

# **Family, school and Church in nowadays**

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**Abstract:**

*This study is a highlight of the historical and actual role played by the school and church of our Romanian nation. Their specificity and current challenges only conjure up the need for Christlike, loving action to highlight their major importance in people's lives.*

**Keywords:** *education, family, religious, spiritual values, Church*

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**Introduction**

An important role in contemporary society is played by education and spirituality or practiced belief, because we live in a society that feeds not only horizontally, with everything that is earthly, but also vertically, with the emotions and feelings of men. Even if we always state that the world is materialistic by excellence, there is however at least a form of spirituality. And this is where school and the Church come in. Their mission is difficult in a materialist society. Good or bad people, competent, civilized, responsible or not, they all need education and faith. But the best thing we should all do is to be more attentive, more inventive and responsible in the process of self-education. In this study, inspired by Prof. Staniloae's line of thought (Stăniloae 2012: vol. I-1930-1936; vol. II-1937-1941; vol. III-1942-1993), I intend to actually define what School and the Church in general (still) means for us, the postmodern, but also for the Romanian people. Personally I see them in this order both out of

humility and also based on the fact that our forefathers fought for nation and country, but also for defending an inner feeling, a treasure represented by our faith in God and by values that now seem to be obsolete.

### **Family and school**

School is the teaching organization, being an instrument of learning. As an organization, school carries out two activities: a managerial-administrative and a pedagogical-educational one. The *managerial-administrative activity* targets the management and administration of the school, as well as the structures that regulate the teachers' activity, their status and institutional role. Within school analysis as an organization, the central concepts are represented by authority and bureaucracy. School is “a natural and absolute corollary through its necessity in view of man's formation for future life” (Galeriu 1977: 38), being a primary educative factor because it prepares and trains young people for life in an institutional setting. Young Christians, “the plants of paradise, cannot grow as a forest, abandoned to chance and without care” (Comenius 1970: 78).

School is “a social group that has its own unity and physiognomy” (Durkheim 1995: 89) meeting the specific characteristics of organizations as it maintains multiple relationships with the external environment; has a primary function of forming pupils and integrating them into society as well as a secondary one, providing behavioural patterns to the population of the area. The position of the individuals in the organization has as tendencies, the satisfaction of organizational requirements and also the satisfaction of personal aspirations. School is a formal system and an informal relationship environment; the unconscious and the imaginary can be described as mediators between the personality of the individual and the organization. At the same time, the communication system is very effective because the relationships between the various compartments of the organization cannot be carried out effectively without a well-established communication system. Man has evolved in time as an integral part of a group that creates and conveys values, determines psycho-social norms, and develops within sociocultural structures.

Not only individuals as such, but also humanity, more precisely the human species, is social in the sense that it was born, formed and has developed until today, exclusively in collective life forms (Herseni 1982: 513).

When talking about school, in general, we must refer to the group that forms it: students or young people, teachers and parents alike. *The group of young or not so young learners or the school group* are those who possess all the qualities needed by a primary group, characterized by: the possibility of face-to-face interaction; the existence of stable structures; the tendency to achieve certain goals; the perception of students in a class as part of the same group. The goals of the class-group must be highlighted: the process of achieving the task, the task being what the group must do to achieve its purpose, the common task of learning becoming specific according to the various segments of the activity; the communication process is carried out in close connection with that of accomplishing the task; social processes, as the class represents the source of personal satisfaction for the group members as well as a factor of cohesion and lastly, the process of influence ensures behavioral unity. A general characteristic of the school group, which fundamentally marks the students' behavior, is represented by "its *homogeneity* in terms of age, status, needs, interests and aspirations" (Herseni 1982: 513). I find it very important that the school environment creates a competitive environment, unfortunately most of the times experienced as something negative by the students.

*Pedagogues or teachers* are the main actors, according to many opinions, especially if we reflect on the practical, administrative and intellectual role they acquire. The "academic staff" as we pretentiously call them, performs the function of organizers, educators and members of the faculty. The role of the teacher requires professional involvement in a multitude of reference groups imposing differentiated requirements upon him as he represents public authority, at the same time conveying knowledge and education, being an assessor of students, a partner of parents as regards the educative task, a member of the school staff and a colleague.

There is where the role of the Religion teacher comes in. He coordinates many of the students' activities, boosting and increasing the "value of their involvement and active participation in the process of their own training and education" (Opriș 2008: 9). While other teachers within

the study groups find themselves in harmonious or conflicting, official or strictly administrative situations, the Religion teacher must always be a man among men, a soul open to all: with the parents, with other public officials and representatives, and so on. He must be a man of consciousness and the landmark that everyone resorts to for the benefit of the students.

We mentioned above that in our specific circumstances, the parents and the community in general remain important. The transfer of knowledge concerning various subjects and the quality of being an educator harmoniously combines with the wider community interaction. Now, in these years, it is planned to dismantle programs, classes by years of study and even curricula subjects, out of a desire for emancipation and inter-human collaboration, a practice taken to the highest odds. But we should at least reflect on the fact that one cannot “learn something” unless one has a solid foundation. For example, you cannot type on a computer keyboard or even write on a sheet of paper, unless you learned some calligraphy and someone helped you hold a pen in your hand. You cannot simply have a mouse and a keyboard before you and start surfing the internet if you do not have the minimum knowledge of what a computer requires.

Family and friends groups are major forces in the socialization process. A third socializing agent, often neglected, is school. Perhaps no other institution has so much influence on the development of a child. Democritus said: “Nature and education are the same. Indeed, education transforms man, and in doing so, gives him a second nature” (Carcea 2001: 15). Rightfully, the child's entrance to school can be considered a true “adventure” (Cucoş 1999: 87), a fundamental turning point in the socialization process; once the child enters school, it is the beginning of what we call secondary socialization. Especially after completing the primary cycle, the life of the child is dominated by school, even outside the classroom. Through the tasks he carries out in the form of homework (and not only) and by attending collective, even extracurricular activities, by the way in which the relationships between students are structured, school is highlighted as a force with an undeniably remarkable influence in the everyday life of the child.

School as a social institution is different from family via several important features: contacts and relationships between adults and children are short-lived (limited to a few hours a day); the contacts between children and adults are extremely varied, the student interacting with several adults who each offer his own perspective on the world. These perspectives are different both from each other and from the perspective of parents; performance evaluation is comparative, public and regular. Nowadays, kids spend much more time in school. The objectives of education have multiplied and diversified, its content has been enriched, so that school goes more and more profoundly in the student's personality system, exerting a considerable influence on his development. Students start school earlier and stay in the educational system for longer. Life without school has become impossible to conceive, as it provides the essential means for adapting to the world and integrating into society. Numerous studies on the importance of school as a socializing force demonstrate the undeniable effects of school on the value system and the aspirations of children. These studies show that “school, together with family and friends groups, influence the orientation of children's moral and social values as well as their social achievements and aspirations” (Hetherington 1986: 256).

As a conclusion to this part of the study, I would like to remind you that the school system, together with family, has a major influence on the way young people are formed. The educational system provides children with a palpable representation of the world, develops thinking, skills and relationships between people. School offers not only simple knowledge, but it also teaches children to look at the world from different perspectives, offering a view of the world, depending on the culture in which it integrates. So where does Church come in? And why is it a treasure of our people?

### **Family, school and Church**

We mentioned above school and its various influences on young people. It provides a different social context at pre-school, primary and gymnasium levels. These levels are organized differently and are perceived differently by children; different aspects of social behavior are expressed in school, depending on children's changing capacities and

needs. As children advance to higher grades, the school environment becomes more and more complex.

School and Church are means of communication and communion. The aspects they enact are both human and divine. This is not about attitudes, preferences or interests, but about the models they present. In determining the impact of each on our own interaction, we must take into account the human and the divine factors. It is not just about the stages of development of the child, the young man, and so on or the socio-political and economic nuances of time and space, but about the message they bear.

School and Church promote values, and the main protagonists are people of all ages. From students and teachers, to parents and family, they all represent God's collaborators here on earth to fulfil each one's destiny. Values are also the acquirement of the mind and of the body, whether behavioural or pertaining to ideas, science and consciousness incorporation. The teacher is like a priest, and the priest is an inherent teacher. Both one and the other perform together with the people: through acts of language, through acts of thought and especially through acts of living. Optimal delivery is the one that maintains efficiency. And we each know that a teacher "teaches" himself, that is, he communicates especially from what he is, the way he is in front of others. That is why the priest and the teacher are like the candles that burn and radiate light, that is, they are consuming themselves to give themselves to the others.

These two represent axial spaces by excellence, negotiation and validation fields, moving spaces – sliding and sometimes tense, sometimes calm, but always beneficial – as they are the spaces of spiritual formation of man in its entirety. According to some analysts, school "has three objectives to accomplish: to prepare the individual for a certain beneficial activity; to shape him as a future citizen and to develop and fulfil him as a human being" (Debesse 1981: 79). It is the task of school to stimulate and develop in young people the ability to adapt and understand not only in the sphere of actual knowledge but also at the deeper level of spirituality. The church completes the school, though it initiated it and gave it shape. Let us remember that men of the church are men of the school, of the book, that is, of the Bible. It is from the latter that the first writings and prints were learned on the porches of churches.

Of course, the Church accomplishes spiritual communion by excellence, but this communion is also attained due to a good education that is not only an intellectual approach, but also a practical one that is related to the field of human affection. The human being does not discover the beauty of things or relationships unless he carries it in himself, and only then projects it outside.

Education is a work of love. Human beings isolate themselves through their lower feelings and unite through their superior feelings. The educator does not give; the process of education only allows them to take what is best in themselves. Forming a common body to respond to all calls from the outside is a first step. Thinking the same things is another. To act jointly is a third one. But feeling together is the supreme stage, which provides decisive access to the Soul Society (Hubert 1965: 224).

One thus notices in the completion as well as in the distinction between the two entities.

For example, beyond the agitations and influences of the outside world in school, there is a more stable and deeper area: the Religion class. The spirit is fulfilled by the Religion class, which is an extension of the Church in school. Investing in the human spirit through education has inexhaustible consequences. If man ennobled his spirit more carefully, then what is related to his material existence would be easier and better accomplished because “man carries the world on the inside, spiritually” (Galeriu 1991: 67). Man is dedicated to finality, to purpose, to values; he does not adapt to the external world, it is the latter that moulds according to a purpose established in his spirit. School is built “to the extent of society, but its role is to open up to the future, to foresee the values needed for later” (Galeriu 1991: 67).

The soul communion that is achieved through this class, through the values it promotes, it consolidates the experiences of the individual being and his preparation for the encounter or the conception of beauty and love in society. The education of values guides students in this respect. What follows after this spiritualization is the work of the individual himself. Through its spirituality, the Church is the intertwining between the act of thinking and the sensibility of the being.

The transmission of knowledge is akin to transmitting spirituality or living in the Orthodox sense and is not just a free or an innocent act. Let us remember that in the “*Paterikon*” we have the most parables that

emphasize the *abba-apprentice* relation. Similarly, in the monasteries and in the church, we have the relationship between the priest and the believer or between the teacher and the disciple, a relationship that has been perpetuated in school. To convey the teaching (the Church views this at the maximal level the transference to the faithful disciples of the life experience into Christ by a spiritual parent or *abba*) is always meant to convey something to someone, but not in the classical sense: from someone who knows to someone who does not know. It is conveyed in such a way that the person receiving the information - the student, acts in the sense intended by the information owner. "If I walk among you," Socrates once said,

I do nothing but try to persuade you all, young or old, not to take care of your bodies above anything else; nor to hunt fortune with fierceness, but to endeavour for the soul, and to how it might become perfect; for virtue does not derive from fortune, but it is from virtue that all the treasures and the other worldly goods spring (Platon 1993: 35).

Religion and morality imply condition and influence each other, being inseparable, referring to man as to a being endowed with life and reason, capable of moral judgment, and aiming at the spiritual fulfilment of man as a person through education in school accomplished by competent and efficient teachers.

### **School and Church - two pillars of the national ethos**

Although within the study we treated the three essential educational factors: the Church, the school and the family, in various contexts, I wanted to conclude the theoretical assessments based on the chosen theme, in a sub-chapter emphasizing the partnership between the Church and the School, by directly analyzing the common institutional point - the religion class. Strengthening partnership ties is a common desideratum, the intensification of the concern for educational-missionary work among the new generation being determined by the belief that all young people raised in faith are the present and the future of this nation, so harshly tried. In addition,

the revival of parochial catechesis and the intensification of the religion teacher's mission are necessary to give to children the beautiful image of the Romanian school and to provide teachers with the prestige and social dignity of the educative profession, and the parents with the confidence that there is no greater



investment for the future of children than healthy education, anchored in the eternal values of faith, cultivated and transmitted within the family, school and the Church (Daniel 2013).

To educate is to cultivate the spiritual purity and common-sense of children and young people, to raise the child morally and godly, to take care of his soul, to shape his intelligence, to form him as an athlete for Christ, that is, to take care of his salvation. Education is like an art, because while all arts are of benefit for this world, the art of education is being done in order to attain the world of eternity (Saint John Chrysostom).

The art of being a teacher is the most noble of arts; while the painter or the sculptor creates a memorable picture or an emotional image, yet without life, “the educator creates a living face; by looking at it, people rejoice and God also rejoices” (Saint John Chrysostom).

We live today in a secularized world in which moral norms and spiritual values are lost, to the detriment of the proliferation of fierce materialism.

The globalization of the world today, religious syncretism, the explosion of technological development, the ostentatious display of a consumer society are risk factors for the progress and the harmonious development of the educational process within the family. Not only parents, but also children (the youth) are mentally and morally affected by these disturbances of the world we live in (Daniel 2005: 67).

There are several

circumstances of training and informing young people: the family, the school, the church, cultural institutions, the media, and that is why these realities must be treated with the utmost respect by the educator, the parents, the teachers, the priests, or other trainers or guides of human consciousness (Cozma 2010: 82).

The teacher-educator needs to know very well this dynamic of the risk factors that hinder the young man’s growth and education, to provide support and help in the educational process, and to find new ways of spending free time for young people in the community. “The need to complete and extend the process of education outside the classroom and outside the school was imposed at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Cozma 2010: 82).

The value of these activities is greater from an educational point of view, to the extent to which they provide the conditions for the practical application of knowledge, for the students to get acquainted among

themselves, for the development of the feeling of appreciation for natural beauty, artistic achievements, for the identification and the development of the artistic and athletic endowments. Therefore, necessarily, the idea of partnership between all the educational factors is necessary. I am convinced that every community – church and school – according to its social, cultural and pastoral specificity knows how to invest in the power, the energy and the soul purity of children and young people, being well-known that their good education is the guarantee of a healthy future for the world of tomorrow.

### **Conclusions**

All the aspects mentioned in the preceding paragraphs can be accomplished through religious education especially developed and supported by the Church, since it is morally important. The precepts of Christian morality are not the product of human reason, but they are revealed. Therefore, the Christian has the certainty that God is not a mere construct of speculation. These have become valuable things in the common consciousness of humanity, even without the will of one or the other. Even atheists and ideologists and indoctrinated people of all kinds (anarchists, communists, socialists, masons, etc.) – I am not referring only to those of other faiths – should accept, if they were honest with themselves, that the world is founded on ontological bases in which there is no lack of good, beauty, truth, and these are not just beautiful expressions and ethereal things without which one can live perfectly well but they all spring from the Good, the True and the Beautiful, that is, from our Lord, the Christ. There would be nothing if it were not a source of realities, even the spiritual ones.

It is often said, as a cliché, that the fulfilment of man – because this is what we are talking about here, although the word “perfection” would be more appropriate - is accomplished with the help of culture. But culture without worship does not exist, because through culture the spirit transcends human nature. Culture is the spiritual endowment of a man struggling with nostalgia for happiness and perfection, thus conceiving works that uplift and ennoble him. The human spirit proves to be the main factor and creator (promoter) of culture. Everything that has been created worthy to be admired in the field of human culture is largely due to

Christianity and to the Christian sense that it has given to culture. Education, in general, and the Romanian school so far, is a “spiritualization instance... that reflects in all its beauty upon the student from the earliest age” (Garrido 1995: 103). Providing education in school is an act of worship, comparable and capable of states similar to with religious ones. This is what we see, for example, in the teaching work of our Savior Jesus Christ, in the dialogue with the rich young man about the attainment of heaven (Luke 18). In that dialogue, guidance is given towards the goal of human perfection, responsibility, humility, indulgence and altruism in consensus with the principles of religious education.

The church and the school, without forgetting the family, have a spiritual and educational dimension through the mission of teachers and educators. As in the case of priesthood, where vocation is required, the teacher's profession asks the possessor for both skill and art. A good educator is required to have not only intellectual and physical qualities, but also spiritual ones, and inner calling and sense of dedication towards man. And above all, *love* remains, as it is also said in the hymn of love of I Corinthians 13, because “to educate is to love” (Comovici 1998: 13). It is known that what changed the face of the world was due to “the inner changes of people” (Mihălțan 1995: 91).

The Church and the School, as institutions that have the mission of ennobling man and of clarifying the notion of freedom, are justified in uniting their efforts to guide young people to accept the moral criteria recommended by the Gospel of Christ.

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