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The Orthodoxy of the “7 Years from Home”

Abstract

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The doctoral thesis intitled “The Orthodoxy of the “7 Years from Home”” started from the hypothesis that between the psycho-emotional development of the child under the age of seven and the religious life experienced in the Orthodox Church there is a direct connection. The contents of the doctoral thesis is divided into three large chapters, preceeded by the introduction and followed by the conclusions and the bibliography.

The first chapter was named “**The Child Under the Age of Seven – The Formation of the Christian Character**”. As the title of this first part announces, the thesis has intended to emphasize the role of the Baptism Sacrament in the development of the Christian character of the child under the age of seven. Further, it presented the role of the godparents and the kindergarden with a Christian programme in the psycho-emotional development of the child.

The Sacrament of the Baptism represents the „entrance gate” into the Christianity or the beginning of the Christian life and it is considered in the Orthodox Christian theology as an event of cosmical proportions, with eschatological consequences. The moment of the baptism means an acceptance of the child into the Body of the Christ, which is the Church. The Christian teaching states that the Baptism represents a „clothing in Christ” (Gal. 3, 27) when it takes place a total change of the human being. During the Baptism the person receives the most complete form and, with it, the gifts of the Holy Grace. Considering this teaching, the Baptism becomes the foundation on which parents can build the religious education of the child.

The godparents have in this festive context an essential role. They assume in front of God the responsibility of the involvement in the spiritual life of the child until the end of life. The mysterious bond created between the godparents and the baptised is meant to keep these witnesses of the Baptism close to the family they have entered into communion through the Sacrament of the Baptism. The godparents bring a significant contribution to the religious education of the child, but also to the entire educational endeavour of the parents. As an example the strains of many godparents to be a constant presence in the life of the family can be mentioned. They offer any help for the benefits of its members.

The lack of the godparents' involvement in the life of the baptised child is often met in the Orthodox Christian space, which determines the godparents authority or their specific role to remain permanently futile. Therefore, the work of the godparents for the wellbeing of the child remains a developmental niche which can be fully explored. For this reason, the developmental niche represents a fragment or a place in the formation of the child where the participation of the Baptism godparents could bring a relevant educational surplus. Considering that they assume a spiritual kinship within the Sacrament of the Baptism, the religious education remains primarily their responsibility too. The relation with the godparents depends mainly on the parents.

The Christian kindergarten comes to play its specific institutional role. The formation of the preschoolers before the school takes place most of the times through the kindergarten as well. Children learn here about essential aspects related to healthy habits and acquire elementary social skills. The kindergarten with a Christian programme is intended to contribute significantly to the formation of the Christian character. Therefore, the Orthodox Christian parents generally want to enroll their children in this type of institution. The first chapter emphasizes the resources brought to the formation of the Christian character by the Sacrament of Baptism, with the godparents and the parents playing the main actors, and the kindergarten with the Christian programme.

The second chapter of the doctoral thesis is entitled „**The Christian Family – The Crucible of Knowing God's will**” and it is structured in two parts. In the first part the focus is on identifying the effects of the excessive consume and the digital technology have on the functioning of the Orthodox Christian family. The thesis points out their impact on the psycho-emotional development of the child under the age of seven. In the second part of the chapter, the family is presented as a space where the child assimilates the parental model. The religious life of the parents is consolidated by the daily home and societal behavior, which instills into the child a special education. The way parents succeed in placing prayer in the center of the common daily preoccupations and at the same time the discipline imposed to children by using a gentle and firm authority transforms the family atmosphere in an essential educational resource. The love of the parents strengthens the will of the child and teaches him or her the fellow and church affection commanded by God.

The relationships developed within the parochial community have a significant role in the formation of the Christian character. They develop the social abilities within the same age Orthodox Christian groups. The family becomes the space for the manifestation of God's will through the daily common effort of the parents to put into practice the Christian precepts.

The third chapter is entitled „**The Child Under the Age of Seven in the Christian Family**”. This chapter is structured in three parts. The first part is focused on emphasizing the preparation of the parents for the birth of the child. This subchapter insists on the life of the adults in the church. It develops the emotional control needed in the dynamics of a functional family. It also highlights the present necessity to intensify the parental education in the field of child development in a social context that presents numerous obstacles and dangers for an harmonious upbringing of the offsprings.

The second part of the chapter focuses on the emotional education of the child, comprised under the concept of emotional literacy. Thus I emphasized the contribution that the participation of the children under the age of seven in the life of a parochial church has on their psycho-emotional development. I also pointed out the strains of the Orthodox Christian parents to boost the psycho-emotional development of the child under the age of seven. In particular, I underlined the bad habits the child learns and how they can be removed with the support of the religious education.

The third chapter intends to be a particularization of the parental endeavours that can be used for an harmonious psycho-development of the Orthodox Christian child under the age of seven. The education of the parents and their self change occupy a priority place in this respect.

The conclusions of this thesis emphasized that there is a direct connection between the religious Orthodox Christian practices and the psycho-emotional development of the child under the age of seven. The positive results are possible when the parents have a devoted religious life. They participates together with the child to the life of a church, where they receive renewed strengths for affection and guidance.

The period of the first seven years is essential for the future development. The responsibility of the parents is hard to evaluate. The two faithful adults must find therefore proper family methods to fulfill God's will.

Keywords:

Orthodoxy, Orthodox Christian child, faithful parents, psycho-emotional development, religious education

Contents

Introduction.....5

1. The Child Under the Age of Seven in the 21st Century – The formation of the Christian Character.....13

1.1. The Baptism – The First „Socialization” of the Child.....13

1.1.1. The Coat of Saving – The Savior Jesus Christ, The Incarnate Son of God (Gal. 3, 27).....13

1.1.2. The Beginning of the Communion With the Parochial Community – Voluntary or Imposed Presence.....22

1.2. The Godparents – An Unexplored Developmental Christian Niche.....37

1.2.1. The Relationship of the Godparents with the Parents – a friendship for the Kingdom of Heaven or A Consume Benefit.....37

1.2.2. The Child and The Godparents – Decisive Factors in the Development of the Positive Emotionality in the Family.....45

1.3. The Kindergarten with Christian Programme – Creator of Life Events.....63

1.3.1. The Child and the Christian Educators – A Binder Between the Family and the Parents’ Community. The Contribution of the Educators to the Emotionality of the Children Group.....63

1.3.2. The Playing with the Same Age Children – A Dominant Activity of the First Seven Years. The Role of the Playing in Acquiring the Christian Identity.....82

1.3.3. Memorable Events – The Parents in Leadership Roles.....90

2. The Christian Family – The Crucible of Knowing the Will of God.....99

2.1. Postmodern Obstacles in the Family Communication.....	99
2.1.1. The Excessive Consume. The „King” Child – Between the Sanctifying Perseverance and The Laziness of the Hedonist Will.....	99
2.1.2. The Digital Technology. The „Target” Child – Between the (Voluntary) Attention of the Parents and the (Pious) Prayer in the Family.....	110
2.2. The Family – The Place of Love Deeds.....	124
2.2.1. The Rhythm and The Discipline of the House.....	124
2.2.1.1. The Prayer in the Family and in the Church – The Feeling of God’s Presence. The Development of the Sanctifying Will.....	124
2.2.1.2. The Limits and the Discipline – The Formation of the Basic Trust. The Emotional Entrainment and the Relation with the Spiritual Life.....	157
2.2.2. The Social and Parochial Network of the Family – The Mandatory Condition for Building Life Positive Tracks. The Role of the Spiritual Father.....	193
3. The Child under the Age of Seven in the Christian Family.....	209
3.1. The Preparation for Child Birth.....	209
3.1.1. The Life of the Parents in the Church and the Antenatal Period. The Role in the Identifying of the Development Results at Adulthood.....	209
3.1.2. The Parental Education About Child Development. The Attachment of the Child in the First Year of Life, Expression of Emotions Before Preschool and the Theory of Mind.....	219
3.1.3. The Emotional Control of the Parents – The Mandatory Developmental Task in the Christian Teaching.....	242
3.2. The Emotional Literacy of the Child under the Age of Seven.....	247
3.2.1. The Emotions Vocabulary – The Positive and Negative Emotional Entrainment	247
3.2.1.1. The Emotional Life of the Child under the Age of Seven.....	251

3.2.1.2. The Emotions in the New Testament – The Teaching Received from Our Saviour Jesus Christ and the Aposles.....	259
3.2.2. The Emotional Self-control and the Life in the Church.....	265
3.2.2.1. The Self-control of the Child under the Age of Seven – the Emotional Sensitivity in the Family and Ecclesiastical Space.....	269
3.2.2.2. Unhealthy Family Habits – Health as a Divine Gift.....	273
3.2.2.2.1. The Anxiety and Anger. Acquiring the Peace of Christ in the Church.....	273
3.2.2.2.2. The Erratic Eating of the Family. The Obesity of the Child and the Discipline of Fast.....	276
Conclusions	279
Bibliography	284