

## **THE PROBLEM OF BELIEVER'S IDENTITY IN MODERN SOCIETY**

### **Introduction**

Modern society is undergoing a process of breaking the traditional philosophical values and transition to a new type of spirituality. A modern believer faces a challenging problem of finding its own identity. This search is characterized by a break of traditional philosophical values, fragmentarity and eclecticity, often by egocentrism, appealing to new spiritual practices that meet the needs of today's world. The relationship between man and the supernatural in today's postmodern society is too personal. As a result, new forms of identity are formed to find a meaning, the essence of life, which, moreover, would not contradict the philosophical foundations of modern secular personality.

The believer is a socio-psychological type of person who can be understood only from the analysis of a certain age, macro- and microsocial, national character, the psychological impact on their fellow believers, the impact of contemporary socio-cultural situation to them.

Humanity is presently going through the process of breaking the traditional philosophical values and conversion to another type of spirituality based on the reunion individual and universal, cosmic and earthly, historical and overhistorical. The study of this process is the basis for the modern understanding of religion.

Using the works of domestic (Lukyanets V.S., Lyakh V.V., Filipovych L.O., Kolodnyi A.M., Dudar N.P. and others) and foreign (S. Huntington, J. Weis, A. Toffler) scientists aim to explore the issue of identity formation of the modern believer, to find causes and possible ways to overcome the crisis of identity and analyze the attitudinal changes that are taking place in the mind of the believer in postmodern era.

### **Theory**

In modern industrial society the industrial concentration and urbanization lead to the fact that the number of contacts between people increases, but their intensity decreases. Finally, there appears a kind of isolation of individuals and distributed loneliness. Relations between individuals are becoming patchy and

highly functional. Thus, in today's society people are more free, but loneliness and isolation are the price to pay for such freedom.

According to V. Lyah, identity should be understood as "the process by which social agents are aware of themselves and construct meaning around certain cultural property or set of properties" [8; p. 38].

American sociologist A. Toffler identifies three basic needs of each individual, which can also be attributed to the needs of identity. These are "the need to be part of a community, the need for structural certainty of their existence and the need for the significance of themselves. Accordingly, dissatisfaction with each of these needs leads to frustration and to" identity crisis" [8; p. 39]. Globalization creates an unstable world where transformation affected all spheres of social and individual life, and at the level of the individual can be manifested as "identity crisis."

Recalling the previous history of mankind, we can state that the current identity crisis is not the first one to happen. The transition from a traditional society to an industrial one is also accompanied by a crisis of identity (then, in a traditional society, so-called primitive identities dominated, e.g. family, patriarchy, religion, nationality).

Accordingly, since the abovementioned changes occurred in the industrial society, they have changed the form of identity. They are linked to other forms of community involvement (company, corporation), structural determinacy (work, leisure, membership clubs), relevance (status, belonging to a particular class, etc.). Of course, traditional, original historical identity continues to exist in an industrial society, such as family, religion, patriarchy, but they are often sidelined and is experience significant transformations [8, p. 39].

In these circumstances society is split into a huge number of subcultures and closed societies. They all have their own language, codes and lifestyles, they have people who are looking for their identity, in many cases trying to find just new forms of identity: religious cults (primarily as a community, as a form of "group therapy", and only later – as a spiritual practice) semi-cults, various forms of belonging to a structured life.

In the conditions of scientific and technological progress internal crisis of the man is deepening, their frustration with the existing world is radically

changing right before our eyes. The person is constantly forced to adapt to these changes. We can say that the pace of these social changes is prohibitive for many people and just exceeds the adaptive capacity of the individual. All this is reflected in modern philosophical orientations of an individual and results in the transformation of social philosophical paradigms, and, as already mentioned, leads a person in the search for vital truth to the latter-day messiah.

Today various psychological factors dominate in a society due to the achievements of the STR, which adversely affect the person, suppressing their strength and capabilities, reinforcing the sense of social alienation, which, as we all know, is one of the main reasons why people are looking solving life's problems with new religions. First comes the understanding that neither science nor technology is able to solve the most difficult problems of life. So people resort to search of supernatural ideas, doctrines, which would give answers to even basic questions of life and inspire a hope for the future.

### **Analysis**

At the present stage, also known as post-secular, postmodern era, the secular world and the world of religion form a new configuration where religion is seen as private recognition of the transcendent. Religiosity of current era is different from previous stages of development. It creates a situation where the choice of certain religious beliefs is an act of free decision of every member of society. Sometimes this religious pluralism leads to the situations when modern believers simultaneously take part in several movements or currents. Unlike it used to be in the past, most of the religious communities, especially the newest ones, do not require absolute loyalty of their supporters.

The search for new priorities in life in different religious systems, strengthened in terms of expansion of the global information space, displays religious consciousness beyond a certain denomination, making it universal and syncretical. To meet their own spiritual demand a current believer transforms existing religious systems or even creates their own.

The relationship between man and the supernatural in today's postmodern society is too personal, since we are primarily talking about a specific person, with their personal problems and needs.

Modern man is freed from the burden of traditions, and all contemporary

activities are based on free choice. As N. Dudar has pointed, thus there is a new chance for religion, because on the basis of religious experiences and among many religious traditions and practices a person gives their preference to one that becomes a matter of their personal choice and conviction. The decline of religion, based on tradition and authority, can be compensated by a man calling to religious experience as experience of the "inner freedom". Accordingly, the processes of industrialisation, rationalisation and technologisation do not necessarily lead to a complete secularisation of consciousness [5, p. 65].

We can assume that now there is even a separation between the religious and the transcendental, which is taking place under the affirmation of religion as a "lifestyle." However, the globalization process does not destroy the foundations of cultural standards of national communities. On the contrary, globalization strengthens the "cultural", "behavioural" standards of local societies, sees ritualization of religious life. However, it perceives everything religious only as a style, or a "lifestyle". On this occasion, the authoritative British social philosopher John Gray remarked that we should abandon the tradition established in the Western understanding of religion as a source of higher truths, and consider it above all as an expression of a certain lifestyle [6; p. 49].

In early 1950's G. Allport was the first to put the terms "external and internal religion" into use that later became widely used in western psychology of religion. According to G. Allport, external religious orientation is inherent to individuals who feel compelled to attend church, but whose religious beliefs and behaviour primarily serve other secular interests (for example, to promote business, to reunite families, to help to achieve a social position). Internal orientation is inherent to those for whom religion has an immediate value and is not a tool for something, but is a goal, providing a comprehensive philosophy of life. [1, pp. 127-128]. Nowadays religion of the first type is more and more predominant, especially among the young and middle age people.

Earlier – both in premodernistic and in modernistic era – religion contained the belief that there is something real, wrote Lutheran theologian John Weiss. God either exists, or He does not. Jesus is the incarnated Son of God, or is simply a man. Miracles either happen or they do not. Today religion is no

longer seen as a set of beliefs concerning what is real and what is not; it should rather be considered as an option. We believe in what we like. We believe in what we want to believe.

Where there is no absolute truth, reason gives way to freedom. The aesthetic criterion replaces the rational. If we listen to how modern people talk about religion, we usually hear: "I like this church". And that does not always mean agreement and faith in its teachings. Today, as never before in history, many people do not want to believe (as if faith was strong-willed feature) in what they do not like.

For example, modern evangelicals tend to not even want to name their religious association. This tactical move has been primarily designed for young people who are bugged by different, primarily hierarchically organized structures, constantly interfering in their personal lives. Governmental agencies, traditional churches and parents continuously force young people to certain rational, consistent actions [3, p.216].

This is absolutely another form of manifestation of believer's modern identity – not what is true, but what like matters. This explains why new cults attract so many intelligent, educated people.

So in the age of postmodernism there are specific religious interpretations, which attempts to "modernize" philosophical doctrine according to requirements of the modern person who pays attention primarily on their own desires and needs.

Religiosity in Ukraine also quite often acquires features of detachment from any confession (because a large number of people consider themselves to be "just believing"), not belonging to any church (because there is no time to visit long worship, delve into the language of preaching, etc.), fragmentation and eclecticity (a combination of conscious elements of different religious values, ideas of science, etc.). The process of reducing religiosity and desacralisation have established such conditions in the mind, where the orthodox position of any religion are intertwined, coordinated and combined with various non-doctrinal, sometimes deistic or pantheistic, sometimes even scientific, philosophical and practical ideas.

As an example of eclectic changes in the consciousness of modern man,

interweaving diverse religious and beyond-religious knowledge and ideas, we can submit the data of sociological research.

According to news agency ITAR-TASS, almost 60% of our citizens believe in God, with many of them at the same time believe in signs, horoscopes, witchcraft and magic, including the largest number of respondents (35%) who believe in fate, and 18% –in signs and retribution for sins, 15% – in the supernatural, from 6 to 8% – in magic and horoscopes, 7% believe in the existence of the afterlife, and 5% – in the existence of UFOs, and 3% believe in reincarnation, and it is among those who consider themselves to be religious men [<http://graphics.itar-tass.com>].

As you can see, the main changes in consciousness, when viewed from the standpoint of modern empirical believer, are: the ambivalent status of religious consciousness of believers, which is reflected in the eclectic synthesis of the tenets of different faiths (often – traditional and non-traditional or new); believers' loss of clear guidance regarding the objectives of their spiritual development; social indifference; lack of faithful religious authorities in church hierarchy; failure in keeping traditions and rituals; periodic change of religion and, therefore, religious organization, or participation in activities of several churches, sects, denominations at once; perception of their own religious views as a form of a certain "lifestyle".

### **Conclusion**

In today's diversity of information flows of both religious and beyond-religious content people often get lost and in search of their own identity begin to build, to combine a variety of ideas, trying to reach a certain truth. In turn, the creators of new religious concepts are gradually trying to organize, interpret everything that people want to know, or seek to "teach" them to understand their surroundings "correctly".

The only problem is that often such constructions result in disappearance of the proper search of meaning, the essence of life. Moreover, as noted by A. Gorkusha, man himself becomes an object of study and improvement. Today a person is seeking to take the place of an intermediary between the divine and human, become a border between the natural and the supernatural, compulsory creator of the new reality, the measure of truth. Our new contemporary

philosophical attitudes do not always need the incarnated Word of God as finally and fully realized revelation. Man feels self-sufficient source of self-transcendence [4, p. 175].

Thus, the criterion of personal faith in general is crucial now. If before God existed for His own well-being, then the new God exists entirely for our sake. Rather than looking for excuses before God, a modern man considers himself "quite good", and mostly is waiting for justification of God, as he believes that to take care of his happiness to be His duty.

The search for new priorities in life in different religious systems, strengthened in terms of expansion of the global information space, displays religious consciousness beyond a certain denomination, making it universal, syncretic. The modern believer is a practical, streamlined, intellectually developed person, who often transforms existing religious systems or creates its own. However, due to lack of time, experience and the influence of other factors, this is not always enough, so here we have an aid of modern religions that fully meet the philosophical demands and structured base of previously acquired concepts.

On this basis a person finds new forms of identity, cults, semicults, various forms of belonging to a structured life that would relieve their "identity crisis" caused by modern postmodernist situation that characterized the process of breaking the traditional philosophical values and transition to a new type of spirituality, where out-denominationalism, being-out-of-church, fragmentarity and eclecticity play a defining the role of the criterion of personal faith.

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