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**THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN BUSINESSES FROM A THREE-DIMENSIONAL
PERSPECTIVE – ENTREPRENEURSHIP, MARKETING AND
ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

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Abstract: The teaching of religion in public schools – whether the subject should or should not be included in the school curricula, what the content structure should be and which approach the teacher should adopt – led to various ethical dilemmas and conflicts in many regions of the world. Our article aims at reviewing, from the perspectives of numerous authors, the different topics as well as the ways in which aspects related to the impact of religious teaching and to specific approaches could be taught to economics students in a democratic society. At the same time, we underline different dilemmas and preoccupations resulting from religious values in the organizational management and in marketing, but also the synergies that could be capitalized from this standpoint, in order to obtain a competitive advantage in a context where diversity (based on differences and similarities), and religious diversity in particular, is a reality that gets more and more obvious, while a good capitalization of it can bring forth loyalty in organizations and competitive advantages on the market.

Key Words: religion teaching, entrepreneurship, marketing, organizational management.

Introduction

The teaching of religion in school is an intensely debated topic both in the social dialogues and in the academic researches, in the current context of globalization, of the dynamic modification of the migration maps and of the international events. The teaching of religion exists in almost all the countries of the world and, depending on the relationship between the state and the church, on the predominant denomination and the secularized traditions, there are several modalities of approaching it in the educational process. Jean-Paul Willaime identifies three lines of development in this field in the European countries: “an increasing integration of religious education, whether denominational or not, into the general educational targets of school and of its missions; a development, to different degrees, of religious and philosophical plurality in the European societies; an escalation of tension and conflict creation”, resulting from these development tendencies¹. But the major preoccupations are mainly related to the content of the curriculum and to the methods the teachers use. Jeff Passe and Lara Willox suggest that adjustments are necessary at the level of the curriculum, which should be more concerned with cultural anthropology, with a special focus on comparative religion²”. For instance, the research made by Sheridan, Wilmer & Atcheson among 280 full-time educators in 25 schools of social assistance in the USA underlined their positive attitude towards introducing religion and spirituality in the curriculum of social assistance, as a specialized course, these elements having to be approached “as two components of the personal and cultural identity that are to be understood in order to perform efficient services³”. The respondents expressed their preoccupations with the conflicts that might emerge “depending on the way content is taught”, estimating that “there is a good and a bad way to manage the topic, both in practice and during the class⁴”. The inclusion of religion in the national educational standards in the USA is one of the functional models but as Douglass notices, “a better teacher training and a more careful planning of curriculum are needed⁵”.

The report “Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers”, edited by the Americans United Research Foundation, provides a clear guidance that makes the difference between “a teaching that is approved at the constitutional level and one of non-constitutional indoctrination”, the school playing an essential role in this⁶: the approach should be academic, not devotional; the goal should be that of making the students aware of the existence and characteristics of religions, and no pressure must be made on them to accept any of these; the aim should be the study of religion and not the practice of religion; the diversity of standpoints and not a particular one should be presented; all religions

should be taught, none of them should be promoted or denigrated; the diversity of religious beliefs should be talked about and the students should not be conformed to any of these. The final purpose of teaching religion is to form the civic abilities necessary for understanding religious differences, for creating the spirit of tolerance, of respect and acceptance in a pluralist society, where the different values and beliefs could work together in a beneficial way and could be exploited in the life of organizations, in businesses and in society in general.

Religion, the entrepreneurial spirit and business development. Connections and divergences

The analysis of the influence that religious values have upon businesses has preoccupied researchers from several fields: economic and social entrepreneurship, commerce, marketing and consumer's behavior, leadership and organizational management.

An ample picture describing how religious values model the entrepreneurial spirit and behavior is provided by Anderson et al. (quoted), who focus their analysis on seven aspects: different religions highlights to different extents of entrepreneurship; different religions generate different models of entrepreneurship, possibly because of the differences in terms of values – asceticism, frugality, temperance –, but also because of specialization, a monopoly-like one, of the networks; specialization along with the religious lines model entrepreneurship; the networks of credits, of employment, of information and supply of the brethren influence entrepreneurship; religions provide opportunities for entrepreneurship; religious beliefs could impede the entrepreneurial spirit; religions created mechanisms for the perpetuation of values⁷.

The empiric research conducted in 1996 by Dana among 296 owners-managers of micro-companies in Alsace show that the motivations for independent businesses vary according to religious orientations. The influence of religion upon entrepreneurship seems to be even stronger in the case of immigrants. For them, religion, together with language and culture, has contributed to the emergence of enclaves of solidarity, affirmation, even survival in the economic-social environment of the host country. Clark and Drinkwater analyzed the effect of religion upon self-employment and observed that “individuals who practice religions where entrepreneurship is strongly valued, such as the Muslims, the Sikhs and the Hindus” enjoy a higher rate of entrepreneurship, even compared to the individuals analyzed according to the ethnic criterion⁸.

The prevailing religion of a society could contribute to the development or stagnation of businesses. Generally it is considered that societies with dominant Protestantism are traditionally richer than others partly because of the high value granted to individual economic accomplishment, regarded as a blessing from God (a point of view supported by Max

Weber). On the contrary, the Islamic societies (excepting the countries with rich petroleum resources) are poorer. This happens because religious faith is based on the idea that fortune must only be used to moderately satisfy basic needs. Consequently, material wealth does not presuppose a higher status or some merit. In one sense or another, in these societies religion “dictates” the position towards the ethics of labor. A significant factor of a society’s perspective upon labor is the importance granted to agriculture. The countries characterized by powerful labor ethics and the motivation of success have an economy historically based on agriculture. “In these societies, hard work is rather an issue of religious morals, than a prerequisite for survival”. Even when economy becomes less dependent on the production of agricultural crops, the society continues to enhance hard work. This could be true for a whole society or for a prominent minority group, such as the Indians in Uganda, who stand out due to their accomplishments in distribution and trade⁹. As a challenge to Max Weber’s theory, his contemporary Wener Sombart underlines the “contribution of Judaism to the philosophical and practical part of the market economies¹⁰”.

Religious norms and business orientation

A short excursion in the universe of predominant religions demonstrates that their norms could restrict or encourage businesses and they could help marketers to make decisions for the market.

In the countries where Hinduism prevails (with 860 million adepts), especially in India, Nepal, Malaysia, Guyana, Surinam and Sri Lanka, religion is a form and a style of life “based on the castes and the classes the individual was born in¹¹”. Although the system of castes generated social stability, its effect upon businesses was negative. The adepts of Hinduism place spirit in the first position. According to them (like in the case of Buddhists), “nothing is permanent, the world is an illusion¹²”, and consequently the relation to work and to its role on earth and in the development of society are understood and approached in a different way compared to the adepts of the predominant religions of the Western societies. Thus, personal wishes must be avoided and consequently the aspiration to material goods and motivation for success and accomplishment are low¹³. The individuals’ efforts are limited, as they should not rise to a level that is higher than that of their caste, which is why success in businesses is not very well regarded. The Mormons do not drink alcohol, but in many Asian societies, for instance, a drink in the evening, after dinner, is a key element in opening business relations. The strictest Mormons do not drink coffee or tea either, as these are considered stimulants. Some conservatory religious subcultures do not accept to use new products or services. The Amish community in the USA for instance does not use electricity or motor vehicles in everyday life. They mainly deal with agriculture. Moreover, the Muslims and the Jews,

according to their religious tradition, do not accept pork consumption. The Orthodox believers do not eat meat and dairy products on Wednesdays and Fridays and during lent periods, whereas Catholics avoid fish on Fridays; the adepts of the sect of Jain in India do not accept pork, poultry and any kind of fish consumption. The Hindus refuse beef and tallow-based products, which could be problematic for a soap producer in India if he uses these ingredients for the products¹⁴. Trade insurance is a product religiously restricted by the Islamic law (*Shari'ah*) everywhere where there are concentrations of Muslims. The Islamic law again imposes a tax (*zakat*) for whoever gathers a fortune bigger than a given accepted level (*nisab*), and this is meant for the poor¹⁵.

Preoccupations also exist about the way in which Orthodoxy stimulates orientation to businesses. Some authors do not deem this relationship to be strong, especially if we look at the Romanians living in the early 20th century. For instance, Rădulescu-Motru harshly stated that "in general, Orthodoxy is not a school for the practical life", but empirical investigations do not necessarily support this affirmation (see the results of a questionnaire study made on a sample of 221 Romanian entrepreneurs¹⁶).

Religious identity and networks in business

Religious identity is an element that supports the joining of a network and promotes the social exchanges that business needs; the network provides access to legitimate resources and consolidates reliable relations. That is why many authors underline that the studies about ethnic or immigrant entrepreneurship are forced to make the transition from the theoretical premises that consider individual factors and attributes to be determinant in the development of [collective] entrepreneurship towards an analysis of the role of social networks of religions and cultures and to capture the social dimension of the economic activity – elements that have been neglected in some of the approaches¹⁷.

For instance, a study among the Indian and the Chinese entrepreneurs of Singapore brought to light that for the Hindu entrepreneurs, religion was a determinant factor of networks (the Chettiars' Temple being the economic center, and Lord Murugan presiding every business meeting¹⁸). In the case of the Ukrainian ethnic group members who emigrated to Canada at the beginning of the 20th century, the diaspora communities developed a solidarity based on common specific language, culture and religion, which became an aid in developing companies meant to support the community needs (restaurants, shops, outlets for agricultural products coming from their farms, industrial services), but also represented an impediment for those who were not part of it to develop new businesses¹⁹. A great variety of Turkish companies serve the ethnic market in the Netherlands where the percentage of the Turkish entrepreneurs is quite high. Common religion, language and culture

encourage the formation and concentration of the groups in certain specific places and entrepreneurial initiatives. This demonstrates the force of the networks emerging from the members' common religion. Spear analyzes three religious institutional dimensions that influenced the members' and the priests' attitudes in favor of the implication in social entrepreneurship: the religious networks and institutions with a high degree of trust, the religious leaders' ideology and discourse, the religious local leaders²⁰.

Jeremy reminds of a different facet of the role of religion in entrepreneurship: in the early 20th century, a big soap producer from England "used religion in the service of his business objectives". He hired a cleric to act as a responsible person for the wealth of his company and as its representative in the church committee. He built a church limiting membership to his employees; yet, less than a fifth of the employees wished to become members²¹.

Entrepreneurial opportunities

Over time, it has been proved that religious norms, values and principles create needs, being a source of entrepreneurial opportunities. The Utah state enjoyed a development of international business due to the strong influence of the Mormons ("Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints"). The young Mormons, generally 19-year old boys, have a more than a century tradition of going in religious missions in other countries. The contact with other cultures, getting to know many persons and to create durable relations, the observation of the local environments, of the business practices there, the learning of the languages of countries where they served their mission represented factors of support in initiating their own companies upon their return. This can also help them work for other companies and contribute to the communication, maintenance and consolidation of relations with clients, as well as to the promotion of the firm and its image²². For the Hindus there is the religious and social norm that the family should be numerous, which will normally influence the purchasing power and consumption. Moreover, the sensitive issues, such as family planning, could be successfully approached if they are backed by beliefs, traditions and taboos.

This is the idea that the "economies of scope" follow: the businesses created by the immigrants from China, Suriname, Turkey, India and Pakistan in Amsterdam. The emigrant entrepreneurs satisfy needs that are specific to co-immigrant clients based on the fact that they can understand them better, communicate with them, share the same language, the same religion, the same culture. They created businesses in the segment of "ethnic" food products or of religious food products of the Kosher and Halal type²³.

The Jewish law is divided in three types of rules: the Biblical law (*d'Oryssa*), the Rabinic law (*d'Rabanan*) and customs (*Minhag*), which all

form together the Halacha²⁴, which is “the path”, the laws and regulations that govern all the aspects of a Jew’s life. For more than a thousand years, there have been food restrictions (*Kashrus*), the kosher food products being submitted to specific religious criteria according to the Jewish law of Halacha. The Kosher certification presupposes the supervision (at any moment, even spontaneously, with no previous notification) of production (from the moment raw materials are received to the moment the final product is packed) by a person (*Mashgiach*) who adheres to the Kosher regulations and guarantees that the food is obtained according to the Kosher law. A product will have the Kosher status if it contains kosher-acknowledged ingredients, it does not contain proscribed mixtures (milk and meat) and the production equipment is used only for preparing Kosher products²⁵. In the case of certain products, the supervisor must participate in the preparation of products, while in other extraordinary cases, with meat or with wine and grape juice (*S’tam Yaynam*), or with cheese (*G’vinas Akum*) the permanent supervision of the *Mashgiach* is necessary. In North America, Israel and some regions of Europe, the traded kosher products have a specific symbol so that they can be easily recognized by their consumers²⁶. The food market of the Kosher products amounts to 7.5 million dollars annually, and companies (currently there are more than 9,200) such as Coca-Cola, Procter and Gamble, Kraft, Heinz, etc. are among those who got certified in obtaining and trading these products²⁷. The Kosher products mean: restrictions related to the meat and milk mixtures; restriction related to the consumption of blood (in animal sacrifice, it should be removed before food is prepared); a list of permitted animals (animals that are ruminants and have cloven hooves, e.g. Beef, lamb, goat, deer, giraffe, etc.), fowl that have a crop, claw, and a lining of the gizzard or stomach that can be easily peeled off (chicken, duck, pigeon, turkey, etc.), everything that lives in salted or fresh water and have wings and scales; restriction regarding the consumption of certain animals and birds (pork, rabbit, whale, dog, donkey, 24 species of forbidden birds); a slaughtering ritual for the animal to be consumed (a rapid death, with as little pain as possible²⁸).

As the Islamic law forbids taking and giving money with interest, the emergence and growth of Islamic financial services can be noticed: products allowed by the Islamic law of “*Shari’ ah*”, which include mortgage for dwellings, funding constructions and creating local stock markets. The basic Islamic principle is the share of risk between the business partners, the profit being accepted from a religious point of view. The Muslim entrepreneurship “is a form of prayer that bring Muslims closer to meeting their religious duties and accomplishing their faith”, a specific set of rules that preserve the rights of the Almighty God (Allah), related to *Aqidah* or *Ibadah*²⁹.

The religious restrictions related to the consumption of certain foods (in Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Judaism), the specific consump-

tion practices (the consumption of products without meat, eggs and dairy products during lent periods, a preference for products with lamb, eggs and cozonac [Easter sweet bread] in the case of the Orthodox believers in the period of major Christian feasts such as Easter and Christmas) are aspects that generate a kind of specialization according to economic sectors³⁰. Knowing religious restrictions concerning some products (beverages included too) can bring forth opportunities such as successfully launching non-alcoholic beverages in the Middle East. As the Hindus are vegetarians in their majority, the food and cosmetics producers must use raw materials based on the vegetal products and less on animal fat and try to avoid the latter. On the other hand, the green color has a particular religious significance for the Muslims, a factor that led to its frequent utilization in the packaging of products meant for them³¹. The lent periods in Christianity impose the elimination of meat and dairy products, but although trade seems to be affected by this, the soya-based food fills the shops, contributing to a rebalancing of profits. To this we should also add the big demand of Easter products in the Christian orthodox countries – lamb, painted eggs, cozonaci etc., the trade of candles, candle holders and decorative Easter objects etc. Although Christmas is one of the important feasts for Christians, together with Easter, its celebration by making gifts is an attribute of the business area. The shops in the countries where Christianity is the major religion register huge revenues in these periods. The celebration of the first communion at ages between 8 and 12 (“Primera comunión”) among the adepts of Catholicism, or of maturity at the age of 13 (in the case of boys *Bar Mitzvah*) and 12 (in the case of girls, *Bat Mitzvah*), when children can take responsibilities in the Jews’ case, represent good trade opportunities for the shops selling clothes and festive products for these events and religious feasts³². From this standpoint, “the religious demands and practices exceed their original goal³³”. A proof of the fact that insufficient attention is paid to the impact of religious customs and traditions on the marketing decisions is the case of the company Tandy Corporation, which in its first year of life on the market of the Netherlands made promotions in the third week of the month of December, and did not register the expected revenues³⁴. An example of profitability is that of the Wal-Mart group, which ordered cards for religious festivals for its Muslim clients³⁵.

Religious pilgrimages, as well as the devotion to certain religious symbols (for instance, the icons in the case of the Orthodox, the crucifixes in the case of the Catholics) represent stimulating factors for the entrepreneurship based on opening small businesses, product trading and provision of services. One of the most important pilgrimages in Romania takes place in Iași, in October, on the occasion of Saint Paraskevi’s Day. In 2014, a number of over 250,000 pilgrims participated. Besides the traders of religious and worship objects specific to Orthodoxy (icons, crosses, books, brochures with akathists), traders from all over the country sold

fur coats, arts and crafts products, food products. Holidays and trips can also be related to religion. The hotel, B&Bs, restaurant owners and the transporters are other trade categories that managed to raise their revenues on these occasions. The travel agencies record substantial profits on the occasion of Christian festivals by selling travel packages and organizing religious pilgrimages (visits to the Holy Tomb and to the holy places in Israel, pilgrimages in Greece, Russia, Egypt, Italy, Bulgaria, Romania, to the saints' relics or the lavras on Mount Athos, the pilgrimage to Mecca), as well as to the tourism areas around religious sites (as for instance the Bukovina area in Romania).

The funeral undertaking companies that take care of the burial rituals in the case of the Orthodox believers represent extremely profitable sources as they rely on a whole network of providers of necessary products (coffins, crosses, towels, candles, wreaths, bakery products), as well as of transportation and catering services. At the same time, the marriage, baptism and burying rituals in the Orthodox believers' case involve paying taxes for the religious services to the Church institutions and to the serving priests.

But religion can also be a serious impediment in the way of entrepreneurship and trade. For instance, the participation of the Arab woman in the economic activity is still very limited (with changing tendencies in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the UAE and especially Dubai, where feminine entrepreneurship is encouraged); women are discriminated on the labor market, their incomes being lower than those of man. The Islamic religion forbids the implication of Muslim entrepreneurs in activities involving alcoholic beverages or strongly speculative business behaviors in spite of their viability from an economic point of view. From this perspective, the Islam "specifically" defines "productive business activities accepted from a moral point of view and socially desirable"³⁶. In the Ramadan period, the Muslims fast, which is why food sales decrease. Moreover, there are numerous debates on the acceptance of genetically modified products in different religions (Christians, Muslims, Hindus).

Religion, markets and marketing

Religion and authority on the market

Mittelstaedt presents an ample and complete picture of how religion influences markets, "what we trade, how, when and where the commercial exchanges take place". Religion exerts several forms of authority on trading markets. The author identifies and details four types of authority in order to explain the relationship between religion and marketing systems³⁷:

Political authority means an explicit regulation by imposing religious sanctions. The "blue laws" are an example of such authority (forbidding trade on Sunday), which shows when commercial activities can take place.

The forbiddance of insurance by the Islamic law shows what can (and what cannot) be traded. The religious political authority can foresee (or explain) the fact that in those countries no option will be made for a powerful commitment in the direction of a domestic liberalization of markets.

Institutional authority means the exerting by religion of a power of control on aspects of social life, which generate an indirect effect on markets and commerce and which “model the citizens’ expectations and satisfaction regarding the subjective quality of life”, the way they perceive normality and the surrounding reality. For instance, the Islamic and the Jewish laws concerning some food restrictions – the Halal products and the Kosher products – lead to the inexistence of certain markets of food products because they would actually not be purchased; another example would be the influence of Christianity on the marriage model, which “influences the population growth in the Occident”.

For example, during certain periods and because of some religious authorities who were afraid to lose the social importance of liturgical time, “businesses” were condemned by the Orthodox Church. *Firea românilor* [Romanians’ Nature], a collective book coordinated by Daniel Barbu, illustrates the accusatory attitude of some church representatives towards the merchants and the craftsmen (“peasants who were a little wealthier”) who take care of their trade instead of going, on Sunday, to the religious service, threatening them with God’s harsh punishment: “And I command you all, who deal with crafts and trades, in any guild, that from now on, on Sunday and on major festivals, you should close your shops and you should not sell, nor buy, nor work, and you should do the way I said...”. This is a picture of the Romanian Orthodox ethics of the 17th and the 18th centuries: “The merchant is incriminated, undoubtedly, with the features of the ‘rich’. The craftsmen could often be those who, moved by a feeling of frustration, would have liked to see the artisans falling down in the eternal fire”. They are “threatened ... because they work at the construction of the professional time, the time of work”. The craftsman “was an almost solitary carrier of individualism, as a possessor of a skill that exceeded the limits of the dominant economy, based on natural time³⁸”.

Social authority controls cultural expectancies and beliefs and draws the limits of “acceptable social behaviors on markets”. This is, for instance, the case of Protestantism and of the work ethics preaches that gave birth to a “rational, ordered, diligent and productive” individual. The consumer’s conduct and the ethics of business are two fields where the social authority of religion has a strong impact.

Competitive authority affects the markets by the direct, competitive implication, selling goods and services on the market. The religious organizations can offer educational services (private schools, theological seminaries, universities), health services (clinics), educational products (books) or products with a religious symbolism or significance (icons, candles,

other religious objects) etc. In their turn, the markets have an impact on religion “by the agency of the political, institutional, moral and competitive mechanisms”. The emergence of products of contraception on the market determined the artificial control of birth, as well as deep mutations in the family structure and in the woman’s emancipation. The study of the way in which the religious authority influences the market (but also the way in which the market influences religion) should be part of the objective of macro-marketing at the four levels included – public policies, quality of life, business ethics and competition.

Religion and client segmentation

Religion is one of the demographic criteria that the marketers use in order to segment clients (Orthodox, Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, others) in the promotion campaigns for products and services. Religious faith has a direct influence on the consumer’s behavior, it is a “central institution that models their culture³⁹”. Religion influences the decision to purchase “products that are symbolically and ritually associated with the celebration of different religious festivals⁴⁰”. The strategic behavior of business is subsumed by the network of social relations that include cultural norms, the educational past and class, religion etc., which makes it possible that a rational thing in one corner of the world could be unacceptable in some other corner⁴¹. Religion orients the promotional activity (choosing certain channels to transmit advertising messages, their content) and the product itself (that should fit with certain demands of the consumers belonging to the predominant religious sub-cultures of the market, but also the avoidance of those products that might bring forth a religious offense). The Nestlé company had to face, starting with the year 1991, the boycotts initiated by the Anglican Church as a protest to the way in which it promoted powder milk, on Kenya’s market, as a substitute to maternal milk. Jean-Paul Gaultier had to confront the indignation of some Jewish groups, who contested some products of the fashion designer, i.e. woman clothes inspired from the model of the traditional Hassidic costumes for men.

Yet, some religious restrictions could generate practices whose “rationality is lost in time”. Al Mossawi and Michale measured the influence of the degree of strictness versus the Islamic regulations/laws upon the attitudes towards the commercial and the non-commercial messages that were controversial in the Gulf countries. The results show that the strict Muslims are more interested by these and, above all, demonstrate a higher degree of remembrance of those non-controversial advertising messages, while the less strict Muslims do not make the difference between the advertising messages that contain elements considered to be in contradiction with the Islamic principles and those that do not. The influence of religion upon advertising, exemplified by the Muslim religion, although a strong one, is not uniform in all the countries

or in all individual perceptions in the same country⁴². The norms of the dominant culture could be exceeded in terms of authority by the norms of its sub-cultures (based on religion). For instance, although the French, the Italians and the Portuguese mainly have the same religion, the last ones react in a much more powerful manner when rules are violated than the others⁴³. Religion could act as a small barrier in the advertising messages, especially when focalization is on the piece of information that is expected to influence the consumer, and not on the content that should really be transmitted and understood. The symbolism used in order to call the attention of the potential consumer on products or services should take into consideration the religious norms of the society in question, as well as the norms of private life. For instance, an advertising spot with a scantily dressed woman, who advertises for underwear or for some cosmetic shower product or a perfume could be considered an offense to certain religious norms and “condemned” for suggesting sexuality, eroticism, seduction, or for creating “lust in the individual’s mind”, which for some religions could be a “taboo topic⁴⁴”. In the Middle East, in KSA (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia) and in many other Islamic countries, it is forbidden to show women’s skin or face in marketing communication⁴⁵. The Islamic law forbids that promotional activities “appeal to emotions, include feminine personalities, sexual images (Marinov, cited by Burton)⁴⁶”. Although estimated to have weak points, the theory of the taboo (or of the “holiness”) by Robertson Smith, formulated more than one hundred years ago⁴⁷, identifies two categories of taboos, “one that is correctly spiritual”, “taboos that correspond exactly to the laws of holiness”, and another category that is related to simple superstition, and which is specific to primate societies. Although existing from the “human’s pre-religious” period, the taboos explain many aspects of the “functioning human mind”, and those who include “hidden desires” can be easily used as “real weapons” in order to create positive associations with the product or the service that is meant to become known by the agency of advertisements or of other forms of promotion⁴⁸. On the other hand, some taboos act as a filter, warning against the situations when the advertising announcements are negative, dangerous, counting on “a rebel and revolting attitude from the target audience⁴⁹”.

In the societies where consumers receive the advertising message from the perspective of religious norms, these taboos can easily slide from what is positive to what is negative. The marketers who will make efforts to get aware of the target consumers’ religious practices, beliefs and preferences, which in some countries represent a real lifestyle, will implicitly determine them to be “ambassadors of the products or brands in question”. “The religions affect the grounds on which people understand the world and, consequently, the understanding and the acceptance of markets and of the marketing institutions⁵⁰”. Smith warns that “even in the

societies where active participation in the organized religions is not very powerful, the influence of religious values should be underestimated⁵¹.

Religion and the stimulation of animal provision and slaughter industry

As Buddhists are vegetarians, they do not wish to be involved in animal slaughtering or to see blood, and yet most of them enjoy meat food offered and prepared by somebody else. Thus, breeding livestock, maneuvering raw materials and selling meat is destined to persons who do not belong to the religious community, but to ethnic minorities; these ones are detested for their work and, paradoxically, for being part of the monopoly organisms of the market. Between advantages and disadvantages, ethnic minorities enjoy a job anyway.

The local and central governmental authorities that come from the religious groups in question and are sensitive in relation to their point of view hesitate to give visible support for the activities that represent the object of religious disapproval, and consequently, the market and other facilities related to animal slaughter are “omitted” from public funds and services. These activities are regarded as having a role in the maximization of public income contributions, just like the producers and the sellers of alcoholic beverages in the protestant-catholic countries.

In some areas of the world, the consumers want to buy meat from recently slaughtered animals and do not accept refrigerated products; that is why the slaughter of animals whose meat is to be traded should be local. The Halal products are the products allowed for consumption (unlike the Haram ones, the forbidden products) by the Quran and the Islamic law. Thus, the Muslims cannot consume dead animals but only those Halal species of animals that are adequately slaughtered (by rapid cutting of the neck, in a way inducing fast and complete bleeding and a quick death; this must be made by a Muslim of an adequate age, who pronounces the name of God during the slaughter). The slaughtered animal benefits from “human treatment”, it receives water not to be thirsty and a curved knife is used, so that its pain be as short as possible. Furthermore, the Muslims cannot eat products of pork, animals with fangs, predatory birds, field animals (frogs or snakes), alcoholic products (wine, beer, spirits, including the “impure” products, that might have alcohol in their composition), fresh or frozen products produced with animal blood, products derived from or combined with products that are not Halal (including enzymes, emulsions or mould inhibitor), products contaminated in the production process with other Halal products. The interdiction also affects the breeding, selling, or transportation of animals that are not Halal. Some Muslim groups do not accept the consumption of fish without scales⁵². The so-called “halal food” products come from the method of animal slaughter according to the Muslim religion, *halal*. It is an extremely profitable business in the USA and, over the last years, in Europe as well, as the number of Muslims living there increases. This kind of “halal food” pro-

ducts are especially prepared for the Muslims who do not have enough time to prepare their food at home and who observe that certain “religious restrictions” already entered the big hypermarkets and restaurants, while the traders are increasingly innovative. Muslims cannot eat food based on pork or by-products (such as gelatine), meat of carnivores with fangs and claws, monkey, elephant, donkey, and they cannot drink alcohol. The food must be prepared separately from the other Halal food, with different tools⁵³. The Halal products businesses found a place in the public and private schools, in the health system, in the prison system, in distribution, in the army (where there are Muslim soldiers) and in the catering services for the airlines. On the shelves of the shops in North America there are over 8,500 references, and these have Halal marks that allow the Muslims to have access to information about the ingredients that were used and whether these products are allowed for consumption by the Muslim law⁵⁴. It is estimated that the market of the Halal products will reach 1.6 trillion dollars in 2018 (according Beer, <http://www.foodnavigator.com/>). Many institutions of certification of the Halal food products, of beverages and medication exist everywhere in the world in order to guarantee the rights of the Muslim consumers to observe religious commandments. Certification presupposes the payment of certain taxes, which generates another type of a profitable business.

The Muslim religious principles thus stimulate the activity of breeding and exportation of animals to other countries. The Islamic countries that bring meat from non-Islamic countries claim that living animals be imported so that they can monitor the way in which animals are slaughtered; thus, new jobs are created for those who will be involved in the slaughtering activities, and the slaughterhouses proliferate. In Israel, the animal slaughter as part of the religious ritual led to the apparition of a wide animal-providing industry. Yet, when the situation of the market does not allow for the provision of “living”, “fresh” products, the consumers do not have an alternative, as it happened in Abidjan, Cairo or Kinshasa⁵⁵.

The marketing of religious products has developed well during the last decades. The Church institutions have their own stores, publications, channels and radio and TV shows, they have on-line sites where they can sell religion and spirituality books, albums with religious historical monuments and travel sites, CDs with religious conferences and songs, addressing a specific and numerous audience. Mel Gibson's movie - “The Passions of the Christ”, which earned substantial profits all over the world, is a good example of a successful religious product on the market of consumer goods, being backed by a well-considered marketing.

Pargament, Maton and Hess underline that the marketing of religion “is not at all new, it has existed for centuries and it is the result of the competitive environment of time”, so it is about an “enhancement of the intensity of the religious message”. Gutenberg invented the written press

in the 15th century, and “the biggest part of the advertising made in the beginning aimed at selling Bibles⁵⁶”.

The impact of religions on organizational management

Indirectly, religion contributed to the scientific development of management. Five thousand years before Christ, the Sumerian priests created a function of control in order to pursue and administrate the information related to the transactions taking place in their temples. They created a formal system of written records of how goods, flocks and herds of animals, currencies, fields, constructions, donations, payments moved, and at the same time they asked the priests to present written situations to the priest-in-chief⁵⁷.

Christianism played a crucial role in the Middle Ages. In the 4th century, by different successive decrees, Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire. Christianity provided the structure and the moral discipline necessary in a decadent empire that had to face the attacks of the Goths and of vandals. The education brought forth by Christianity gave a new orientation. The spiritual value of everybody's work was the central element of this education and discipline. The monasteries had a major contribution to the defending of academic study and to “providing a conducive environment towards progress in manual labor and preparation in manual and mechanical arts”; they applied agriculture and industrial functions at a small scale, which made independent economic existence (gardens, mills, bakery shops, shops for constructions and maintenance) possible. The Christian monks massively participated in the training of qualified labor in agriculture, in the field of practical arts and crafts, in constructions and mechanics, which represented “the main means for each individual to learn new abilities and to improve their economic situation”. The crafts and trades became more and more specialized, and apprenticeship represented the main method “to transmit practical and technical experience from one person to the other⁵⁸”.

An interesting business practice related to how to promote the high managers is the one used by a big company in Asia. The manager in this position must leave the company before, for three months, to study and to present written reports related to three major aspects: in the first month, religion and ethics; in the second month, history; in the third month, business. The company has this policy (involving risks and costs) in order to develop its human capital and to make sure that the organizational vision is well-institutionalized. The study of religion and ethics is justified by the fact that “all businesses suppose decisions based on a set of values and standards⁵⁹”. Besides, together with the cultural and economic factors, religion has a substantial role in the decision-making process on ethical criteria, it can affect the subjective judgments upon what is good,

compared to what is bad, in estimating the consequences of a decision (the theory of utility), which can differ from one individual to the other⁶⁰.

The life of organizations is also influenced by the impact of religious values on the employees' conduct. For instance, the employees of some companies in Mexico have a different hierarchy of values compared to the Americans; for them, the order is family, religion and work. Family and religion are two tightly related variables in this context, considering that "the Catholic religion plays a key role in the people's life and personal values, as far as the extended family is concerned⁶¹", but this aspect is also valid in the other predominant religions. The American managers who have businesses there or work with Hispanic Mexicans (representing a percentage of 60% of the Hispanic population of America⁶²) must take into consideration these particularities, and provide the possibility for the family members to participate in certain events in the company's life, to offer the rooms of the company for family religious reunions⁶³ (for instance weddings, baptisms etc.). They "must obtain better knowledge of the historical, cultural and religious forces that motivate and govern people in other countries", as "business and daily life are governed by religious factors (prayer time, daily events, food restrictions⁶⁴)".

The common interest for religion contributes to the maintenance of relations, both at a social, and at an organizational level. According to the theory of balance given by Theodore Newcomb, people are attracted to each other according to the "similar attitudes and common interests, relevant for one object or one objective of the group⁶⁵". From this perspective, religion, the system of castes in India lead to the formation of informal groups in organizations that fight in the interest of the group members, even to the detriment of the organization; in other words, it intervenes in the organization policies and in the decisional process. As Sinha underlines (2008), the "groups based on castes, religion [...] can be pretty cohesive, but do not lead to the meeting of organizational objectives⁶⁶".

In an ample theoretical analysis, regarding both the macro-level (society, the economy) and the micro-level (organizations), Velayutham brings forward the idea of the role that the Catholic religion plays in the individuals' taking of responsibility by means of the practice of confession (and the emotion of culpability); he also mentions the role of Protestant reform related to the "modern practice of responsibility", "by restructuring the practice of confession and extending the principles of responsibility taking in itself⁶⁷". The practice of confession in Catholicism (existing in Orthodoxy as well) is also considered as having a beneficial role in reducing individuals' stress⁶⁸.

The challenging of the decision factors also consists of a good management of diversity, based on the existence of different faiths and religious practices in the organization. The mixture of generations of

different ages challenge the managers to find adequate solutions for a working climate that brings forth high-performance and satisfies the various religious approaches and attitudes. The Y generation (also called the “tech Generation”, “Millennials” or the “post-boomer”), born between 1980 and 2000, is different from the X generation, that of their parents, as far as the relation with religion is concerned, which is “practiced rather in terms of religiosity”, which is “based on a spirituality that goes beyond certain religions”. They are looking for “meaning and goal”, and less “a reproduction of doctrine formulas and rituals”, “without resorting to the major narratives associated with religion or the appeal to the supernatural⁶⁹”. The “religion” of the Y generation means “hope for the people’s kindness and the significance of usual life⁷⁰”. The members of the Y generation have in common a long list of attitudes towards everything that religion means in their life and in society⁷¹: they take it as a choice, not as an obligation; they pay no importance to religious labels and names; they are tolerant to other persons’ beliefs, appreciate the diversity of religious practices; the religious authority is internal and not acknowledged by an external source (as, for instance, the church authority); the value of religious experience is stronger than a set of codified beliefs; they appreciate the idea of the religious quest, rather than a static set of beliefs and practices; they adhere to a religious group if they find there authentic persons (honest, open, humble), than persons with an authoritarian presentation of truth; they assume eclecticism in the religious tastes, opting sometimes for a hybrid religious identity; they believe that religion can change the world by militating for justice and equality.

In the whole world, religious minorities occupy an important place in the total structure of the population. Thus, in the USA, besides the Jewish population that occupies a relatively stable percentage, there are 4 million Americans practicing Islamism, Hinduism, Taoism, and other non-Christian cults. In France, the Netherlands, Spain, Germany and Great Britain, the Muslim population represents a percentage from 6 to 15 of the population⁷². Naturally, this generates an organizational mosaic of human resources.

For instance, many Muslims work in the company of Whirlpool Corporation’ Lavergne, in the installation factory of Tennessee, representing 10% of the labor force. According to the demands of their religious belief, men wear a long beard and skullcap, and women cover their heads with shawls and the body with modest long clothes, meant to hide their shapes. Considering the specificity of their activity, in order to protect the employees from accidents with the equipment, the company security policy forbids dishevelled hair, hats or other clothing items of this kind, as well as long clothes. Furthermore, the Muslims need 45-90 minutes to go to the religious service in their mosque every Friday at noon (lunch break for the employees is no longer than 30 minutes). This case shows an ethical dilemma that the company managers have to solve in a reasonable

way, so that the other 90% of the employees should not feel discriminated, if the Muslims get further facilities⁷³.

Globalization, business internationalization, the mobility of personnel especially due to the amplexness of immigration, and the utilization of foreign labor force, force the managers to adopt "reasonable accommodation". Obviously, in Europe and in the USA, numerous normative acts have regulated the elimination of any act of discrimination based on religion. According to the American legislation, the employer is obliged to provide the employees with the possibility to accomplish their work duties, situations that are mainly meant for persons with disabilities and those who have certain religious beliefs. Thus, they must assure that the legitimate religious practices are not in conflict with the work duties and obligations, with the dress code that the company imposes, with the organizational practices. "Reasonable accommodation" gives the employee the possibility to celebrate religious feasts, to adopt a dress style according to the norms of the religious cult they practice (for instance, the veil and the burqa by the Muslim women), by granting a flexible working program⁷⁴. Certain American companies renounced the ceremonies organized for the employees on the occasion of Christmas due to the fact that the employees with different religious orientations protested that they were discriminated.

The belief, within Arab cultures (especially in the countries of South-Eastern Asia) that man is under the forces of nature and that he/she should submit and not try to dominate them makes religion an instrument of social control. In these cultures, there is a stronger relation to the past, "what people live in the present is a part of their past experience", faith is dominant in the internal locus of control, of personal will and force when one has to decide or change the future. Time has different landmarks, compared to what happens in the western societies, it "does not run, it walks"; that is why the strict deadlines and strategic planning have a different approach, relevance and connotation. The aged persons, especially men, have a different place in the family and society, women play a different role in the family compared to western women. These details, the determinist sense, the passive acceptance of events, give special features to the way business is run: a leadership through the careful control of employees, the construction of trust in the relation with the clients and the providers in time (the past and honor are important factors), slow changes⁷⁵. Learning, an important element of the strong organizational cultures and of high-performance, is more difficult in the organizations where the old beliefs in fatalism prevail, especially in the situations where the degree of environment change is high. The leaders have the role of balancing these situations, where beliefs of this kind co-exist with those aiming at a pro-active solving of the new issues emerged in the business area. Schein states that a combination of Asian principles

with the occidental ones determined the spectacular economic success of Singapore⁷⁶.

Yet, the turbulent events due to terrorism brought negative changes of attitude among the Americans and the Europeans towards the Arab minorities, contributing to an increase of the extent of intolerance at the work place. The "Islamophobia" led to the adoption of legislation norms forbidding the Muslim women to wear the burqa; in Switzerland, the construction of minarets was forbidden, Sweden asked the Muslim Swedes to adapt themselves as soon as possible to the standards of the Swedish society, Spain abolished the EURO 2,500 aid granted to families for each new-born, starting from the argument that the Muslim women are the ones who give birth to many children and enjoy this social aid, "which erodes Hispanic culture"⁷⁷. Vigoda-Gadot and Drory relate religion (a socio-biological category, as sex and race) to the organizational resources, positions and power, and give as an example the concentration of Muslims in the occupation of "low" work places in some European organizations. The recent cases of terrorism in France and Belgium bring back such issues⁷⁸.

In a study made among the students, Conroy, Emerson and Tisha found out that religiosity is significantly correlated to ethic perceptions, but not as a result of religion and ethics courses integrated in the curriculum. That is why the authors think that the best way to contribute to the consolidation of the students' ethical attitude (future business leaders) would be the "promotion of an active participation in the religion they chose"⁷⁹.

Another aspect regarding the influence of religion in the life of the organization is related to spirituality at the workplace, an element more and more frequently adopted in the management of human resources by the western companies in the last years. The promoters of this trend state that "religion and spirituality provide the life of individuals with sense and goals, they provide hope for a better future"⁸⁰. Many people see spirituality as a form of detachment from religion based on institutionalization (beliefs and ways to express them) and they selectively and individually choose their beliefs and practices but this does not mean that they necessarily oppose and exclude religion. McGuire (cited by Neitz) says that "the two forms of religious practice often co-existed"⁸¹. In spite of the fact that specialized literature offers many controversies related to the difference between religion and spirituality, Harvey (cited by Sigal) calls attention to the fact that "a meaningful dialogue about spirituality without religion is doubtful", while opinions like "spirituality unifies, religions divides" are problematic and ignore serious aspects in the practice of research in the field (Hicks, cited by Sigal)⁸².

The charismatic leaders are aware of it. In his book *Leadership Wisdom of Jesus*, Charles Manz resorts to a "wise and compassionate" leadership, starting from the Christian teaching and the Biblical verses "in a way that

captures something from the already practical spiritual wisdom of Jesus' teachings⁸³". The author identifies metaphorically, based on Christ's teachings, four major areas which the leader should pay attention to in order to be effective: "to clean the mirror image" (to analyze himself, to lead himself before leading others; the last one should be the first one, that is he should be humble and search for greatness in the others; to have clean inner morals, which in the outer world could be an example for the others; to transcend concerns; to act with integrity and to wait for the others to do the same; to let his light glow like a lighthouse that could guide the others towards their own best light); "to lead the other with compassion" (to love his friends and his enemies, to express his love for the best benefit of everyone involved; to do for the others what others should do for him (the "golden rule"); to forgive, not to condemn; to offer support to the one in the back (to "gather the lost sheep"); to "lead the others towards their best selves" – the seeds of leadership will bear fruit only if the soil is ready to accept them"; to forgive and to accept mistakes for the safety of teaching; to lead in order to serve and without blindness, to know his own blindness and to help the others lead themselves; to see in the hearts of the adepts and to appreciate the small contributions that the others made in all honesty (the "widow's mite"); to inspire commitment, not greed); and to "plant golden mustard seeds (to lead with the golden power of the mustard seed ("faith as small as a mustard seed") and not to serve two masters ("you cannot serve both God and money"). The final message is that "Love and faith are fundamental ingredients for a leadership that moves mountains".

A similar approach is made by Michael Youssef in his book *The Leadership Style of Jesus* identifying among the leader's qualities that of the "shepherd leader".

Instead of conclusions

Religious diversity is a reality that has to be acknowledged and administered. Globalization and the different events that humankind currently deals with have fundamentally changed the way in which we experience the differences and the similarities among the people around. Knowing these aspects is a must for the traders, managers and marketers carrying on international businesses. Some religious norms could generate irremediable business "cultural blunders" or frustrations among the business partners, the employees or the clients.

As de Garay underlines, "religion has an influence on the market, and a big one. But this does not mean that it should necessarily transform into an ethic, market-governing code⁸⁴". The solution is a change of attitude (acceptance of reality) at both the micro-level, and the macro-level, by acquiring specific deep cultural information and by forming skills necessary for the managing of religious diversity: the capacity to listen, to

analyze, interpret and solve, to change behaviors, to obtain consensus, to integrate what is different and what is similar in a synergic and effective way. From this point of view, religious diversity can be capitalizable, profitable and able to bring forth loyalty and competitive advantages.

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