Globalization and Problems of Russia’s Spiritual Security

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I. A “New Babylon”?

Chapter Eleven of Genesis tells us about the construction of the Tower of Babylon, when “the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech” (Gen. 11:1) and when people began to build a city and a tower whose top might “reach unto heaven” in order to make themselves a name (Gen. 11:4). And the Lord said, “Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do; and now nothing will be restricted from them, which they have imagined to do. ...Let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city.” (Gen. 11:6-8).

As is known, in the Orient to be people of one language often meant to be part of a single empire, that is, to have one global space—political, economic, social and religious. The religious meaning of the story about the Tower of Babylon is quite obvious: people wanted to forsake God and to create a world civilization with a tower whose top might “reach unto heaven” and thus make a name for themselves. In antiquity a tower used to be a part of a cathedral, and building it signified that humanity adopted a new religion, one based on arrogance and opposition to God.

Since then, people have, from time to time, become possessed by grand ideas of unification and construction of some sort of a universal world. The sudden changes that occurred in the world in the late 20th century and attempts to grasp the meaning of the ongoing events, a search for some kind of sign of the changes, trying to discern the face of the period and give it a name—all that has led to the appearance of a stable definition of the new faith which is called GLOBALIZATION.

There are different types of globalization:

1. “World-outlook” globalization presupposes mankind’s unification within the framework of a general ecumenical project based on man’s universal world outlook, the “Ecumenical Council’s formula” of unity capable of bringing together
all nations and peoples inhabiting the earth. Undoubtedly, “world-outlook globalization” has biblical roots—hopes for the advent of an era of general well-being and peace when “the wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.” (Isa. 11:6).

2. “Imperial globalization”. The history of the Roman Empire is a vivid example of this type of globalization. It was a period when peoples, states and territories were conquered with the use of armed force, economic superiority and skilful politics. However, “imperial globalization” did not destroy the traditional religious notions and beliefs, culture and customs of the conquered peoples: on the contrary, Rome assimilated their achievements and placed their gods in its Pantheon.

3. “Christian globalization”. A distinctive feature of this type of globalization is an attempt to build and organize a universal space of salvation, which vividly manifested itself in the first millennium A.D. when there was a single Church which was not divided into the Western and Eastern ones and which had the same saints. The formula of Christian globalization was “expounded” by St. Augustine who proclaimed that there must be “unity in the main thing, liberty next to it, and charity in all things”. However, in the 11th century, following the Great Schism, there appeared two civilization models—the West European and the Byzantine.

The West European civilization model gradually renounced the ideas of universal salvation, and the main tendency of the Western culture became man’s humanistic emancipation; there was a senseless spending of the spiritual energy accumulated during the previous millennia. The West adopted a secular system of political world organization, relying on the development of legal institutions and the nascent industrialization of production, which in the long run led to the creation of a new world, colonial in its essence. The world united via colonization,
transcontinental empires were built, but in spite of all that the world remained multipolar.

The Byzantine model of civilization contains its own original algorithm of building a universal world. A vivid example of that is the creation of the Russian Empire which, owing to its spiritual core—Orthodoxy, managed to realize its “global project” by including various religious-cultural communities and peoples in a single social space through enlightenment and inculturation, instead of colonization—as this was in the West.

4. “Islamic globalization”. The Moslem scheme of universalizing the world, which originated in Asia and Africa and then spread to Europe, comprised both “imperial globalization” (the transcontinental and multinational Ottoman empire) and some new projects for the creation of a universal world (for instance, Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism).

5. “Ideological globalization”. The 20th century saw the appearance of a new type of globalization the distinguishing feature of which was total control over the minds of the millions. The confrontation of communism and capitalism in all spheres of human activity was characterized by domination of politics over economy, where ideology determined the priorities in the development of science (for instance, space exploration), or forms of statehood, culture and social life. The communist version of transcontinental and multinational ideological globalization was very much like “imperial globalization”, except that its distinguishing feature was cruel persecution of religion in which “the fathers of ideological globalization” perceived their principal rival.

Desirable from the viewpoint of the Orthodox Church would only be such a globalization which would unite the world on the basis of God’s Truth for serving it and opposing the forces of evil. In this context it is appropriate to recall a letter starets Filofei of the St. Eleazar Monastery of the Saviour in Pskov sent to Grand Duke Vasily III and dyak (secretary) Munekhin (16th century A.D.). In his letter the
starets talked about Moscow as the Third Rome and about the impossibility of there being a Fourth Rome. In his view, there could not be a Fourth Rome because of the apostasy-prone development of mankind which would become drained spiritually, and because of its inner emptiness would not be able to have a Fourth Rome as an ecumenical pole of attraction to achieve its unity. From the Orthodox point of view, the process of building a universal world could have only one goal—common spiritual growth in the service of God and enlightenment of the peoples who had not yet cognized the Truth and who were “living in darkness”. In their goals the modern globalization processes are contrary to the ideas of the Third Rome because they are based on the materialistic ideology which is similar to the one expressed by Satan who tempted Jesus in the desert.

II. A New Civilization

We are witnessing the birth of a new world. Today, it is clear that the 21st century has entered the era of an information society characterized by a single global information space. Many analysts assert that in the next two decades humanity will be changed beyond recognition. The main trends and specific features in the development of a global information society were defined by the post-industrial states in the Okinawa Charter which they adopted in July 2000 in Japan.

Reviewing mankind’s historical development, it should be noted that until now there have been two waves of global change. One wave was transition from a nomadic way of life to a settled one and to land cultivation—the so-called “agrarian era” (it is interesting to note that in that era Islam appeared and became widespread). The other wave was the industrial revolution which led to a new mode of production and the dawn of an “industrial era” (it was during that era that Protestantism appeared and spread).
The “information era” is beginning in the process of a quiet information revolution—”quiet” because it is not causing any social upheavals. Rapidly changing, however, are the moral and cultural values which were fundamental for the preceding epochs. In the spiritual sphere this leads to the advent of new religious movements which could only appear in the “information era” (for instance, “virtual religious communities” in the global network called Internet, etc.). In the social sphere, according to analysts, social inequality will be replaced by intellectual inequality, which will lead to the intellectual exploitation of some by others.

Overall globalization erases the distinction between the inner and outer environment of mankind’s activity. Its development presupposes the disappearance of inter-civilizational distinctions because of the unification of peoples. And that means that globalization presents a threat to the state, sovereignty, national economic systems, national administrations, and the autonomy of confessions connected in some way with the socio-political, cultural and economic identity.

Globalization envisages some sort of single-direction scheme of development—a kind of high road along which the entire humanity, following the example of the leading nations, is supposed to proceed towards its prosperity. As far as such world-renowned authorities as Arnold Toynbee, Claude Levi-Strauss, Oswald Spengler, Pitirim Sorokin and Karl Jaspers are concerned, it should be noted that they all perceived a threat to mankind in the pernicious consequences of a hegemony of one type of civilization. This view was shared by Nikolai Danilevsky who, relying on his theory of cultural-historical types and contrary to the proponents of the globalization theory, discovered the law of “non-transferability of civilizations”.

Globalization means not only a new world order but also a change in the world outlook which was predominant for many centuries; it means a new interpretation of the goals of mankind’s development.

The strategy of globalization presupposes:
1. Attaining a definite form of world unification.

2. Establishing global control over the movement of world resources and world incomes, and their appropriate redistribution.

3. Gradual “capitalization” of the civilization’s resources with the aim of establishing global control over the right of ownership.

4. Affirming new rules of business ethics, moral postulates and spiritual principles of the new civilization.

Globalization is a new world order which tries gradually to replace the national-state models of the populated part of the world with a set of geoeconomic models subordinate to a single world centre.

III. Russia’s Spiritual Security

Entering the information era and creation of a global information space is generally regarded as the emergence of a new empire. A reply to this global process is mankind’s mounting search for alternative ways of development. The most powerful and easily accepted idea opposing the globalist information era is so-called archaeization—a return to humanity’s “roots” where there is no place for progress. As a rule, archaeization, in contraposition to globalization, takes the form of fundamentalist movements, all of which becomes gradually transformed into religious extremism. In this way globalization processes may provoke the appearance of threats to a state’s national security.

As is known, national state and constitutional security is characterized, on the whole, by the degree to which the individual, the society and the state are protected.

This security may be created in three ways:

1. Direct protection from external and internal threats;

2. Preventive neutralization of danger sources;

The Concept of National Security of the Russian Federation states that “the insurance of the national security of the Russian Federation also includes protection of... the spiritual and moral heritage, historical traditions and norms of social life..., formation of a state policy in the sphere of a spiritual and moral upbringing of the population, as well as opposition to the negative influence of foreign religious organizations and missionaries.” In the world today, the problem of spiritual security advances to the foreground in the life of the individual, public institutes, the state, mankind and the world as a whole.

To address problems associated with threats to Russia’s spiritual security the state must, for the sake of justice and self-preservation, rely on traditionally constructive religions—those which have made, and are continuing to make, a substantial and lasting contribution to the history, traditions and culture, language and self-awareness of the peoples and the state as a whole. Constructive traditionalism is a many-sided phenomenon in which the duration of a religious association’s activity is not a determining factor. For instance, some clearly destructive demoniac cults have existed in Russia since ancient times; they still have their adherents and secret spiritual continuity. However, such religious associations are incapable of making a lasting contribution to the history, traditions, culture, language and self-awareness of the peoples of Russia and the state. Moreover, it is precisely such cults that breed man-hating ideas which outwardly call for the rebirth of neo-paganism as a means of opposing globalization.

The section entitled “In the Sphere of Spiritual Life” of the information security doctrine of the Russian Federation outlines the main areas of ensuring spiritual security. Above all, this is: elaboration of civilizational forms and methods of public control over the formation of spiritual values in society—values that
correspond to the country’s national interests, the fostering of patriotism and civic responsibility for its destiny, formation of legal and organizational mechanisms ensuring the rights and freedoms of citizens, and raising their legal cultural standards.

Spiritual security presupposes preservation of the fundamental moral values and traditions and fostering the ability to overcome effectively any external threats, proceeding from one’s national interests.

In view of the fact that the building of a global world pursued absolutely definite purposes: in the economic sphere—maximal utilization of the possibilities of the world periphery, and in the spiritual sphere—inculcation of the standards of the new world order, the participation of traditional religious association in solving the problems of Russia’s spiritual security appears both necessary and useful. Thus, without the growing educational activity of the Russian Orthodox Church it is impossible to revitalise people’s high moral and spiritual level, or the realization of their calling, obligations and duties in this world. Today, two opposite processes are going on in Russia: on the one hand, there is a moral disintegration of the people and, on the other, there is a process of formation of a popular moral nucleus out of an amorphous mass of people. To form such a nucleus it necessary to include in it, through the educational system and mass media, certain enlightenment programmes capable of bringing home the traditional foundation and values of the Orthodox perception of the world.

The well-known sociologist Claude Levi-Strauss wrote: “It is difficult to imagine how one civilization could make use of another’s mode of life without giving up trying to be its own self. In actual fact, attempts to achieve such a transformation could lead to only two results: either the disorganization and collapse of one system or their original synthesis which leads, however, to the appearance of a third system which cannot be reduced to the two others.” In order to halt the growth of catastrophic tendencies in the building of a new world order, it is
necessary to find a counterpoise to the globalist way of development which advocates a unipolar, unilinear world. Support rendered by the Russian state to the enlightenment effort of the Russian Orthodox Church will in many respects ensure the spiritual security of each citizen, each family, and the whole of society and state.

Bibliography


