaru, & Sandu, 2008).

Types of faith-based organizations

Sider and Unruh (2004) show that the lack of a clear definition of the term "faith-based organization" creates a number of shortcomings in analyzing the effectiveness of social activities that this type of organization provides. Without a clear understanding of the role that religious belief plays in the emergence and development of a faith-based organization, as well as in the development of social programs and service provision, this can lead to over or underrepresenting its religious dimension (Van der Merve, Swart, &

Hendriks, 2014). For example, when the law prohibits granting public funding to religious organizations (Necula, 2015), this ban should not apply to organizations that, although they are founded by persons who have a religious backgrounds, through their social practice, the services provided (Cojocaru And Cojocaru, 2011a, 2011b), but also the way they are organized and managed (Vlăduțescu, 2014), they are not dependent on the religious organization (Cucu & Lența, 2015) that set them up, and they should have access like any other NGO to public funding (Smith & Sosin, 2001). In fact, public funding should only be linked to the professionalism of providing social services and conditioned by the quality of these services (Ignătescu, 2013). This quality should be assessed and attested by instruments such as accreditation and licensing of social services, social inspection etc.

The characteristics of the faith-based organizations, brought into discussion by Sider and Unruh (2004: 121-124), are:

1. Mission and the constituent acts of the organization. It is taken into consideration whether religious terms are used in drafting the documents describing the mission of the organization, including its statute, if the terms use have religious meaning or whether the language in which the organization's objectives are formulated has a religious specificity. The way the mission and objectives are drafted can attract or estrange members, staff, beneficiaries, sponsors etc.

2. Founders and organization history. These aspects show the existence of a connection with a religious group or a congregation, either in the past of the organization or even at the present time, when it operates. Beyond the organization's history, a defining element is its affiliation, understood as a very close relationship with another entity or agency - with a Church, in our case -, which gives the organization legal status, administrative and managerial structure, while the organization can be entirely dependent on the affiliation organization, including for the resources required for its activity. Not all faith-based organizations are formally affiliated with a religious cult, while religious cults can choose to run social programs directly, without externalizing them in the form of organizations. Both services offered directly by religious cults and also organizations that, although they have a clear religious or spiritual side, are not formally affiliated to a cult are included among faith-based organizations and analyzed as such (Sider & Unruh, 2004).

3. Administrative and supervision structures. This is important in assessing the degree to which the organization is controlled by the cult representatives it is affiliated to, the role played by cult representatives in organizational management, in staff selection, general management and

activity management. The need for members of the organization's management to adhere to that religious cult, to have a social position within the cult, to adopt a specific lifestyle is assessed. It is then assessed how the organization's staff are selected and the way in which religious affiliation plays or not a role in the selection of members, of hired personnel or volunteers. It is also analyzed whether or not there are separate selection procedures for staff who, in their work, perform roles of spiritual, religious value, and those whose roles are of a secular nature. If in the selection of staff with roles of cultural or spiritual value religious discrimination is not under discussion, in some legislations, such as the American one, other positions that do not involve religious specialization and are not directly involved in the organization's religious mission should be opened to any person, thus avoiding discrimination on the basis of religious affiliation.

4. Support, including financial support, received by the organization. The analysis of funding sources and resources to which the organization has access to concerns the influence of various public or private funders to which the organization calls when it develops and implements its programs. When the sponsor is exclusively the religious cult to which the organization is affiliated, the organization's programs typically have more religious content than when the organization uses other sources of funding, including public ones, when it needs to adapt the content of its programs to the sponsor's requirements, including by limiting their express religious content, which is considered a form of secularization of those requirements.

5. Religious practices of the staff of the organization. The mandatory or voluntary participation of members and staff of the organization in religious practices is considered. When staff and members of the organization's leadership frequently take part in various types of worship activities and thus are practitioners of that religion, this will be transferred to the practices that the organization implements, even if they wish to be as uniform as possible with those practiced in similar secular organizations, as an object of their activity. A series of four characteristics are considered essential for determining the religious content of the social programs offered by the organization: the environment in which they take place - they are organized in spaces belonging to the religious congregation or other areas owned by the organization -, if there are religious symbols or objects of worship in that space - such as icons, crucifixes etc. -; the existence or non-existence of religious activities in the services offered by the organization - morning prayer, evening prayer, participating in public services with the community, public reading or invitation to reading of sacred or religious

texts, spiritual counseling etc. -; and the obligation of the beneficiaries to participate in them. Regarding the integration of religious components into the programs and services provided by the organization, five distinct forms are identified: implicit participation - services are offered in a religious context and there are practices such as evening or morning prayer etc. -, the activities are common and the participation in them is self-understood- on the basis of an invitation, in the course of benefiting from the services, the beneficiaries are invited to participate in various religious services offered by the cult of which the organization belongs or to which it is affiliated -, relational participation - based on relationships between the staff of the organization and the beneficiaries, who accept or even request to participate in religious services to which members of the staff are currently participating -, activities are optionally integrated - when religious services are integrated into the general ones of a social nature offered to beneficiaries, but their participation in them is voluntary, for example, spiritual counseling, participation in various religious services or ceremonies for the beneficiaries, such as the funeral of one of the beneficiaries, attendance at the liturgy followed by the Eucharist etc. . - and activities are necessarily integrated - when social services are offered under the condition of participation in events or religious ceremonies. Another dimension of the analysis concerns the explicit or latent character of the religious content involved in the social programs that are offered.

6. The presumed link between the religious content of the implemented social programs and the expected results for or by the beneficiaries. Some organizations, with a pregnant missionary character, condition the outcome of the programs by their religious component, for example, converting the beneficiary to that faith (Sider & Unruh, 2004).

Sider and Unruh show that a number of authors start defining the concept of a faith-based organization from the religious content of programs developed by organizations, others consider their organization and functioning pattern, as they are independent or under the control of the cult institution, or by referring to the religious content and the religious history of the organization. Starting from understanding the religious content of an organization as having a multidimensional nature, the authors suggest a typology embracing all these aspects and ordering them on a series of axes, from organizations heavily infused with religious content to those who originated as organizations of a religious nature, but which function in a secular manner (Sider & Unruh, 2004: 110-116). To clarify the specifics of faith-based organizations, Sider and Unruh identify a series of five faith-based organizations:

1. The first two categories include *faith-permeated organizations* and *faith-based organizations*, in which the relationship between organizational programs and the religious element is the closest, the former being an explicit expression of religious values, clearly expressed in the mission of the organization. The selection of the staff involved in their programs and - at least in part - of the beneficiaries is influenced by their religious affiliation. The governing board or decision-makers are directly involved in the activity of the Church, being in most cases people of the Church or even hierarchs. The religious content of the programs is mandatory and deemed necessary for the success of the social programs developed by the organization. Funding for programs is largely based on funds from the religious congregation to which the organization belongs. The organization's relationships with other organizations, with no confessional affiliation or other confessional membership, are often reduced, if not nonexistent (Cojocaru et al., 2008; Sider & Unruh, 2004; Van der Merve et al., 2014).

2. *Faith-affiliated organizations* retain in their mission a series of spiritual elements, the fulfillment of which is often considered as a condition for running the organization's programs. Founders, individuals or legal entities belonging to the religious community, retain significant influence over their activity, but members of the governing board, although most of them belong to a religion, are not necessarily religious hierarchs.

3. The last two categories include faith-background organizations and faith-secular partnerships, and are organizations of a religious nature (Marx & Hopper, 2005), which retain a series of references in their history to religious values, but act in a secularized manner. The content of programs and decisions on the organization's activity, the selection of staff and beneficiaries are no longer related to religious affiliation. This form of deviation towards secularization has been identified in the case of faith-based organizations, most of which are neo-protestant, who, under the impact of the necessity of supporting and financing their activity in a religious climate with few neo-protestant influences and by shifting to a national management, have been secularized, becoming organizations that have religious elements in their past but have given up the spiritual content of their work (Cojocaru et al., 2008). Partnerships between faith-based organizations and secular organizations usually carry out their work in a secular manner, organizations with religious origins or affiliation generally adopting a type of secular speech and practice.

Smith and Sosin (2001) show that FBO differ significantly from each other, depending on the strength of faith-based relationships involved by belonging to the organization, on the one hand, and on the relationship

between the FBO and the cult to which it is affiliated, on the other hand. Organizations also differ from one another in terms of organizational religiosity or spirituality. Adding to these aspects those related to the internal structure of organizations, the Working Group on Human Needs and Community Based Faith Initiatives (WGHNCBFI, n.d.) developed a typology similar to that of Sider and Unruh, classifying organizations into six categories: faith-saturated, faith-centred, faith-related, with faith-background and faith-secular partnership, depending on the degree and manner of involvement of the religious element in the mission and activity of the organization. According to this reference framework on FBO, in faith-saturated organizations the whole staff is formed of faithful practitioners, and programs necessarily include religious content, while in faith-related organizations, religious symbols may appear in some of the programs, but not necessarily, the membership or adherence to that cult is not required for the staff, except for the organization's leaders, and programs do not include messages or activities of an express religious nature. Organizations with a historical faith background no longer include any religious material or symbol, and their appearance and functioning is the same as in a secular organization, despite the inherited spiritual heritage, which it is often used for promoting the organization.

Clarke (2008) classifies FBO according to the active or passive, persuasive or exclusive manner in which the religious element is expressed by the organization in its programs and in the public discourse that emanates from it.

For his part, Johnsen (2014) considers religious affiliation as subsidiary, from the perspective of the social services provided, to the humanitarian principles that animate the organization. These principles, of course, have a religious origin, but they themselves are operational even in the absence of faith elements. These principles act as motivation for the staff of the organization, being able to mobilize public support for the cause supported by the organization, but not in the name of religion, but of humanism itself, which means that the organization doesn't necessarily expect conversions and it does not exclude those of another religion or without any confession from the services offered (Johnsen, 2014). Although this approach is an effect of the secularization of mentalities of social service providers, even those from FBOs, it is in consensus with the fundamental humanism and tolerance of the Christian faith, which gives priority to the care of the Other before the necessity of his conversion.

Conclusions

Recognizing the social importance of the work of faith-based organizations is part of reconsidering the role of religion in society and the failure of the complete separation of the secular society from religion in the context of a post-secular society (Barbato & Kratchvil, 2008; Habermas et al., 2017). The debate on the role of faith-based organizations in the provision of social services is a major one in the contemporary sociology of religions (Bäckström & Davie, 2010; Ellenson, 2006; Jeppsson Grassman, 2010). In fact, religious communities and their leaders have not been excluded from public debates, proof being the existence of parties of Christian-democratic origin, with an effective political activity at the level of the European Union, or the influence of the American establishment and the traditionalist-Christian conservative groups on The US Congress.

Social assistants acting on the basis of the post-secular paradigm recognize social faith-based action as an alternative to bureaucratic and consumerist care in both the public and private sectors. We conclude that post-secular social assistance is a model that can be a basis for social policies that replace the neo-liberal hegemony of bureaucratic secularism, by promoting the communitarian public good (Shaw, 2017).

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