

SECULARITY OF THE STATE AND POLITICAL STRATEGIES OF RELIGION

Abstract

The starting point of this article is the complexity of the current political panorama of religion. In Latin America, religion is present in manifestations of political agents as well as politics are present in religious expressions. Before a diversity of existent models, this article analyzes the Brazilian situation. Religiosity is an indelible characteristic of the Brazilian people. The historic heritage of Catholicism and the growth of Pentecostal Evangelical Churches reveal the laicism of State as an incomplete and fragile process. Civil society presupposes an existence of citizens who are, also, religious. These assumptions raise two fundamental questions: considering that religions are expressions of pluralism of national identities that shape citizenship, how can one give meaning for the presence of religion in politics? How can a religion find its adequate spot in politics without damaging the laicism of State and without secularizing/politicalizing itself? This article contributes to this discussion.

Keywords: Laicism of State, Politics of Religion, Brazil

Secularity of the State and secularization of society

Analyses about religion in the contemporary Western world usually focus on the theme of secularization. However, the relationship between the modernization process of a society and its relationship with the sacred seems more complex. It is no different in relation to the secularity of the State. Religiosity remains an element that characterizes the individual and the society. Political debate falls under the interference of religious institutions in many countries, be they rich or poor, emerging or developed, secular or theocratic.

The use of the term *secularity* is not synonymous with *secularization*. *Secularization* refers to the sociocultural dimension characterized by the decline of religion as the reference for various spheres of public life as well as by the disappearance of religious practices. Secularity refers to the political aspect and is applied to the relationship between political and religious authority. The neutrality

1 E-mail: gasdasj@hotmail.com

of the State is set against religious groups. In this sense, the Secular State is different from the Confessional State. The Confessional State operates and legislates according to religious requirements. The Secular State does not promote any particular belief and is independent of religion. Secularity is one of the principles of the modern State. Its legitimacy rests in the sovereignty of *the people* (*laikós*).

Secularity is closer to political liberalism than to culture. One of the principles of liberalism is precisely the separation between religion and politics, and the recognition of religious pluralism (cultural framework). Every liberal State assumes, not eliminates, diverse forms of pluralism. A secular State is defined as a sovereign political institution, legitimate and separate from religion. This is different from secularism, which is an attitude of radical and intolerant fighting against public forms of religious expression. Secularity, on the other hand, demands recognition of religious freedom, subjective autonomy, democracy and respect for human rights.

There are various forms of secularity², according to the culture, history and types of constitutional systems for the separation of Religion and State. Some countries separate Church and State but maintain some preferential relationship with some religion, by formal or informal agreements, such as Italy, Spain, Portugal, Poland, Sweden and Panama. Others adopt a State religion, such as Ireland and Costa Rica (Catholic); England (Anglican); Greece (Orthodox); Denmark and Finland (Lutheran).

From the historical point of view, both the process of secularization and the secularity of the State are marked by the Protestant Reformation³. Their efforts have contributed to the political constitution of the Modern State. Thus, would what Russel said be true, that, Christianity popularized an important idea, foreign to the general spirit of antiquity, that man's duty to God is more imperative than his duty to the State⁴?

Differing from Catholic Christian theology, Lutero distinguished between the internal (spiritual) and the external (temporal) worlds⁵, although he considered submission of both to the will of God. This individualization of faith inspired Hobbes' theory of the State. Hobbes identifies the basis of sovereign power as the sole legislator in the distinction between the two worlds⁶. Karl Marx also dedicated himself to political "emancipation" in relation to religion. Marx highlighted that secularity means only the freedom of the State, not of man, from religion because "the overwhelming majority does not cease to be religious through being religious in private".⁷

2 Oro, Ari Pedro, "A Laicidade no Brasil e no Ocidente: Algumas Considerações", *Civitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Porto Alegre, 2011, pp. 221-237.

3 Marramao, Giacomo, *Céu e Terra: Genealogia da Secularização*, São Paulo, Editora da UNESP, 1997.

4 Russell, Bertrand, "A filosofia entre a religião e a ciência", in: *História da filosofia ocidental*, Tradução de Brenno Silveira, São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957, pp. 10-20.

5 Lutero, Martin, Calvino, Jhon, *Sobre a Autoridade Secular*, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2005.

6 Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviatã: ou Matéria, Forma e Poder de um Estado Eclesiástico e Civil*, São Paulo, Nova Cultural, 1997, p. 91.

7 Marx, Karl, *Sobre a Questão Judaica*, São Paulo, Boitempo, 2010, p. 19.

This differentiation between the State and religious spheres precedes the other distinction, directed at the schism of “man” between public life and private life, typical of Anglo-Saxon liberalism. Max Weber conceived the separation between religion and politics as an element of the process of differentiation between cultural values and the formation of institutions. His thesis pointed to the decline of religion as a developmental factor of modernity. The transcendental foundation of the organization suffered a progressive substitution by the immanent dynamic of rationalization of the institutions⁸.

The Weberian *disenchantment of the world* enables the *desecration of the law* and institutes the secular State as the reference of legal order. This set of factors made the withdrawal of the State from religious affairs possible, at the time in which it imposes neutrality on religion in affairs of the State. The liberal, secular State is founded on the disengagement between the sacred and the public.

Even with this institutional separation between Religion and State, religion maintains its influence in the political scene up to the present time. The reappearance of several fundamentalisms, and the emerging presence of religious groups in the public sphere, at the beginning of the 21st century, reveals the importance of reopening the discussion of the concept of secularization. The idea of a Church-State separation and that religion should not have a role in public life are seen by liberal-democrats, socialists and republicans as one of the central pillars of politics, to the point that they are simply taken for granted. Facing these facts, it is worth asking: what are the possibilities of a truly secular State without the existence of a truly secular society to represent it?

Complexity of the political scenario of religion

The presence of the religious element in the political sphere cannot be interpreted as outdated or reductionist schemes and methods. The public visibility of religion on the contemporary scene is a fact. The events that define the beginning of the 21st century reshape the discussion and the interest around the issue of the relationship of religion and politics. This topic has been explained in various ways, from the most direct link between Church and State to its radical separation that clearly delimits both spheres. There currently persist both the most fundamentalist theocracies as well as secular societies close to agnosticism. Religion and politics cross over between peaceful coexistence and the cruelest violence.

Whether in the cultural field and that of everyday life, or in the civil and political spheres, religious actors bring their language, their morality and their demands to the public. Several authors have insisted on the emergence of religion as a social and political force⁹. In recent years, the growing visibility of these actors

8 Weber, Max, *A Ética Protestante e o 'Espírito' do Capitalismo*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2004.

9 Cf. Casanova, José, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1994.

on the global scene has become clear¹⁰. There are numerous examples. To mention only the most well-known: the advance of Islam in Europe; the institution of an Islamic State in the East; the political persecution of Christians in various parts of the world; the debate about issues of gender, sexuality, human reproduction; parliamentary representation of religious leaders; intensive use of old and new media by religious groups.

The interactions between religion and politics are more complex and less defined than can be imagined. Contemporary democracies continue to allow for the mobilization and organization of religious forces, creating an excess of visibility and influence¹¹. The instances which generate institutional attitudes, whether progressive or conservative, fundamentalist or liberal, manifest their influence in the sphere of social actors as well as in the context of civil society organizations and of the State.

This situation can be seen in Latin America. Its history goes back to the predominant posture of the Catholic Church. Nearly 40% of the world Catholic population lives in this region. Evangelical Pentecostal churches play an increasing role in a great number of these countries with the exception of Uruguay and Mexico.

From the end of the 20th century, most Latin American countries experienced fundamental political changes. At the beginning of the 21st century, the relationship between politics and religion disproves the classic theories of secularization and the secularity of the State. On the one hand, in most cases, the constitutions and the guidelines guarantee equality for all faiths, affirming the democratic principle of independence between political institutions and religions.

On the other hand, religious institutions show their presence in public spaces in a remarkable way. The political landscape of faith is as a highly complex and hybrid territory. Religious interests are present in political activities and in political actors, in the same way as political interests and actors are present in religious activities. The fields are intertwined. Religious institutions are active not only in partisan secular agendas, but also create their own agendas. These institutions are, in most cases, vertical and disciplined corporate structures, imposing ideological lines both from the left and from the right. Currently, new information and communication technologies, social networks, blogs and digital pages are their preferred platforms for expansion.

The relationship between religion and politics in Latin America cannot be disassociated from the explanation of the processes of secularization of the State which characterize the western world. Democracy was consolidated from the institutional differentiation between political institutions, regarding the religious sphere. This is not about the disappearance of religion from these societies, but of their autonomy from State powers.

10 Esposito, John L., Watson, M. (eds.), *Religion and the global order*, Cardiff, University of Wales, 2000.

11 Haynes, Jeff, *Religion in global politics*, Londres/Nova York, Longman, 1998. Hecllo, Hugh, Mcclay, Wilfred M. (eds.), *Religion returns to the public square: faith and policy in America*, Washington, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2003. Roof, Wade Clark (ed.), *World order and religion*, Albany, State University of New York, 1991.

There is not a uniform model of State secularity in Latin America. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the singular experience of each national reality. In these countries, the Christian-Catholic tradition established itself in different ways, with different conflicts and deadlocks. The levels of secularization are distinct. In each one, secularity seems an incomplete characteristic of democracy. As it is impractical to discuss the reality of all Latin American countries, the text focuses on the case of Brazil. This is not only because it is the birthplace of the author, but also because it is the country with the largest number of Christians in the world whose reality lends itself to illustrate very well the connections between Politics and Religion.

Secularity and secularization in Brazil

In Brazil, the process of institutional secularization is under construction. The boundaries between politics and religion are relatively fluid. It is impossible to repeat the traditional diagnostics of the social sciences for which secularization, technological evolution, individualism and cyberculture would bring about a progressive decline in the public presence of religions. That is not the case in this country. On the contrary, there is a growing advancement of the social and political actors for whom religious identity is an essential component. The phenomenon is intensified with the emergence of new, neo-Pentecostal evangelical churches undermining the Roman Catholic monopoly. The Christian matrix continues hegemonic.

Brazil is a very complex secular State. Politics is still in a very embryonic state, because the country emerged from a dictatorship only a little over three decades ago. Practically all religious groups are present. Many Brazilians practice their faith in more than one religion. The 1988 Federal Constitution establishes the right to religious freedom: "Freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable, the free exercise of religious faiths is assured and, as provided by law, the protection of places of worship and their liturgies is guaranteed", states the Constitutional text (Article 5, Item VI). The Penal Code (Decree of Law 2848/40, Article 208) also protects religious freedom and provides a penalty of 3 years imprisonment and a fine for the practice, induction or incitement of discrimination or prejudice of religious character (No. 7716/1989, Article 20).

The legislative codes state the separation between the State and Religion, and there may exist no official religion. However, there is explicit interference of religion in public affairs. Religiousness is an indelible characteristic of the profoundly confessional Brazilian people. Brazil is a secular State wherein 92% of the people declare themselves to be religious, and whose currency carries the motto "God Be Praised".

In a *religious nation* like this, there is no way to discuss politics either emphasizing or abridging religion. The entrenchment of churches in the consciousness and in social reality makes the presence of the religious element inevitable in

the public space. Religiousness has marked the experience of the Brazilian people. Messianic experiences have existed from the time of indigenous peoples, who used religious elements to create a feeling of revolt against the oppression of Portugal. Christianity enabled a more syncretic type of religiosity, mixing elements of African and indigenous religions. The so-called *popular religiosity* constitutes a symbolic universe of people. This close relationship may be explained, in part, by this popular religiosity and by the influence of Catholicism and the traditional Protestant religions.

The religious and political relationship went through distinct stages in the history of Brazil: *Religion controlled by the State, Catholicism allied with the State, Autonomous religion and criticism of the State, Pentecostal attacks on the secularity of the State.*

Religion controlled by the State

Brazilian Catholicism is the historical result of the Catholicism of the Iberian Peninsula. The large number of royal privileges that the crown of Portugal and Spain received from the papacy as compensation for their part in the retaking of the Iberian Peninsula from Islam transformed the churches in the colonies into typical models of *Catholic caesaropapism*. The churches became administrative districts of the conquering foreign State, in which the king controlled politics, economy, doctrine and morality in a nearly absolute way. The independence of Brazil from the crown of Portugal in 1822 reinforced State control of the Church. The emperor of Brazil, Pedro I, was simultaneously the primary ecclesiastical authority and the Grand Master of the Order of the Masons. Numerous bishops were also Masons. Consequently, the institutional presence of the Church was extremely fragile. There was only one diocese in the entire territory until 1676. No parishes, universities or seminaries were established to educate the native clergy. The expulsion of the Jesuits from Brazil in 1759 was another very harsh blow.

Religion allied with the State

The Church was able to free itself from State control only in 1889, with the Proclamation of the Republic. The country had only 13 bishops and 700 priests. This autonomy permitted the arrival of European priests and missionaries, giving impetus to the process of *Romanization* and *Europeanization* of the Church. The process of the Christianization of the society began with the economic oligarchy and the holders of political authority, as well as other influential elites. This project used the public authorities, resuming a type of alliance with State and economic authorities¹².

12 Dom Vital Center brought together a large number of Catholic intellectuals who later played prominent roles in public life. Getúlio Vargas brought even closer the State and the Church. With the success of the Catholic Electoral League (LEC), the Constituent

Autonomous religion and criticism of the State

Inspired and reinforced by the Vatican II Council (1962-1965), this model distanced itself from the State, opposed the military dictatorship and allied itself to the civil society to reconstruct democracy. The Conference of Latin American Bishops (CELAM), held in Medellín (1968), legitimized and supported the whole process of democratization of Latin America and conferred a more Latin American identity on the Church.

Brazil, the most populous, extensive and Catholic country in the region, played a significant role in this new ecclesial identity. The Church committed itself to the defense of human rights, with the restoration of democracy and preferential option for the poor. The prophetic and independent attitude of State authorities, through the clergy, religious orders, laity and hierarchy (Helder Câmara, Pedro Casaldáliga, Paulo Evaristo Arns, Luciano Mendes and Waldir Calheiros) became the *voice of those with no voice*.

The Basic Education Movement (BEM), inspired by Paulo Freire's proposal, had a crucial role in the political and social transformation of Brazilian Catholicism. The BEM is at the origin of the *Basic Ecclesiastical Communities* (BECs). The Church supported the organization of indigenous communities, of urban and rural workers unions, created institutions like the *Indigenous Missionary Council* (IMC), the *Pastoral Land Commission* (PLC), *Workers' Pastoral Commission* (WPC) and the *Commission for Peace and Justice*.

The work of Christians, the laity and religious orders in the defense of human rights and the fight against the dictatorship was not restricted to the protection of freedom from political persecution, but extended to social struggles for housing, education and health, projecting the image of religion positively as the interlocutor between the State and civil society. Most social movements that appeared in the 70s and 80s have either direct or indirect links to Christianity. Its influence on the process of constituting the identity and political discourse of social organizations is remarkable. This form of living the faith favored the appearance of organizations that currently are known internationally as the Landless Movement (MST) and the Central Union of Workers (CUT). The Workers' Party (WP), which has governed the country since 2003, was founded by Luís Inácio ("Lula") da Silva under the protection of the Church.

The Theology of Liberation contributed to the link between Christianity, politics and social commitment. The appearance of this Theology, in a moment of renewal of the post-Conciliar and post-Medellín Catholic Church marked a turning point that legitimized a more left-wing political approach, independent of political and economic forces. The *see, judge and act* method interprets the reality of oppression and structural injustice from faith in Jesus Christ. The theology

National Assembly responded to many Catholics' demands in the drafting of the new Constitution.

assumes various elements of culture and popular religiosity, not as a pejorative element of alienation but as transforming forces of reality. Those aspects that were already part of Brazilian culture generated social, political and cultural organization that influence Brazilian politics.

Despite the weakening of the Theology of Liberation, there still persists a series of progressive discourses and political practices committed to social justice and to the marginalized. Pope Francis is revitalizing this characteristic of Christianity. In sum, Christianity, whether in the Protestant or the Catholic version, had a crucial role in the difficult process of redemocratization and consolidation of Brazilian civil society.

The 1988 Brazilian federal constitution symbolized not only the opening to citizen participation in politics but also the expansion of religious space. The Churches, in the process of elaborating the constitutional text, despite not attacking secularity, incorporated some provisions that reflect their points of view¹³. Notwithstanding, the Brazilian State maintained separation of religion.

Pentecostal attacks on the secularity of the State

Brazil is experiencing a new setting in the relationship between politics and religion. In this scenario, secularization is threatened by religious harassment in institutional politics. Brazil is no longer the most Catholic country in the world. The Theology of Liberation has lost influence. Religious identities are constructed from symbolic premises and moral doctrines which are less ideological and progressive. The religious field has become more plural. Catholicism, once a hegemonic social, cultural and political force, fights to rebuild its position in the face of the growth of the Pentecostal orientation of Christianity. According to official data, in 2000, 15.4% of the Brazilian population declared itself evangelical; in the 2010 census, this number increased to 22.2%¹⁴.

The neo-Pentecostal boom has reached the political sphere. The use of religious identities has been practiced in an unlimited way as an electoral resource to channel the votes of the faithful. The exploitation of religion for political interests, and vice-versa, has become commonplace in Brazilian reality. Many ministers take political office, promoted by their popularity. In 2014, one candidate for the presidency of the Republic introduced himself as *Pastor* Everaldo. The establishment of parliamentary political representation reveals the strength of religious

13 The Catholic lobby was responsible for the insertion of the expression *under the protection of God*, in the preamble; besides ensuring the *provision of religious assistance in the civil and military entities of collective detention* (art. 5, VII); and the maintenance of religious education in the public schools of elementary education (art. 10, §1), which was optional.

14 In 30 years, the percentage of the population who declared themselves Evangelical increased from 6.6% in 1980 to 22.2% in 2010. However, the majority remains Catholic, 65%, but showing a fall as compared to 1980, when it represented 89% of the population. Umbanda and Candomblé remained stable at 0.3% of the population. Source: IBGE, Demographic Census 2010. http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/estatistica/populacao/censo2000/populacao/religiao_Censo2000.pdf (accessed 20.11.2014.)

communication movements in terms of state behaviors. The number of evangelical members of congress coming from the (neo)Pentecostal matrix keeps growing¹⁵. The progressive disappearance of the political frontier in the secular State gets these candidates, who identify themselves explicitly as ministers, elected.

Social, anthropological and cultural themes (sexuality, environmentalism, human mobility, the workplace, indigenism, race, education, etc.) of past decades enter into conflict with the religions. The (neo)Pentecostal ideological framework is extremely pragmatic and morally conservative. Thus, the clashes with civil and human rights groups intensify. Catholics and evangelicals close ranks around the *Parliamentary Front in Defense of Life and the Preservation of the Family*, blocking the advance in the debate of topics like civil union of persons of the same sex and of abortion. Such Evangelical Parliamentary Fronts are scattered about in city councils and Legislative Assemblies of the states of the federation. All in all, Brazil is a secular, liberal, democratic State in which, in many cases, religion determines the vote and the future of the civil society.

Does a religious society represent a threat to the secularity of the State?

On the issue of the relation between religion and politics, Brazil is a country of flagrant contradictions. To list some examples: the country formally became secular in the first Republican Constitution (1891). However, the 1934 Constitution introduced the requirement for religious education in public schools. Thus, the secular State ended up interfering in the constitutional right to religious freed (cfr. Constitution, Article 5, VI – *freedom of conscience and belief is inviolable*).

The country has not adopted an official religion since the 1891 Constitution; but, the religious hegemony of Catholicism has only seen competition in the second half of the 20th century, with the advance of Pentecostalism¹⁶. The media are public concessions, but the dispute between evangelicals and Catholics regarding the “religious market” came to be caught up in the media. The success of Christian religious candidates is also due to the media power. In 2009, there were 20 television networks that transmitted religious content, of which 11 were evangelical and 9 were Catholic. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, with nearly 2 million faithful, controls the second largest TV network (Record) in the country and more than 40 radio stations. In the political-media sphere, the slogan *the believer doesn't mix in politics* was replaced by *brothers vote for brothers* in a reference to the advertisement: *Catholics vote for Catholics*, from the *Catholic Charismatic Renewal*¹⁷. The recent intensification of the presence of religion

15 The Evangelical Parliamentary Group has 80 representatives in the National Congress.

16 Jurkevics, Vera Irene, “Laicidade à Brasileira: Católicos, Pentecostais e Laicos em Disputa na Esfera Pública”, *Civitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Porto Alegre, 2011, pp. 238-258.

17 Mariano, Ricardo, “Pentecostais e Política no Brasil: do Apolitismo ao Ativismo Corporativista”, in: Santos, Hermilio (org.), *Debates Pertinentes: para Entender a Sociedade Contemporânea*, Porto Alegre, Edipucrs, 2010, pp. 112-138.

in politics has reinforced the image of Christianity in relation to other religions (Islam, Afro-Brazilian and Eastern religions). This practice has intimidated the exercise of pluralism and undermines the religious freedom of the non-Christian denominations.

The civil laws are ceasing to be a reflection of the will of the people on complex issues, regarding private decisions and public interest. The list of topics, on which the political-institutional function of the State comes under pressure from religions that count on the power of their media vehicles in defense of positions based on religious morality, is extensive: abortion, homo-affective civil unions, embryonic stem-cells and reproductive rights. This phenomenon exposes the weakness of secularity as a republican value in the activities of Brazilian political institutions.

Brazil comes close to a type of *confessionalization* of politics, based on an aggressive *modus operandi* of partisan politics action of the Christian denominations. Religious groups are the strongest of the "political-social pressure groups". Their politicians do not discursively oppose the secular State. However, they are against the denial of the relationship between the political and religious spheres.

Would this be the role of religion in society? Why do religious groups gain such prominence in politics? What do they represent? How can we preserve the richness of religious diversity and the cultural pluralism of Brazilian society, facing such harassment? Attempts to introduce laws with a religious character in Brazil lead toward intolerance and discrimination¹⁸. A democratic society is made of disputes. The weakness of the political boundary in the public authority lets religious candidates not forego their religion, or the values that they support. Daily Brazilian life is filled with religious issues, and there is no political education. The land is fertile for religion to become an opiate of the people and an instrument in the service of the elite and of the conservative parties. They exploit poverty and the needs of the poor for their own benefit, proselytizing prevails where the common good and social interests should take precedence. Brazil, maybe, has inaugurated a relatively secular State.

Secularity of the State and Religious Freedom are legacies of Christianity

Christianity emerged under the rule of an empire that tolerated religious polytheism. Rome allowed each conquered people to preserve their gods, in exchange for submission to the figure of the emperor. Christians, monotheists, were opposed to the latter condition. Tertullian demanded from the Roman State that which is currently known as *secular State*: "But you had best see to it whether this does not concur to the making up of another article of irreligion

18 Giumbelli, Emerson, *O fim da religião: dilemas da liberdade religiosa no Brasil e na França*, São Paulo, Attar, 2002.

against you—namely, to deprive men of the liberty of worshipping after their own way, and to interdict them the option of their deity; so that I must not worship the god I would, but am forced to worship the god I would not" (*Apologeticum*, chapter 24). Early Christianity was a partisan of distinction of the religious and political spheres.

From the institutionalization of Christianity as the official religion of the State through the work of Emperor Constantine, religious intolerance turned against non-Christians (heretics). The total confluence of Church and State takes place at the coronation of Charlemagne by Pope Leo III as *most pious Augustus, crowned by God, great and peaceful, Emperor of the Romans*. Despite the efforts of Pope Gelasius I to abandon political agnosticism, Christendom maintained a hierocratic conception of State. Gregory VII and Innocent III worked for the State to become an executive extension of Christianity. Thomas Aquinas advocated a political power subordinated to the Papal power (*De regimine principum*).

In the *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1689) John Locke defends the autonomy of society against religion, and freedom of religion against the State. However, in the pontificates of Gregory XVI (1831-1846) and Pius IX (1846-1878) the Church continued holding on to the Confessional State (*Syllabus*, 1864). Only at the end of the 19th century is the principle of tolerance incorporated in the ideal of a confessional State by Leo XIII (*Libertas praestantissimum*, 1888).

Only in the mid-twentieth century did the Catholic Church cease to consider itself a legally perfect society, superior to the State, to affirm that relations between both societies should be characterized by autonomy and cooperation: autonomy, because the aims of one and another are different. The aim of the political community is the realization of the common good whereas the aim of the religious community is of the spiritual order. Regarding cooperation, the common good sought by the State includes freedom of religion, and the religiosity that the religions promote should not be opposed to the common good, but contribute to its realization.

The Declaration *Dignitatis humanae*, of the Second Vatican Council¹⁹ teaches that the secularity of the State is inseparable from the right to religious freedom. This right to religious freedom is an indicator to verify respect for human rights, as can be seen in *Art. XVIII* of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: "Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes the freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance".

After this long road, the Second Vatican Council "declares that the human person has a right to religious freedom. This freedom means that all men are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and

19 Concílio Vaticano II, Declaração Dignitatis humanae: *Acta Apostolicae Saedis* (1966), No. 58, pp. 929-945.

of any human power, in such wise that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits." (*Dignitatis Humanae*, n. 2).

From this doctrinal statement it follows that: Only a secular State can ensure religious freedom and respect for religious pluralism. Religious entities are subjects of rights and duties and are endowed with legal personality before the State. The State, in turn, has the right and the duty to intervene when the forms of organization, association, worship, and public expression of religions violate the law, the peace and the public civil ethics. No religion can ignore civil rights of the public order.

The separation between religion and politics refers to religion as an institution in relation to the State as an institution. It does not separate religions from society as a whole, since the society itself is civil, not secular. Religions rest on the set of social forces, not in the sphere of the State. The place for religious expression is the civil society. On the one hand, religious freedom protects religion from the interference of State power. But, on the other hand, it also protects the State from the harassment and interference of religions in the exercise of public authority.

The function of religions should not be confused with functions of the State. Political reality has its own autonomy. The main mission of religion is not of political-economic order, but of spiritual order. Secular orders, such as political power, have their own value. The duties of the political sphere of the government and of legislation are the responsibility of the State. Religions, as part of civil society, are invited to contribute with the State in defense of human dignity and the common good. To preserve political autonomy, religions must relinquish control of State institutions.

The religions have no more rights or privileges than other institutions, against the powers of the State. Supernatural titles are of religious/spiritual order, therefore they cannot be used to demand rights and privileges of another order (neither supernatural nor spiritual), as in the case of civil, economic and political rights. A mandate or set of divine guidelines, revealed by a spiritual being, is a matter of faith, therefore, and cannot be used to confer or impose rights or legal interdicts pertinent to civil legislation. They are distinct and autonomous orders. If the State is secular, it has autonomy before the divine order. Otherwise, it would revert to the pre-modern theocratic model. Public institutions do not require the holy element to ensure their autonomy and foundation. However, religions can contribute with the public authorities in the implementation of social justice.

The concept of secularism makes sense from the religious element present in society. The secular State is not secularist, i.e., it assumes the possibility of religious choices of its citizens. The mechanisms of civil order, independent of any religious conception that prevails in the public sphere, do not interfere with individual conscience. The search for a religious meaning in human existence is a

question that each individual chooses freely; it's not a *matter of State*. The State would not deal fairly and equally with religions if it prioritized one over all others. Religions are challenged to consider their place in this historical context of pluralistic, democratic and civil society.

Conclusion: the meaning of the presence of religion in politics

How religion can find its proper place within politics without hurting the secularity of the State and without becoming worldly or political?

The question is no longer *whether* religion should be present in the political sphere and public institutions, but how to make sense of this presence, how to understand its different modalities and impacts. Culture and identity are intertwined with religion, democracy and tolerance. Religions, as an active component of contemporary political dynamics, are legitimate expressions of the plurality of national identities that comprise citizenship.

The State is secular in order to provide for all. No one is the owner of the truth and there will always be divergences. Therefore, it is necessary that the sides get along to reach a common agreement. Only a secular State allows religious plurality. The current process of re-composition of the religious sense is a fact relevant to a secular State. Religions entwine with the political power in different ways. Any religious citizen has the right to participate in politics as long as they do not want to impose their beliefs on others. Religious plurality is an imperative of democratic societies. No one should be removed from public life, or lose political rights for believing in deities. The State is secular so that no group can use the State against their religious opponents. The State is secular (laity or non-clerical), not secularist, i.e., it does not have an official religion and it recognizes all forms of religious expression. Democracy, actually, infers that all voices and thoughts are heard.

The autonomy of civil society and the State should always be respected, in any form of participation. A religious-based morality cannot be imposed on society as a whole. It is not for religion to develop a public moral consensus or the legal structure of a country and its rulers. The transcendence of religion in relation to temporal orders confers freedom, universality, and autonomy regarding the powers of this world.

Religion is invited to engage in dialogue with politics accepting the plurality of beliefs, ideologies and different ethical projects. To engage in dialogue means not to impose its doctrine and moral code, and to let oneself be led by the constant search for the common good, justice and peace without ever getting privileges. Any politician, regardless of the power he exercises, should represent the people and not just his electorate. The function is to work for the common good and not only by their ideologies or religious convictions.

The challenge in the relationship between religion and politics is to incorporate the ambivalence of religious logic into the public debate and political repre-

sentation. It is to defuse this presence within a pluralist and democratic context. The presence of religious actors should not represent in itself a threat that justifies their exclusion from politics. On the one hand, the pluralism of the democratic order is compatible with different political-ideological and ethical-social nuances; on the other hand, the ongoing co-participation of social actors with different moral conceptions in public spaces can have an effect of both inclusion and co-responsibility regarding the community vocation and the quest for the common good and justice. There are possible convergences between political and religious speeches. The plurality of political positions is a mark in the field of religions and today they dispute their hegemony both inside and outside of the institutionalized spaces of religion. Not all positions are equally valid or acceptable in argumentative, political and ethical terms. It is for the public debate to set this litigation. The solution to political issues is always political.

Religions, as institutions, participate in the political life supporting their proposals. However, when they act only in defense of their institutional interests they become vulnerable to political contingencies (corruption, manipulation, etc.). The solution to bad politics is good politics. Many religious persons believe they are enlightened by God to *fix* politics. They think they have the right to govern, by the mere fact of being Christians. They demonize other's politics and deify their own. Politics are made by imperfect men and women.

It is necessary to avoid all forms of Manichaeism or moralist triumphalism in politics. No institution may claim a divine right to rule, as the State is not a judge of religious doctrines and practices. No human power can be deified. To control others from one's own conception of life is an abuse of right. This is not to say that a religious group has greater or lesser representative legitimacy of the interests of their constituents or of society as a whole, but to observe to what extent the religious burden they bring to the debate can obscure rather than clarify certain themes.

Religion functions as a support for the pursuit of the common good, but its space is different from that of the Government. The common good is a collective construction and is, by nature, comprehensive. The more people participate, the more it is legitimized. The laws of the State are for all its citizens. Nevertheless, the norms and morality of a religion apply only to its faithful. Religion can strengthen democracy, human rights and public virtues. In order to do this, it must keep its autonomy within civil society. Only thus, it can offer its best to society.

The need to consolidate the process of democratization of Latin America requires making progress in the construction of the secularity of the State and recognizing the historical particularity of the rich cultural and religious plurality so evident in each country. Respect for the uniqueness of the processes of each of their States is a necessary condition to show, in an assertive manner, the relationship between the political dimension and the religious dimension that configures the region.

Religion and politics mix together; Religion and State do not. Politics is not a way to strengthen one religion over others. The West learned, the hard way, that religion and State must be separated. A sound political involvement is essential for the health of religion itself, as well as for the common good. The Christian view of the State is that the State should not be *religious*.

References

- Casanova, José, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago, University of Chicago, 1994.
- Concílio Vaticano II, Declaração Dignitatis humanae: *Acta Apostolicae Saedis* (1966), n. 58.
- Esposito, John L., Watson, M. (eds.), *Religion and the global order*, Cardiff, University of Wales, 2000.
- Giumbelli, Emerson, *O fim da religião: dilemas da liberdade religiosa no Brasil e na França*. São Paulo, Attar, 2002.
- Haynes, Jeff, *Religion in global politics*, Londres/Nova York, Longman, 1998.
- Hecló, Hugh, McClay, Wilfred M. (eds.), *Religion returns to the public square: faith and policy in America*, Washington, Woodrow Wilson Center, 2003.
- Hobbes, Thomas, *Leviatã: ou Matéria, Forma e Poder de um Estado Eclesiástico e Civil*, São Paulo, Nova Cultural, 1997.
- Jurkevics, Vera Irene, "Laicidade à Brasileira: Católicos, Pentecostais e Laicos em Disputa na Esfera Pública", *Civitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Porto Alegre, 2011.
- Lutero, Martin, Calvino, Jhon, *Sobre a Autoridade Secular*, São Paulo, Martins Fontes, 2005.
- Mariano, Ricardo, "Pentecostais e Política no Brasil: do Apolitismo ao Ativismo Corporativista", in: Santos, Hermílio (org.), *Debates Pertinentes: para Entender a Sociedade Contemporânea*, Porto Alegre, Edipucrs, 2010.
- Marramao, Giacomo, *Céu e Terra: Genealogia da Secularização*, São Paulo, Editora da UNESP, 1997.
- Marx, Karl, *Sobre a Questão Judaica*, São Paulo, Boitempo, 2010.
- Oro, Ari Pedro, "A Laicidade no Brasil e no Ocidente: Algumas Considerações", *Civitas*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Porto Alegre, 2011.
- Roof, Wade Clark (ed.), *World order and religion*, Albany, State University of New York, 1991.
- Russell, Bertrand, *A filosofia entre a religião e a ciência*, in: *História da filosofia ocidental*, Tradução de Brenno Silveira, São Paulo, Companhia Editora Nacional, 1957.
- Weber, Max, *A Ética Protestante e o 'Espírito' do Capitalismo*, São Paulo, Companhia das Letras, 2004.

Елио Естанислау Гасда

СЕКУЛАРИЗАЦИЈА И ПОЛИТИЧКЕ СТРАТЕГИЈЕ РЕЛИГИЈЕ

Сажетак

Почетна тачка овог чланка јесте комплексност тренутне политичке панораме религије. У Латинској Америци, религија је присутна у манифестацијама политичких актера, исто као што је политика присутна у испољавању вере. Пре анализе различитости постојећих модела, овај чланак се фокусира на ситуацију у Бразилу. Религиозност је једна од неизбрисивих карактеристика Бразилаца. Историјско наслеђе католицизма као и раст пентекосталних цркава открива да је државни лаицизам недовршен и крх процес. Цивилно друштво претпоставља и постојање грађана који су и верници. Ове претпоставке постављају два фундаментална питања: имајући у виду да су религије исказ плурализма националних идентитета који обликују грађанство, како можемо дати смисао постојању религије у политици? Како пронаћи адекватно место религије у политици без да то угрожава државни лаицитет и без страха од тога да религија сама себе секуларизује/политизује? Овај чланак је допринос овој дискусији.

Кључне речи: државни лаицизам, политикологија религије, Бразил

Примљен: 07. 12. 2014.

Прихваћен: 02. 03. 2015.