

## Religion as a Discipline -The Golden Link between School and Family

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**Abstract:** *Education is a complex process because of its influence in child's personality development. Above all subjects, Religion is the queen, the spring of all values the students can learn. Romanian society was separated from every religious act because of communism atheism. During the communism period, it was forbidden to speak about God and Religion within the school. Beginning from 1990, the things changed and the exuberance of the freedom of language and thought continued, as was normal, with the re-introduction of Religion into school. The icons resumed their place in classrooms, the teachers started to transfer the values. Everybody agrees that this subject influence beyond the classroom. Religion must be seen and treated as a link between school and family, the values go within the family and change behaviors, attitudes and lives. Many student's families transformed only as a influence of their children' life changing through orthodox values learned from school, from Religion hour, from Religion's teachers. A lot of mothers and fathers started to fast because of their children, started to go to church to pray. It was a blooming of spiritual life. Both the parents and children reinvent their life through Orthodoxy's values. This phenomenon was supported by orthodox literature and by mass media.*

**Keywords:** religion discipline, family, education, values.

### Introduction

„Education is the highest form for young people and children' character and personality. For this reason education should be the fundamental priority of any society that wants the spiritual progress and material well-being of the people”<sup>1</sup>

„Religion is the learning of learnings”<sup>2</sup>. From the teacher's perspective, each student should be a light that he/ she lights up, ready to transfer the light further.<sup>3</sup> When the "teacher" is the Religion teacher, the metaphor even becomes objectionable, becoming imperative. Mother Sica, on her official name, Anastasia Popescu, emphasizes from the very first pages of her book how important is the relationship between the Religion teacher with children' families and young people that are participating in religious activities . Also, this connection must be between the Religion hour and the

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<sup>1</sup> The Speech of His Beatitude DANIEL, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at the National Meeting of the Parents Association for Studying Religious Discipline in School. Conference Hall of the National Center for In service Training DumitruStăniloae, from the Justin Patriarch Building - Bucharest, on Saturday, March 28, 2015, <http://www.protoieriasector6capitala.ro/cooperare-benefica-intre-familie-scoala-si-biserica-in-domeniul-educatiei.html>, accesed on 01. 09. 2018.

<sup>2</sup> Mama Sica, *Cum sa-i invatam pe copiii religia*, București, Editura Anastasia, 1995, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Alin Ionuț Pop, Manuela Oana Pop, "Dezvoltarea religiozității la preșcolari," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 9, p. 90.

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children' families too, through what this presupposes as information and values<sup>4</sup>.

### **Religion-the first measures within Romanian educational system**

In the "Golden Age of Old Science and Literature"<sup>5</sup>, until the middle of the 5th century, Religion, as a science and literature, had reached great prosperity. Now there have been developed famous theology schools, such as those in Alexandria and Antioch, where the foundations of Christian education were laid. If we list them only a few of the great educators who have organized religious education, such as Eusebius of Caesarea, Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Vasile the Great, Gregory of Nazians, we understand that these were and have remained the sources from which the teaching about the Orthodox faith has been fed and continues to do so. From St. John Chrysostom, we have clarified the purpose of "teaching Christian education to children": "Let the Christian idea come from understanding by persuasion, to the full practical realization." In a work of 1937, Father Mihail Bulacu talks about the art of educating the human soul and which is "Craft Crafts and Science of Sciences," for man is "the most special and complicated being." As such, religious teachers respond to "a divine call" having the duty to be "followers of His disciples".<sup>6</sup>

From this perspective, Spiru Haret (1851-1912), the founder of modern Romanian education, "sets religion as the first object in the catalog", where it remained until its removal as a study discipline till 1948 when the communism, according with its "reform", excluded Religion from schools. After 1989, the resumption of the study of Religion and its reintroduction into the curriculum was based on a consensus which, unfortunately, no one had the inspiration to measure it. People, tormented by the Truth that had been hidden for half a century, felt the need to rediscover the Divine Reality, which the study of religion could reveal. Therefore, in January 1994, the National Consultative Commission on Religion was established<sup>7</sup> which had as attributions the elaboration of the teaching methodology of religion, the proposal of measures for the valorization of the educational resources of the religion lessons, the endorsement of the training programs for the teaching staff of this discipline, the analysis of the collateral phenomena and the proposed measures for the regulation of possible dysfunctions, the approval of the printing of the materials necessary for the teaching , providing

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<sup>4</sup> Mama Sica, *Cum sa-i invatam pe copii religia*, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> L. Leonte, *Ucenicului Hristos*, Bacău, Editura Studion, 2000, p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> L. Leonte, *Ucenicului Hristos*, p. 15. Gladiola Mrejeru, "Aspecte Metodologice Ale Educației Religioase La Vârsta Școlară Mică," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> L. Leonte, *Ucenicului Hristos*, p. 23. Ionela Camelia Lazea, ""Coordonate Ale Educației Timpurii În Cadrul Familiei," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 126.

information on legal provisions, ensuring good results coverage, and collaborating with the other committees of the Ministry of Education to ensure interdisciplinarity. With the emergence of the Education Law No. 1 of 2011, this issue was discussed, and the theological education was regulated.

Thus, Article 15 stipulates:

(1) Cults officially recognized by the State may request [...] the organization of a specific theological education in public education, in existing public universities[.] The establishment, organization and operation of this education is done according to the law.

(2) Cults recognized by the state have the right to organize confessional education by setting up and administering their own private education establishments and institutions, in accordance with the provisions of this law.

Also, Article 18 governs the teaching of Religion:

Plans for primary, gymnasium, lyceum and vocational education include religion as a school discipline, part of the common trunk. Pupils belonging to state-recognized cults, irrespective of their number, are provided with the constitutional right to participate in religion, according to their own confession. At the written request of the major student, respectively the parents or the legal tutor established for the minor student, the student may not attend religious classes. In this case, the school situation ends without religion discipline. Similarly, it is also the case for the student who, for objective reasons, has not been provided with the conditions for attending classes in this discipline.

However, the 2014-2015 school year has seen a great deal of concern about the status of religion, which has been initiated more than once by various secularist organizations and culminating in the discussion of the inclusion of Religion in the Romanian curriculum. As such, the article cited above from the Education Law was later amended as follows: “student enrollment to attend religious classes is made by written request of the major student, respectively the parent or tutor legally established for the minor student. Change of this option is also made by written request of the major student, respectively the parent or the legal tutor established for the minor student. If the student does not attend religious classes, the school situation ends without religion discipline. Similarly, it is also the case for the pupil who, for objective reasons, did not have the conditions for attending classes in this discipline.

From this perspective, we find the pressure that the more secularized society exerts, the changes of perception and legislative changes occurring at increasingly small intervals. The status of religion, still stable at the level of 2018, places this discipline in paradoxical condition to be part of the common trunk of Curriculum Plans but at the same time to have discipline

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value for which the parent or supporter legally, or even the child, in case of a major student, must enroll.

The result, however, demonstrates that, despite attempts to diminish the role of Religion in school, parents give great confidence to the formation of their children according to the spiritual and traditional values: "After some opponents of the time of religion obtained Decision no 669/12 November 2014 of the Constitutional Court of Romania, which condition the participation of pupils at the religion time by a written request of parents, legally appointed tutor or major student under the pretext of exercising (or verifying) the freedom of conscience and religious beliefs, the positive answer of the overwhelming majority parents and children was massive and dignified, expressing the importance of religion in the life of the Romanian people<sup>8</sup>.

An objective analysis notes that the number of Christian-Orthodox schools in the country is increasing, which, without being confessional, gives special attention to the teaching of the Orthodox religion and the learning environment offered to the child, being supported by increasingly powerful by the Romanian Orthodox Church. From kindergartens organized near churches and monasteries, such as the Sfântul Ioan cel Nou de la Suceava, founded in 2005, with the blessing of the Metropolitan Pimen, from the Three Holy Hierarchs School, which functions alongside the Church of Bucharest with the same name, and until The school and recently the Varlaam High School, supported by the Iași Metropolitan Church, the Primary Classes of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca and the Brâncoveanu School in Constanța, these initiatives .Along with the initiatives of teachers from the secular environment, such as the Kindergarten and the Desired Child School in Bucharest, Agatonia School in Piscu village, Ciolpani commune, or Anastasia Popescu Orthodox Pedagogical High school. This school that already has 25 years, during which it grew organically, from kindergarten groups to primary and middle classes, and now high school - all prove, on the one hand, there is a real osmosis between the Orthodox Church and contemporary society, and, on the other hand, the need for quality education based on Christian Orthodox values is increasingly felt among Romanian families. Starting from this, which reinforces the conviction that "religion plays a role of great importance"<sup>9</sup>, the Religion lesson can become the keystone of the life of the entire school, both from the perspective of other subjects of teaching / learning, as well as that of parents, for whom the teacher of Religion may be a reference to moral and spiritual life.

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<sup>8</sup> Comunicat al Patriarhiei cited by *ziare.com* - marți, 10. 03. 2015.

<sup>9</sup> Comunicat al Patriarhiei, p. 20. Luminița Badale, "Tradițional și modern în familia românească," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 119.

Beyond the curriculum, the lesson plans and the learning contents, we believe, along with Teacher Laetitia Leonte, that "Religion must first be the right answer to the questions that lead to confusion, to comfort the pain, to accompany man in his life, as Christ accompanied Luke and Cleopas on the way to Emaus, to work on hearts that feel the need for warmth, the safety of knowing the deity, to be able to easily discuss the being and energies of God, with the delight of the intellectual who penetrated the depths of knowledge"<sup>10</sup>.

Learn the age of great questions, children and young people, and with them, even the families they belong to, find the balance of answers and fill the "gigantic absence" that God's ignorance brings to the secularized world in which we live. Father Dumitru Stăniloae speaks, when the "religion lesson" is the golden link between school and family. Knowing the fact that the formation and development of the moral, relational-value dimension of human personality is one of the priorities of most contemporary educational systems, we consider that an exemplary mobilization of human and material resources in the various educational institutions is required towards ensuring efficient moral education determined not only by analyzing the characteristics and problems of contemporary society, but also by the data history provides, especially since the decline of a society can start once it is incapable to manage and perpetuate traditions, values and culture.<sup>11</sup> This high status, once challenged but challenged, reconfigured, then challenged again, in the landscape of a society for which it obviously takes over the material values that have discovered and developed the "welfare culture"<sup>12</sup> is in fact the stake of the true "value education", or, rather, education of true values.

Post-modern relativism comes together with the need of the child and adolescent to develop "self-awareness"<sup>13</sup> the one that gives them autonomy and authenticity. We note this double dimension of the contemporary world, reiterated in fact throughout history, but "we hold that there is a current trend in contemporary pedagogy dealing with the cultivation of interiority, which attest once more the importance and need for a paideutic centered on the spiritual dimension of being"<sup>14</sup>. From this perspective, the Religion lesson can be considered as having at least two dimensions: the first, to integrate into the actual education, "the introduction of the young in the paradigms of knowledge, sensation and living specific to

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<sup>10</sup> Comunicat al Patriarhiei, p. 21.

<sup>11</sup> Adriana Denisa Manea, "Influences of religious education on the formation moral consciousness of students", *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, CIL (2014), pp. 518-523.

<sup>12</sup> M. Levine, *Prețul privilegiului*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura ASCR, 2016, p. 27; Violeta Cristina Șinar, Valer Cristian Șinar, "Educația Outdoor La Preșcolari," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 55.

<sup>13</sup> M. Levine, *Prețul privilegiului*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> C. Cucos, *Educația religioasă, Repere teoretice și metodice*, Iași, Polirom, 2009, p. 109.

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one community"<sup>15</sup>, and the second, differentiation from the rest of the subjects offered by formal or non-formal education, by having faith at heart, that is, "the certainty of the God's existence of God"<sup>16</sup>.

Thus conceived, faith becomes a stage on the road of knowledge and self-knowledge, so to the formation and strengthening of the "self-sentiment" towards the edification of which should be any educational, parental or institutional approach.

That is why Religion lesson can and should tend to report children and young people to a superior plan in terms of value. As such, "Investing in the human spirit through education has inexhaustible consequences" because "Man carries the inner, spiritual world as the Creator carries in His thought and love"<sup>17</sup>, "Religious education" transmits values that respond to young people's quests and develop them "appetite for transcendence"<sup>18</sup>.

### Conclusion

Tudor Vianu speaks of the fact that religious values are integrative, giving unity and sense to others<sup>19</sup>, and the sacred, in the view of Mircea Eliade, brings man to the real of existence.

What are, then, the levers by which the hour of Religion contributes to finding solutions that can change today's perceptions of the world, more and more inclined in the conception of many scholars, alienation and reification? Given that its role is both informative (instructive) and formative, it will relate to both a curriculum and the explicit content of learning, namely content to be conveyed, and to a hidden curriculum, of which many elements of religious education ". In a community where religiosity is strong, the infusion of religious sentiment is made easier and more direct by the collective dissemination of conduct, through social imitation, conformity and the desire to continue the traditions<sup>20</sup>.

Of the volumes devoted to this theme, it is worth extracting at least one piece of the book entitled "The Smile of the Saints" signed by Romeo Ene. Professor and priest, he creates a bunch of touching testimonies about how much religion can mean for a community, linking it to school and church. The last text in the volume has as a starting point a questionnaire

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<sup>15</sup> C. Cucuș, *Educația religioasă, Repere teoretice și metodice*, p. 137.

<sup>16</sup> C. Cucuș, *Educația religioasă, Repere teoretice și metodice*, p. 137

<sup>17</sup> C. Galeriu, *Jertfă și răscumpărare*, București, Editura Harisma, București, 1992, p. 67. Delia Muste, "Managementul Timpului Școlar," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 50.

<sup>18</sup> C. Galeriu, *Jertfă și răscumpărare*, p. 149

<sup>19</sup> T. Vianu, *Studii de filosofie a culturii*, Editura Eminescu, București, 1982, p. 102.

<sup>20</sup> C. Cucuș, *Educația religioasă, Repere teoretice și metodice*, p. 249.

given to high school students, which reads as follows: "What are the reasons why I go with pleasure to the church?"<sup>21</sup>.

The list of answers is impressive through authenticity and excitement. Among the evoked young faces, one of a boy who loved the church very much. His parents, who at first did not cross the threshold of the cult, confessed that the little one urged him to come with him. And they listened to him. The teacher, representing the school and discipline he teaches - religion - can, here, add the smile that comes from the saints and unites to the whole family who has Christ in his heart.

Society, with good and evil, obeys history. The way tomorrow's children and young people will integrate into realities that, for their parents, are difficult to even suspect and imagine, will depend on what Madeline Levine called, as we have seen above, "the self-feeling". The Religion lesson has all the prerequisites for contributing to the structuring of the self and, as such, the way in which the future can be managed, precisely because it opens a gateway to the world whose philosophy is Christian faith and values. From this perspective, "the remarkable children are those who have developed a genuine, strong, loving, creative, moral self-control"<sup>22</sup>.

Lastly, let us remember the words of a mathematician whom the Religion teacher can cite for the lesson to become surprising and unforgettable. This is Professor Florian Colceag, nicknamed the "genius coach", to whom the reporter asked some questions:

*"Are you a faithful man, Mr. Colceag?"*

*- I'm a mathematician. For me, God is not a cultural formula, God is the infinite, intelligent and sensitive space that really exists. I can demonstrate this through my maths. [...] I do not even ask my faith, I ask the question of knowing. I'm in the situation of having a direct open window that I understand exists. God exists and works"*<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> R. Ene, *Zâmbetul sfinților, file de pateric rural-urban contemporan*, Editura Agnos, Sibiu, 2017, p 109. Adriana-Denisa Manea, Ciprian Baci, "Interrelații familiale provocate de revoluția. Tehnico-științifică," in *Astra Salvensis*, V (2017), no. 11, p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> M. Levine, *Prețul privilegiului*, p. 78.

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.dela0.ro/matematicianul-florian-colceag-pot-demonstra-ca-dumnezeu-exista-si-actiunea>, accesat 01. 02. 2018.

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