

The Silence of God between Alienation and Resonance

Bratu-Maximilian Caraman

Ph.D(c). "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, Romania
caraman.maximilian@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Alienation is more than a symptom of our times. It has become an increasingly articulated feature of the contemporary collective ethos. The paradigm of alienation seems to be a cyclical occurrence, a reiteration of the oppressive spleen of the early last century, but much more oppressive and much more globalized. Analyzed from multiple perspectives (psychological, social, artistic, literary, etc.), alienation remains a negative category, which is why it must have a cause. Depending on the lens through which the cause of alienation is viewed, inevitably limited answers can be offered, as the human structure is too complex to be contained in one area of analysis. Almost completely ignored, although, as we shall see, this is where the lifeline might come from, the theological perspective can diagnose the phenomenon of alienation with greater precision and offer a sustainable variant of what we call resonance. The Hebrew Bible offers some conclusive passages on alienation, seen as estrangement, a split from God. This comes both from man, through disobedience to God's law, but especially from God, through the installation of a communication embargo. The silence of God is the most drastic consequence of man's estrangement from God, a consequence that will bring about a state of alienation. The present study aims to identify and analyze the situations in which God's silence produces alienation, as well as a biblical perspective on the antidote called resonance.

KEYWORDS: alienation, resonance, silence of God, spleen, Hebrew Bible

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Social alienation, both at the level of the individual and as a whole, is one of the symptoms that is becoming increasingly apparent in contemporary post-modern society. It is seen as an alienation of the individual from the individual, a retreat into the self of as many as possible. Alienation is by no means a reaction to an accumulation of over-licensed tumultuous relationships, like a temporary and necessary respite from too much exposure to human interaction. It is an estrangement that also has a background of non-communication.

The causes identified are multiple. The finger is pointed at technology, which means that the individual is less and less exposed to human interaction, at excessive urbanization, which does not create the framework for a welcoming ethos, at the accelerated dynamics of each individual through rapid changes of job, home, neighbours, entourage and routine. The assault is, therefore, concerted from multiple angles, and as a result, the individual is continually and, it seems, irretrievably alienated.

The issue has been addressed from multiple perspectives and through the lens of several fields. The explanatory dictionary itself, under the secondary meaning of the term 'alienation', makes the appropriate reference: 'philosophical'. Unfortunately, what once seemed to be the exclusive preserve of philosophy, i.e. of a small, elite group of people, who had the vocation of genius anyway (in the model outlined by the nineteenth-century romantics, the genius, as an individual, feels a crushing disappointment of non-value, which is why he retreats into an ideal, imaginary, own, exclusive world), today the problem is found to be a psychological one (Triff 2016, 204-242), sometimes with pathological nuances (Kessler 2021, 13-22). In dealing with Saul's alienation due to his disobedience to God, Kessler induces the idea of pathological overtones in the character of Saul as a result of his estrangement from God, but more importantly the institution of God's silence in relation to him. The issue can also be treated from sociological, economic (as the alienation of the individual poses serious challenges to economic domination), literary and theological perspectives.

This study aims to address the problem of alienation from a theological perspective. Since the antidote to alienation is, according to the current trend, resonance, we will start by addressing this concept, also from a theological

perspective, even if the term is not present as such in the biblical texts. However, the theological approach will not limit the perspective exclusively to this field, as the Bible itself is a coherent source of content for related fields such as sociology, psychology, philosophy, etc.

As the title of this article suggests, the concept of alienation is treated in the context of the theme of God's silence. In fact, divine silence, seen from the perspective of an embargo of communication on the part of God in relation to man, is also the cause of individual alienation. What are the causes of the establishment of divine silence, some typologies of this silence that concern the subject of alienation, as well as a concrete application to our lives are some of the reasons treated in this article. Both human moments of silence in relation to God, but especially the nuclei of divine silence are message-bearing and enriched with meaning. We can affirm that through his silence God „speaks”.

„Silence is an oft-used literary, philosophical and theological category.” (Caraman 2020, 180-191). Silence is a virtue present in a wide variety of spheres. The spheres of mysticism in particular value silence as telling, sometimes more meaningful than the utterance itself. We can speak here of Eastern mysticism, Muslim or Christian mysticism.

In the Christian area, we mention the writings of Saint John of the Cross (Jean de la Croix), or Maître Eckart. Philosophy, for its part, also claims silence as a virtue, as an instrument of wisdom or of knowing the truth. Plotinus, the Neoplatonist whom some theologians place at the roots of Christianity, discusses in his philosophical discourses the silence of nature as a divine principle, i.e. nature that produces, without having signifying figures, and that has only signified figures, i.e. nature has no discourse of its own, but glides through what it does. (Caraman 2020, 181)

Looking at the dynamics of divine silence in the Old Testament, it appears as a spectral notion, whose limits are the peaks of walking with God (see Abraham in the episode of the sacrifice of Isaac, or Joseph towards whom God instituted a silence that resulted in his deity. The term used is based on the Bible's statement that Joseph loved as God did, as he proved in his confrontation with his brothers, who had been exposed for the iniquity they had committed years before, and from which Joseph suffered dramatically) or an oppressive silence that brought a curse. The latter type of silence produces

alienation. The treatment of the subject is at the confluence of theology and philosophy (Schellemborg 2015) and is, surprisingly, even used as a rationale for divine evidence (Lutzer 1997).

As a category of communication, silence is present in the writings of the Old Testament in various guises. Each of these implies the semantic value of a programmed absence on the part of God and in relation to man. The most commonly used image of divine silence is that of the concealment of his face (Balentine 1983).

Silence can be defined as a deviation from the norm, the absence of words or repression of actions are a signal of exception. God has established direct communication with man. When the human-God relationship is healthy, it is characterized by utterance and active involvement on both sides. God's utterance is a bearer of grace, and man, as receiver, is a blessed beneficiary. "When the divine-human relationship begins to break down, God's silence on words and deeds testifies to the alienation that has occurred" (Kessler 2021, 13). God's chosen people have repeatedly rejected what he communicates to them. God's slippage had as its primary purpose the people's finding out His will and fulfilling that will. Relationships established on the original terms deteriorated and were replaced by alienation and silence. Therefore, the alienation of individuals and the nation has its primary source in God's decision to impose an embargo on communication, either verbal or at the level of His actions. We will examine some Old Testament narrative cores that present these instances of divine silence.

Saul: the exponent of disappointed expectations

1 Samuel 8-31 depicts the rise and fall of Saul. He is Israel's first king, chosen by God and embodying the people's longing for better. Saul's journey reiterates the Deuteronomic pattern emphasized by God: obedience to His Law (Rotaru 2015, 318-322) will bring blessing in all aspects of Israel's life, while disobedience had built-in curses. The punishments listed in Deuteronomy, then reiterated, are progressive in the intensity of the pain suffered. In addition to famine, drought, numerous deprivations, infertility, the abhorrence of enemies, the dishonesty of one's own daughters and sons, all culminate in the announcement of the establishment of a silence from

God. The culmination of this curse will bring a distress that could not have been anticipated.

Saul seems to be the actor of this peak of divine wrath, with silence playing a significant role in the deterioration of the relationship between Yahweh and Saul. The biblical narrator highlights through narrative sequences the instability of Saul's character and the sinful decisions he made. We will look at the tragedy of this character who began his monarchical career with the promise of a successful path, crowned with God's blessing. In our approach, we will limit ourselves to one aspect of his tragic career: his loss of access to God's voice and his descent into darkness and silence. Saul's alienation from God comes in two stages. The first, outlined in 1 Samuel 13 and 15, builds on rejection from God. The entire dynasty is subject to removal, and Saul in particular loses the divine blessing needed in his service as king of Israel. The second stage appears in 1 Samuel chapters 16-18. The passage captures Saul's progressive decline into alienation, silence and then death.

Saul's reign is preceded, in 1 Samuel 1-12, by the removal of Eli and his family from the priesthood, later to be replaced by Zadok. The chapters mentioned make it clear that God is willing to remove a priesthood line because of the sin in which Eli's sons persisted. Saul is characterized as having a lacking character (Hertzberg Philadelphia 106, 133-34). Saul is the actor of a tragic history. He begins with good premises, but is rather dismissed because of his inability to show obedience to God.

The fatality of rejection

1 Samuel 13:1-14 focuses on Yahweh's rejection of Saul's dynasty. Saul's first serious mistake was his failure to wait for Yahweh's appointed time with full confidence. Although the context was extremely tense (Jonathan had announced a battle with the Philistines, and now the Israelite army was surrounded by the enemy army), Saul had a duty to wait for the arrival of the late Samuel. The people begin to scatter, and Saul is increasingly tense, until he takes the initiative to burn the sacrifice (v. 9). While the smoke of the sacrifice was still in the air, Samuel appears and pronounces judgment on Saul:

And Samuel said, "What have you done?" Saul said, "When I saw that the people were scattered from me, and that you did not come within the days appointed, and that the Philistines gathered together at Michmash,

“than I said, ‘the Philistines will now come down on me at Gilgal, and I have not made supplication to the Lord.’ Therefore I felt compelled, and offered a burnt offering.” (1 Samuel 13:11-12)

Samuel does not accept such an explanation that only shows a lack of trust in Yahweh and speaks against Saul in discrediting his dynasty:

And Samuel said to Saul, “You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the Lord your God. (...) For now the Lord would have established your kingdom over Israel forever. (1 Samuel 13:13)

Some interpretations say that Saul’s mistake was that he was not a Levite, which prohibited him from offering sacrifice before God. Other interpretations say that his fault was that he usurped Samuel’s office. However, in the deepest layer of the situation, “Saul’s fault lay in his inability to see beyond the numbers of his soldiers and trust Yahweh for the outcome of the battle.” (Firth 2009, 157)

Saul’s recklessness can be compared to Gideon who set out with an army of 32,000 soldiers, but brought victory to the people with a force of 300. Yahweh was going to bring victory without using the power of arms, but rather the panic of the Midianites who end up slaughtering each other. Gideon sets Saul an example of success that he did not experience.

A similar situation is outlined in 1 Samuel 14, where Jonathan attacks a Philistine garrison, accompanied by only one soldier (vv. 6-13). Again God uses a small number of soldiers for the intervention that will destroy the Philistine army. Jonathan’s statement in 14:6 is instructive of Saul’s bankruptcy. Jonathan says: *Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, “Come, let us go over to the garrison of this uncircumcised; it may be that the Lord will work for us. For nothing restrains LORD from saving by many or by few.”* (1 Samuel 14:6). While Jonathan sees the situation through God’s eyes, Saul, in his own words, fails the challenge.

Saul is like the servant of Elisha who could not see beyond what struck his eyes, but he is opposed to Elisha himself who looks at and analyzes the situation through the perspective of Yahweh’s power. These narrative interferences strike a discordant note with Saul’s attitude in 1 Samuel 13.

As a result of his failure in 1 Samuel 13, Saul’s dynasty is removed from the throne. Although he remains on the throne, God’s communication continues through the prophet Samuel. He has not yet been seized by God’s

silence. His fall continues, however, in chapter 15, where the reign is taken from him personally. In 15:1-3, Samuel commands Saul to rise up against the Amalekites and destroy them utterly. Saul only partially obeys God's voice and His command. He keeps his best flocks and the Amalekite king alive and sets aside some of the valuable pieces raised in battle. When God reveals to Samuel what Saul has done, he confronts Saul, who ducks, blaming the people (15:17-21). Saul blames the people, saying that they brought the best flocks from the Amalekites to be sacrificed to the Lord and that the others were sacrificed as commanded. He is contradicted by the text in v. 9, where the narrator notes that: *"But Saul and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to utterly destroy them."* Saul repeats the same idea in vv. 21-22. This marks a contrast between chap. 13 and 15. While in 13 it was obvious why he lost the battle, in 15 it is not clear why he chose to keep Agag alive. In any case, his statement, made to justify himself, intensifies his guilt rather than mitigating it. Accordingly, Samuel informs him without mincing words that the reign has been taken from him (15:22-29). As a conclusion to the passage, Samuel communicates to Saul Yahweh's final decision to remove him from the reign:

Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, He also has rejected you from being king. Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned, for I have transgressed the commandment of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, please pardon my sin, and return with me, that I may worship the LORD." But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you, for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel." (1 Samuel 15:23b-26).

Establishing divine silence

From this point on, Saul's descent into the darkness of silence and the absence of God is accelerated. The degradation of his whole being is pitiful. The Spirit of Yahweh departs from him and an evil alien spirit possesses him (16:14, 18:10) (Jaffers 2005, 670-74). Saul becomes insanely angry with David, afraid of him, and plans numerous attempts on his life. He suspects everyone

around him of conspiracy. All these are symptoms of severe alienation with paranoid overtones. The degradation of his inner structure as a result of his alienation from God is beyond the range of what people are used to. His alienation takes on serious pathological notes. He is still called king of Israel, (whether by Jonathan, David or the high priest Ahimelech), even leading the people into battle, though his status was that of an outlaw.

Yahweh's silence is relentless. It contrasts the person of Saul with that of David. In the period between the book of Joshua and the books of Kings, discernment of Yahweh's will by a leader of the people was essential. This is particularly emphasized when the Israelite army had a choice between going to battle against an enemy or not. In fact, there were limited possibilities in Israel to find the answer to such a concern. The Urim and Thummim procedure was instituted, guidance was received through dreams and their interpretation, as well as through prophetic actions. Saul appeals to all these tools (1 Samuel 28:6), but without an answer from God. Guidance by the means mentioned above was available to Saul until his fall (he was verbally guided by Samuel - 1 Samuel 9:19-10:8 - and the prophet Aiah, appealing to Urim and Thummim, 14:41-42). His status is totally perished and he „descends into a realm where Yahweh's will becomes progressively inaccessible to him.” (Kessler, 17). Unlike Eli who receives the news of his removal with a humble heart, Saul resists God's will, losing every shadow of what he had been or could have been. His degradation reaches tragic and comic notes (Exum and Whedbee 1984, 5-40).

The first episode of divine silence, vis-a-vis Saul, is in a narrative core related to David. The latter, fleeing from Saul's face, arrives, with a small army gathered around him, at Nob, at Ahimelech the priest. He demands food and asks the priest to ask God about his plans. Learning of Ahimelech's hosting of David, Saul calls the priest to account. He is most upset that Ahimelech has asked for divine guidance for David. The priest's ambiguous answer leaves us unclear as to whether he asked Yahweh and whether he also received an answer for David, but the situation is made worse when Saul demands that the priest do the same for him, and Yahweh refuses to offer guidance. The refusal in this situation was not due to Saul's condition, but to an oath broken by his son Jonathan. These aspects, however, are not the subject of our study. Saul's reaction to Ahimelech's response is as brutal

as it gets. He orders Ahimelech and all the priests of Nob killed (1 Samuel 22:16-19). Saul's subordinates refuse to carry out the order, but Doeg, who has denounced Saul's involvement of Ahimelech in helping David, thirstily carries out the order, even over-zealously killing not only the priests but all the inhabitants of the village (1 Samuel 22:16-19). The most important aspect is Saul's removal from the face of God as a result of his touching the priestly ephod. The aspect is highlighted in verse 18: "*he turned and stuck the priests, and killed on that day eighty-five men who wore a linen ephod.*" Saul's humiliation is all the greater when contrasted with David's situation, to whom Yahweh responds and guides him. So Saul is proscribed from leading the nation of Israel by having one of his most important footholds amputated: access to Yahweh's counsel.

Saul continued to go deeper and deeper. Saul's experience of divine silence reaches its nadir in 1 Samuel 28. The context is hardening to disfavor Saul on all sides: David hides from Saul, Saul continues to lead battles against the Philistines (28:4-5). The coalescence of the Philistine armies against him terrifies Saul (28:5). He asks for God's guidance, but does so in vain. The biblical narrative captures this detail: "*And when Saul inquired of the LORD, the LORD did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by the prophets.* (1 Samuel 28:6). Saul's situation is desperate. Samuel has died, so he can no longer call on him personally for help, so he orders his subordinates to find him a medium through whom he can find an answer to his distress. Even at this moment Saul's face does not humble itself before God. He betrays no trace of repentance before God. He quickly takes the step of seeking help from a witch. Surely the reader is curious as to what forces, powers or deities Saul was going to appeal to by his visit to the witch. That's because the unseen world of the Old Testament is much different from that of today or the New Testament. The dead were seen as shadows inhabiting the Sheol, a dark and shadowy place (Johnson 2002, 54-84).

The situation is all the more tenebrous because the biblical text specifies that Saul had killed all the soothsayers and all who called for the dead (28:3). It is reminiscent of the episode of the massacre at Nob. Stepping as if into a kingdom of darkness, the woman's house in Endor seems like a gateway to Sheol. She agrees, following Saul's oath not to kill her, to summon the spirit of Samuel. Annoyed by Saul's action, Samuel does not give Saul the answer

he expected, namely what Yahweh's intention is regarding the encirclement of Israel by the Philistine armies. What Samuel does is a reiteration of what he had already told him while he was alive: his kingdom has been taken from him, he himself removed from the face of God. He is told not only of the removal from his reign, but also that in the battle that will take place the next day, Saul, along with his entire family, will be killed: "*And tomorrow you and your sons will be with me. The LORD will also deliver the army of Israel into the arms of Philistines.*" (1 Samuel 28:19). Essential in this scene is the clarification in verse 16: "*LORD has departed from you and has become your enemy.*" (1 Samuel 28:16).

To conclude, Saul's alienation has several roots that grip and suffocate him. First, we noticed his desire to please people, to please them, becoming fearful when they begin to drift away from him. He fails to give obedience and belief to God. He dishonors Yahweh by his rash actions. Above all he shows no trace of repentance or humility before God. He is the prototype of deceived expectations. Both Yahweh and Samuel invested him with their trust. Both began with high hopes and gave him enormous support. Both are saddened by his failures and both refuse to reconsider his rejection. Saul ends up mired in silence, a prisoner of his own imprisonment.

Amos: silence covers the nation

Amos is recognized in Old Testament literature as a prophet who adopts a harsh discourse against the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Divine silence settles in, on the pages of the book becoming as oppressive as Saul's. The difference, and perhaps the greater gravity of the situation, is that the silence is established nationwide. Disobedience to the Lord's law has led the people into a state of crisis. Most serious, in God's sight, is that while religious activity was abundant (songs and sacrifices were flying and filling the air, Amos 5:21-24) sin and idolatry were rampant.

The book of Amos is replete with motifs from the semantic area of sound and silence, and silence as God's judgment plays a central role. The noise of singing and noisy temple worship become disturbing to God. He commands their removal from before His Face: "*Take away from Me the noise of your songs, for I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments.*"

(Amos 5:23). Amos' call is always to obey Yahweh's will (3:1; 4:1; 5:1; 8:4). Amos' warning is very clear. If God's Word goes unheeded, the nation will experience death, destruction and exile (2:14-15; 4:2-3,12; 5:1-5,16-20; 6:7-11; 7:8-9; 8:2-3, 9-14; 9:1-4).

Amos 8:11-12 is one of the best known passages in the book of the prophet and one of, if not the most important for our study. The passage is surrounded by other passages that foreshadow divine and human silence. The establishment of both are an effect of disobedience to God's word. Verses 8 and 9, which just precede our passage, foretell complete and imminent disaster. The sun will be darkened in the middle of the day, the inhabitants of the land will tremble with the terror that will overtake them. Then the text expresses the most profound disaster:

„Behold the days are coming,” sais the LORD, “That I will send famine in the land, not famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD. They shall wander from sea to sea, and from North to East; they shall run to the fro, seeking the word of the LORD, but shall not find it. (Amos 8: 11-12)

As stated earlier, God's silence, as a consequence of the people's repeated violation of His law, is established following the deuteronomic pattern. This silence is preceded by punishments that increase in intensity: famine, drought, infertility of women, invasion of wild beasts and harmful insects, invasion of foreign peoples. None of these carries the gravity of God's silence. Thus the passage in 8:11-12, being itself a prophecy, heralds the cessation of prophetic messages.

Like the divine silence of 1 Samuel 28, in Amos 8:11-12 the loss of access to God's counsel is appalling. Those deprived of this benefit go off shaken in search of it. Weighed down by so many allusions to utterance, to sound, Amos now declares that God's Word will disappear and that God Himself will cease to speak.

The threat comes in the context that in the first five chapters of Amos, the people are urged to repent and change. Yahweh implores the people to turn from their ways (4:6, 8-11), to seek Yahweh (5:4-6,14), and to fill the earth with justice and righteousness (5:24). The famine of 8:11-12 thus describes a time between the loss of the opportunity they had to repent and the implementation of the final judgment, which means that the people

actually had the chance to seek the Lord before they starved as God's truthful prophets had a message from Him.

In conclusion, Amos 8:11-12 highlights the privilege of hearing God's voice. Disobedience leads to silence that weighs far more than a state of confusion created in the midst of Israel, not knowing which way to turn in times of trouble. God's silence highlights the loss of relationship between the people and Yahweh, i.e. it produces alienation, estrangement. The state of alienation has multiple effects, affecting many areas of identity: election as a people, the covenant made with Yahweh, direct communication, special protection from God, the guarantee of material blessing. The crisis of alienation is all the deeper the more favorable the status they lose as a nation (Rotaru 2014, 28-29). Israel agonizes between becoming a people like all others or, worse, a people identified with God's curse. They will be the icon of what it means to disobey Yahweh and squander a great opportunity.

The silence imposed on Jeremiah

To the instances of divine silence presented above is added a new form of silence. Jeremiah, the prophet of God, is forbidden to be silent in his dealings with the people. *"Therefore do not pray for this people, nor lift up a cry or prayer for them, nor make intercession to Me; for I will not hear you."* (Jeremiah 7: 16). In the prophetic tradition, silence is seen as a sealed book and a cessation of prophecy and vision. *"The whole vision has become to you like the words of a book yhat is sealed, which men deliver to one who is literate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And they say, 'I cannot, for it is sealed.' Then the book is delivered to one who is illiterate, saying, 'Read this, please.' And he says, 'I am not literate.'" (Isaiah 29:11-12)*

For Israel, it seemed impossible for Yahweh to cancel their elements of identity, such as the Temple or the act of prophecy. As an effect, God limits both elements: both the Temple door and His voice, silencing them. (Isaiah 29:10). God's fearful silence is both on the level of the nation as a whole and on the level of the individual when he is in trouble and distress. God turns His face away from His people, but He turns His face to His prophet whom He commands not to interfere with the cause of the people. The term used for forbidding communication is *al-tiphga*, from the root *paga*. It implies emotional intensity and persuasive skills as a mediator. The

term also occurs in situations where one is advocating for someone based on an existing relationship, accessing a strong emotional dynamic. Perhaps most eloquently, Ruth encourages Naomi to leave her, and Naomi responds: "Entreat me not (*paga') to leave you, or to turn back from following after you;" (Ruth 1:16).

In this context, it is natural to ask what is the reason for this embargo imposed by God. Wasn't it enough to cut off His direct communication? Beyond the aspect of a categorical imperative on God's part to interrupt any chance for the people to rehabilitate themselves (perhaps Jeremiah's intercession would have softened Him), it is pertinent to see in this gesture God's desire for resonance. He wanted the alienation of the people as a whole to reserve for Him a singular specimen of empathy. The Most Holy One wants His prophet to be one with Him, to feel His pain, to understand His heart. It is a song intoned in silence, like a dirge. Just as at a funeral service you let the mourner's mourning embrace you, so Jeremiah is called to resonate with God. It is, if you will, a polyphonic silence, in which God is silent, accessing his own inner chords, and Jeremiah is called to harmonize through his own silence. In these sequences, the sound, Jeremiah's utterance would have been offensive to God.

Conclusions

God's silence carries a message at least as consistent as His utterance. The aspects of God's silence are many, much more varied than have been dealt with in this material. They are tuned to God's purpose in relation to the human subject, whether individual or nation.

Silence, as the materialization of the curse prefigured in Deuteronomy, is a painful form of punishment inflicted by God. The pain lies both on the part of man who directly feels the consequences of God's silence, but also on the part of Yahweh Himself, for His expectations have been deceived, the investment made in the chosen people is squandered.

The silence of God, with all the stages of its establishment, is the main, if not the only cause of alienation, since the lack of communication with God can only bring alienation, confusion, loneliness. The solace offered by postmodern society cannot cover the inner emptiness of man thirsting for

God. The antidote to alienation must be organically linked to what caused it to arise. Without a substantive link, the search for a solution is only a doomed endeavor.

Alienation is not a passing state of some individuals. Rather, it is an acute symptom of alienation from the living God. Someone said that hell is not fire and unimaginable pain, but hell is the total absence of God. The feeling is given by inter-human relations, by social projects that smooth the alienation of the individual, even the well-being of contemporary society cannot create a real and lasting resonance without anchoring these endeavors in God and in a steady, harmonious communication with Him. For most people today, God has become the Great Unknown that the world is trying so hard to bypass and replace. Success is doomed to failure.

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