

"BABEȘ-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA  
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SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS

THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY – EDUCATIONAL FACTOR  
IN THE CONTEMPORARY EUROPEAN CONTEXT

Coordinator: Rev. Prof. Dr. Vasile GORDON

PhD student: Iuliana-Anișoara LUȚAI

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## SUMMARY

Keywords: Christian family, education, postmodernism, ideology, sexual education

The doctoral thesis with the title "The Christian family - educational factor in the contemporary European context" is structured as follows: the introduction, the two parts, having two chapters each, the conclusions and the bibliography.

The first part, with the help of Chapter I, begins with the presentation of the notion of "family", starting from the etymology of the word, as well as the meaning that this term has in different European languages. With the establishment of the meanings of the term, a genesis of the family is realized, starting from the revealed text of the Creation. In accordance with scriptural and patristic texts, the creation of man must not be separated from the creation of the family, that is, of the male-female unit, an ontological unit is established between Adam and Eve, the prophet Moses affirming that "God made man...he made man and woman" (Genesis 1, 27). Adam and Eve, without merging as persons, in the biblical perception are one. Eve is not the copy of Adam, but the person who completes him, to form one body. An essential coordinate is established, namely that the family is formed only by the union of a man and a woman. The preservation of paradisiacal purity would have led to continuous progress towards God, but sin had consequences not only on the human person, but also on the family. In this sense, an analysis of the fall into sin of the family, not of man, as an individuality is proposed: God created man in the male-female unit, as such the fall concerns this cell formed by the two. Although the fall is an act in which, in a first phase, Eve participates, later also Adam, the motivation that was the basis of the commission of the sin must be considered as belonging to the man and the woman alike, i.e. the family. Among the causes that led to the fall, the following are mentioned: the family's desire to be like God, Eve's selfishness and Adam's lack of opposition, not assuming the family vocation. Next, the consequences of sin on the family are exposed, these being divided into: immediate consequences (opening the eyes and knowing the emptiness, hiding and fearing God, not assuming responsibility) and lasting consequences (birth in pain, attraction of the woman and

her domination by the man). The end of the chapter describes the state of the family after the knowledge of sin and the expectation of a Savior. The loss of communion with God and the awareness of the sin committed inaugurates a new period in the history of the family, the man and the woman preferring a selfish existence, in which individuality opposes the communion given.

Chapter II describes the course of the family, with the coming of Christ the Savior. The restoration of man is followed by that of the family, since the resumption of the dialogue between God and man, through the saving work of Jesus Christ, also implies the integration of the family into the new ontology. The family, through the presence of Christ the Savior at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, but also through His divine work, is renewed, because He reactualizes the unity of man and woman through the Mystery of Marriage, unites the family with Him, through its integration into the Church, and shows the unity of spouses, as primary given. With His coming, the family is founded by the union of the man and the woman, consecrated through the Sacrament of the Wedding, showing that just as the Savior Christ was present at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, so also in the case of the Sacrament of the Holy Wedding, He is the perpetrator who crowns the bride and groom, although the priest performs the Sacrament, thereby achieving the incorporation of the new family into the Holy Church and union with Him.

Next, it is shown that through the Sacrament of Marriage the integration of the family into the Church is achieved, and following its model, it must be led by Christ the Redeemer, so that any desire for domination by one of the members is removed, within it there must be manifest sacrifice and free, unconditional love. In the New Testament, love is shown as the matter of marriage, because only its existence makes it possible to maintain the unity and purity of the family. Man and woman, though they become one, do not lose their identity in a depersonalized existence, but sacrificially give themselves to each other to keep the family in complete unity. The family becomes a reflection of the perichoretic mode of existence of the Persons of the Holy Trinity, so that man and woman do not confuse themselves, do not cancel their own selves, but open themselves to a boundless communion. After the exposition of the

family, from the perspective of the New Testament books (the Holy Gospels and the writings of the Holy Apostles), the parallel between Christ/Church and man/woman is highlighted, emphasizing the sacrificial relationship that expresses the true identity of the union of the two. This sacrifice will be reflected in the suffering occasioned by one of the spouses, which must be assumed without grumbling, just as Christ also suffered for the Church, restoring her beauty and making her the chosen Bride. Finally, the purposes of marriage are set forth: the birth of sons, mutual help, and the avoidance of the passion of decadence.

Part II, through Chapter I, deals with the pedagogical implications of the family, but also with its role in the new European paradigm, being, along with the Church and the school, a factor of religious education. In Christianity, education is not confused with an approach to teaching some theoretical information, but it addresses the whole man, body and soul, so as to contribute to his fulfillment and perfection, not only here on earth, but in the life to come. Unity is shown as an essential premise for the realization of the educational process in the family, children being integrated in an environment suitable for their development. The existence of a single body, formed by the union of man and woman, presupposes a single vision of education, even if the father and mother have different, but converging, responsibilities. Next, an exposition of the European postmodernist context, the challenges to which the family is exposed, as well as the consequences on education is made. It is remembered the impact that homosexual communities have on the traditional family, by promoting a different understanding of the family, with no connection to Revelation, but also of pleasure instead of the sacrifice of husbands. Divorce is also mentioned as a consequence of the new directions that characterize European society, the main causes being traced (immaturity of husbands, adultery, individualism and lack of dialogue), but also their effects on the education that the family should offer to children.

Along with divorce, feminism is seen as looking after the integrity of the family and the weakening of the educational prerogative. The invocation of various freedoms, in the context of the postmodern era, also included the emancipation of women, but this request is evidence of a mistaken understanding of the equality and symbiosis that must exist between people of the

opposite sex. The chapter ends with the presentation of the new situations in which parents and children find themselves, in the context of promoting a freedom oriented towards the satisfaction of pleasure, without limits and reasoning, as well as new social values, in which personal affirmation replaces any responsibility.

Chapter II makes an exposition of education, in the new postmodernist paradigm. Starting from the concept of education, it is shown that it can only be complete by orienting children towards God. To be possible, education must be accompanied by faith, since the child does not receive only a theoretical teaching, but is imparted knowledge that presupposes their living. By promoting gender ideologies, the new type of education promoted in schools, through subjects such as sexual or health education pays attention to the soul of the child, showing him directions in which he is not enriched with new knowledge or beneficial values, but with steps towards satisfying of desires and pleasures that must be repressed by restraint and purity. The young man, in the new ideological context, is in a situation of uncertainty that of accepting what society offers him as appropriate for the new times or what the family presents to him as authentic.

Therefore, the creation of an antithesis between sexual education and Christian morality is conclusive, as it shows the inability of the former to respond to the natural aspirations, specific to children. After exposing the course of sexual education in the schools of the member countries of the European Union and Romania, it is shown that sexual education, without being ignored, must not find its place in the school curriculum, but must represent one of the educational concerns of the family. The responsibility of sexual education should not be denied to the school, the mother and the father being the pedagogues entitled to guide their children, taking into account the specifics of their age and the environment in which they live.

In order to understand how the Christian family can become an educational factor, it is necessary to understand its history, from the moment of its appearance until today. Complete openness to the other is expressed in the loving relationship between man and woman, which is the foundation of the family. The act of making the first people testifies to the composition of the family, but also to the new relationships in which the man and the woman share. The evolution

of the family, starting from the Garden of Eden, must be put in relation with the course of society, therefore, the crisis of the family is reflected at the level of the whole world. The family, as a union between a man and a woman, received from God the gift of tending to the Creator and advancing on this path, through obedience and the practice of love. The loss of the primordial state and the appearance of sin in the world had the effect of breaking up the family. By clinging to sin, Adam and Eve broke the primordial unity, separating them from God and introducing divergent and selfish tendencies into the family.

The consequences of sin were felt not only on a personal level, but also on a family level, with man and woman becoming two entities that ceased to be one, proving their inability to sacrifice for each other. This event is the beginning of a decline of the family and, at the same time, of society, with repercussions on the pedagogical act. The natural dynamism of man, therefore also of children, towards God is slowed down by clinging to sin and material things. In order to cross this stage in which creation was, the restoration of man and the family was imperatively necessary. The incarnation and work of Christ the Redeemer, which culminated in His Resurrection, reopen the path to perfection for man, restoring family unity.

The wedding in Cana of Galilee is a confirmation of the family and the unity between man and woman, but also a renewal of it. The Savior's presence at this event is the testimony of God's care towards the family, a reaffirmation of transfiguring love, because, from now on, the union of spouses becomes a Holy Sacrament. Through the performed miracle, the Savior shows that the family passes into a new existential stage, being transfigured by His grace, just as water is transformed into wine. In the new ontology, the family, based on love, is incorporated into the mystical body of the Savior, which is the Church. The bond between Christ and the Church is shown by St. Apostle Paul as a prototype for that between man and woman, and as the former is founded on His Sacrifice, so, within the family, sacrificial love is what maintains this unity. Renewed through Christ, the family becomes a unit of persons that is ontologically oriented towards the Kingdom of God, but having an earthly mission to fulfill, that of progressing in love, through the birth and upbringing of sons in obedience to the divine commandments, as well as through the mutual sacrifice of spouses. The family becomes the connecting link between the



person and society, within which pulsates the feeling of mutual love, directed towards God and fellow human beings. In order to understand the mission of the family, in its capacity as a "little church", its identity must be understood, the existence of the love of the spouses, poured out on the children, being the essential condition for the fulfillment of any prerogative, such as the educational one.

In the Christian view, the birth of sons is a gift and a mission, because it obliges husbands to adopt a behavior appropriate to the role they have to fulfill. The educational prerogative, characteristic of the family, cannot be fulfilled without the existence of a Christian ethos, which directs its entire mission to God. The family can become a paideic locus to the extent that the values it transmits are a reflection of the teaching of the Gospel, children being not only trained to face the challenges of this life, but also educated, by disciplining the functions of the soul, to acquire happiness in the Kingdom the heavens. The fulfillment of this goal requires the transformation of spouses into assumed educators, able to take care of the children's education together, each of them having specific responsibilities. The family, founded through the unity between man and woman, is the natural environment in which children are born and favorable to their development, because the unity between male and female creates the premises for harmonious development. Children are given the values and natural feelings that belong to each parent, contributing to the formation of a character on which motherhood and fatherhood have left their mark. In the postmodernist context, where gender ideologies propose a "new family", the mission of the Christian family is to bear witness to its true identity.

The transformation of the family from a sacrificial environment into a space where the sinful desire to materialize, through the union of people of the same sex, in the name of happiness and freedom, is proof of the perversion of love and the inability to fulfill its educational vocation. The unity resulting from the selfish union of people of the same sex represents a form of family schism, sacrificial love being replaced by pleasure and lust, happiness being reduced to the immanent. Within this apparent unity, education is carried out arbitrarily, the parents' lack of morality having the effect of creating an atypical and inadequate family environment for the harmonious growth of children. In a society where gender ideologies

are promoted as liberating, the Christian family is the institution that can help reawaken the collective consciousness.

Postmodernism is not a current that does not establish a clear boundary between good and evil, but proposes an axiological syncretism, characterized by the ambiguity of the meaning of sin and virtue. In this ideological confusion, education turns into an attempt to mold children according to the values that characterize the new societies. Since education finds its beginning in family life, we believe that its decline is due to a corruption of the unity between man and woman. In the context where families prefer pleasure to sacrifice, individual success to the detriment of the common good, education is given a profile consistent with new orientations and concerns. Thus, divorce, infidelity, individualism and the lack of responsibility of the spouses produce not only the spiritual and physical distancing of the spouses, but also the disintegration of the family, the children being the victims of struggles whose protagonists are the parents who claim, exclusively, their justice. Without disputing belonging to a family, children whose parents are in one of the situations mentioned above are condemned to a life devoid of the landmarks necessary for a good upbringing. The challenges of the family, in the current European context, cannot be overcome as long as love is reduced to sexuality, the education of new generations is reduced to the transformation of man into seats of pleasure, in the name of a misunderstood freedom. The Christian family, through its constitution and the values it shares, must become a guiding beacon within society, the education carried out within it leading to the spiritual formation of young people, in accordance with the teachings of the Gospel.

The attempt of European society to adapt to political correctness must be followed by a prompt reaction of the educational triplet – family, Church and school. Promoting an education based on authentic principles becomes a difficult task, the school aligning itself with the new ideological visions, by introducing sexual/health education into the school curriculum, as a discipline through which children are given information about sexuality, eroticism, gender identity, contraceptive methods, etc.

In this situation, the Christian family must promote, together with the Church, the true values, such as chastity, sincere and committed love, understanding, submission, etc. Formed in

an environment where these demands are practiced, children will experience true freedom, which is not the consequence of the selfish and immeasurable gratification of sin, but of communion.

Through the present research, we aimed to present the pedagogical dimension of the family in the current European context, starting from the origin, identity and purpose of the family, as a unit between man and woman. The four chapters that make up the work are made up of four sequences, which together form an image of the educational dimension of the family. The purpose of the work, as announced in the introduction, was to show the overwhelming role of the Christian family, as an educational model, versus the new "European" paradigm, in which the "new freedom" suppresses any value. Thus, through its content and the structure of the exposition, the work confirms that the Christian family, although subject to major destabilizing influences, represents a determining factor in the education of children, as long as it not only promotes, but also lives in the spirit of the Gospel.

An open problem, as a starting point for future research, remains the detailed analysis of the ways in which the Christian family will manage in the near future to integrate and maintain the evangelical teaching in the children's education, as well as monitoring the results of this effort. If through the present work an attempt was made to create an educational model, represented by the Christian family, there is a need for a continuous survey of everyday reality, in permanent change and not always for the better. The exposure of the identity profile and the educational mission represents an ideal, but the assumption of these demands transforms the Christian family into a model for the good upbringing of children. A study, which can use sociological research techniques, can demonstrate whether the authentic model of the Christian family is able to fulfill it.

We believe that the originality of the work is given by the way the subject is developed, but also by the method of exposition, necessary to understand its complexity. Much has been written about the family as a Christian educational factor, but less in relation to the European context. The family is the basic institution of any society and, at the same time, it is permanently influenced by society. But regardless of the times it passes through, its original data cannot be canceled or changed. Referring to the pedagogical vocation of the family, we must take into

account its identity, just as we also take into account the fact that man is a dichotomous being. The family structure is characterized by a series of constants, their removal having the effect of dissolution. Precisely for this reason, the work starts from presenting the identity of the family, showing that the transformation it undergoes today has considerable effects on the upbringing of children. Identifying the wrong directions in which young people are today is not enough without indicating the causes, and one of them is represented by the transformations undergone by the family. Without an assumption of the family vocation, in which faith and moral values are shared, man and woman cannot create an authentic educational environment for the children they give birth to.

Also, a new aspect is represented by the establishment of the relationship between the situation of the contemporary family and the Christian ethos, which should characterize it, considering the effects felt in terms of pedagogy. Unsolved problems by parents, as life partners, have an impact on children's education, as they become living in an environment unsuitable for normal development. In the content of the work, both the frequent causes that lead to family separation, as well as possible prevention solutions, were indicated. Protecting the Christian ethos of the family, as a determining factor of education, in a society marked by increasingly visible secularization, can only be achieved in close cooperation with the other two major educational factors, the Church and the School.