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**THE SOCIAL - MORAL VALUE of the FAMILY in
the PAST AND NOWADAYS**

- Abstract –

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KEYWORDS

Family, social life, moral life, Ancient times, divorce, secularization, family education, education of children, the woman, the virgin.

INTRODUCTION

Mankind cannot be conceived outside the family. Whether we are talking about early humans, or the current civilization, family is important not only as the basic cell of society, but also as the main spring which helps it maintain and perpetuate. Thus, man can fully develop only inside the family.

When God created the first family of Adam and Eve in paradise, He imprinted in their consciousness the appropriation of being participant in multiplying the human race and in reaching likeness with Him. So the family purpose is twofold: a material one of multiplying the human race and the second one of continual advancement towards perfection and union with God through providing the necessary conditions for substantial and spiritual life. The family, formed of man and woman, is the most important creation of God, and its importance is shown by God through His act of creation. Adam and Eve were not created through word as all the other creatures of the earth were, but from His hand actually.

The family is the best environment for the birth, upbringing and education of children, therefore it is the most important link of the society, and it's an institution of respect, dignity, inner freedom, sensitivity and love. Safety, peace, affection, and spiritual possibilities offered by the family are the most suitable atmosphere for the development of each member of the family. The child born inside a family enjoys and benefits from all the love of his parents, and he also defends his parents' morality through beautiful and sincere joy and through the feelings of love and responsibility that he brings about. The existence of children in the family determines moral and responsible parents. The family develops and assimilates discipline, order, sense of dignity and social justice, love, respect and helping others, altruism and Christian love. Inside the family the human being doesn't feel isolated because it assures him the roots from the past, support for now and hope and safety for the future. Children strengthen the love between parents and give hope and confidence in their future.

Family status as described in Holy Scripture, and as it exists today in Christianity is not the same during the whole humanity, almost the entire history so far has seen the family as an institution meant to meet man's interests and desires. The woman was his slave, she was compared with an object that he could get rid of without any reason or regret, and she was the method through which man could meet his needs and ensure his heirs to carry on his name and his fortune. Such a family where the woman is not appreciated and not considered equal to men cannot be considered normal, and consequently a society that is built on such families is loose, it will not last too long in time and will not develop to reach advanced stages.

The family was severely tested by various forms of infidelity and immorality, leading to alteration and deformation of the relations between spouses, and to deviation forms of its beauty and value. We mention only some of these ordeals: pagan practices of polygamy and infidelity, the absolute right of life and death of the man over the woman and her children who were considered equals with the slaves etc.

Even if The Saviour sanctified and instituted marriage as sacrament, nowadays there is a promotion and spread of immorality in various forms and with hidden interests and purposes that many families or individuals fall into.

Chapter I

The importance of family, especially that of the woman, concerning peoples of Antiquity

I.1. Family in Antiquity. During ancient history the institution of marriage has been diverted from its purpose and importance given by God, even leading to the point of customs and practices against human nature transmitted until today. "... Plato organizes marriage among outside goods; it ensures the immortality of our nation ... Democritus rejects marriage for the reason that it brings many inconveniences and distractions and that it gets one away from urgent matters."¹

I.2. Family in Mesopotamia: Babylonians and Assyrians. From sources and information we have (Hammurabi Code from 1792 to 1750 BC, clay tablets found at Nineveh, Assur, Babylon etc. 4th millennium BC, the writings of Berossus)² we find out that at the Assyrian-Babylonian people slavery "was the political and social organization which made the law" and 'the family' fully supported its consequences³, immorality being also presented in religious myths.

From Hammurabi's Code we find out that if a married man had children both with legitimate wife, as well as with the slave, "only the first children had the right to inheritance"⁴, if his wife had no children, and the husband had children from a relationship with a prostitute, he was obliged to provide food and support to these children, who were considered his descendants and who had the right to inheritance. During the life of the legitimate wife, the prostitute was not allowed to live under the same roof with the man.⁵ If the man left his wife or their residence without her knowledge, under the Code of Hammurabi, the wife was no longer obliged to live together with her husband (para. 136).⁶ The Assyrian-Babylonian people thought that "gods repelled men and women, with their bad manners and human weaknesses, from the true morality of the union of the two in the act of marriage. The woman was considered the slave of man; conjugal relationship was therefore achieved by its very natural ontology being established by God from the very creation of man."⁷ From Herodotus' pieces of information we find out that virgins were forced to prostitute in the sacred grove of Ishtar-Bilitei and the gain realized from such practices was brought to the temple.⁸ The woman was considered an object or a certain creature used to give birth to children in

¹ Clement Alexandrinul, *Scrieri, partea a II-a, Stromatele*, II, 138, 2-6, translation D. Fecioru, in P.S.B., 5, publ. I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1982, p. 182.

² PhD Alexandru Stan, PhD. Remus Rus, *Istoria religiilor*, manual for theological seminars, printed with the blessing of Saint Teoctist the Patriarch of Romanian Orthodox Church, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1991, p. 62.

³ Priest A. Negoită, *Ideile umanitare ale creștinismului*, in „S.T.”, III, (1951), no 5-6, p. 336-337.

⁴ PhD Deacon Emilian Cornițescu, *Descoperiri arheologice din Egipt, Asia, Babilonia, Siria, Asia Mică, Fenicia, și Arabia care au legătură cu datele din Vechiul Testament*, in „S.T.”, XXXVI (1984), no 7-8, p. 561.

⁵ *Ibidem*

⁶ Apud R. Geiger, *Die Stellung der geschiedenen Frau in der Umwelt des Newen Testamentes*, in “Die Frau im Urchristentum”, publ. Herder, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, f.a. p. 135.

⁷ Priest Leon Dură, *Familia în lumina Noului Testament*, (Doctorate Thesis), in „S.T.”, 2nd series, year LV, 2003, no 1-2, January-June, p. 94.

⁸ Lecturer Irineu Mihălcescu, *Istoria religiilor lumii*, publ. Cugetarea, f.a. p. 275.

order to ensure heirs for the family. Even if in some cases she had some rights in justice, she remained compliant to her husband who was her master.

I.3. Egyptian family. The situation of women in Egypt was very good compared to other nations, the wife was respected, and giving birth to children was considered a divine blessing, while childlessness was a great misfortune because there was nobody to perform rituals on the dead. Only pharaohs were entitled to several wives, ordinary people instead respected monogamy marriage. According to Herodotus, in Egypt, there's a moral order: "the King respects the gods, average people respect the king, the slaves respect their masters, young people are respectful with elders."⁹ And yet "the woman (the wife) was not free! Although the ancient Egyptians family was built on solid principles for those times, in a world where women were bought and sold as a slave, the love between man and woman, respectively between husband and wife was vitiated and the situation of slave-wife was far from Christian wife state, under the law of Christ's grace."¹⁰

I.4. Family at Celtic peoples. Marriage was simply an agreement based on the freedom of spouses to live together or to divorce, not based on any religious ceremony, marked only by a feast. Divorce could be done by mutual agreement or if one of the spouses had serious reasons to this extent: serious offenses or adultery. "Polygamy was permissible, or more precisely: concubinage was officially recognized. Every man married or not, might have a concubine - or even more. The concubine was not despised or scorned by society; her position in the family, her rights formed the habit of a customary thorough lawmaking."¹¹

"Social and legal position of Celtic women (that one of equality with man) could also take other forms, unusual to other peoples from other countries in that era. So - married or not, women had access to different functions: some of them were prophets, others had a role in educating young people. In northern Britain, especially in the region of the Picti, there was a group of warrior women, a kind of Amazons who initiated young people into the issues of war. Later on, Celtic woman is admitted into the Christian church and into some forms of religious worship. In the first century CE Brigant Celtic tribes from Britain were commanded by a queen, Cartimandua. And the Gauls' laws reserved for the queen one third of the spoils and half of all criminal fines imposed on its subjects".¹²

I.5. Family in Ancient Rome. Throughout the Roman Empire there was no equality between spouses¹³ woman was (at the beginning of the Roman Empire) a matter of satisfying man's pleasures and of perpetuating his family being under the undeniable authority of her husband as "pater familias". Through marriage, the control and ownership of the woman was transmitted to her husband¹⁴, who could separate from her under the mere accusation of "perversitatem morum."¹⁵ By the act of marriage that included man's right for "manus" (ownership of woman and all her things, including children), man had the power of life and death "jus vitae nescisque" on his wife. This

⁹ PhD. Deacon Emilian Vasilescu, *Istoria religiilor*, publ. I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1982, p. 105.

¹⁰ Priest Leon Dură, *Familia în lumina Noului Testament*, ... p. 97.

¹¹ Lecturer Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației*, vol. 2, publ. Științifică și enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1987, p. 32.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 39.

¹³ Paul Evdochimov, *Femeia și mântuirea lumii*, publ. Cristiana, Bucharest, 1995, p. 175.

¹⁴ R. Geiger, *Die Stellung der geschiedenen Frau in der Umwelt des Newen Testamentes*, în "Die Frau im Urchristentum", publ. Herder, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, f.a. 137-138.

¹⁵ Suetonius, after R. Beiger, *op. cit.*, p 143.

right, however, has gone in the course of time therefore 2nd century BC Cicero said that "women used to have their own goods which were at her command."¹⁶ At Roman family, as well as at other ancient peoples, the emphasis was on almost unlimited man's authority over the woman and children, on providing family male descendants and on material wealth necessary for caring after its members. Therefore by marriage the woman was forced to bring her contribution that entered into her husband's property, in case of a divorce the woman took her participation that she came with in her husband's family.

Starting with the first century AD the education of children based on fear and terror was replaced by the one based on affection, kindness and fatherly love, the consequence occurred immediately: children became disobedient, frivolous and spenders. Similar changes also occurred in the life and social status of woman, she became emancipated and she claimed to be a more and more independent person going up to the standard "pater familias" had in the beginning. She also enjoyed the entire confidence of the husband being able to go out alone or paying visits or shopping, in the evening she often accompanied him to meetings or even family feasts.

"There weren't few the women who misunderstood freedom and dignity, and began to use them as pretexts to lead a life of emancipated women in the pejorative sense of the term, turning freedom into libertinage. Many times women dodged the duties of motherhood simply because it would have caused shortcomings not only in small daily works, but mostly they would be forced to live in relation with the household, preventing them to start an easier and more enjoyable life outside of it, defiling it or leaving it altogether without any shadow of a sense of shame."¹⁷

I.6. Family in Ancient Greece. Marriage was an institution founded not on love but on the interest of procreation and on family continuity. In general Greek families had two kids and boys were preferred because they helped their fathers to do housework and they ensured the continuance of ancestors' family worship. There were, however, deviations from this rule as there were acts of incest between brother and sister which were regarded as the most horrible facts and caused terrible punishment of the gods, in return stepbrothers' marriage was accepted, as well as that between cousins or between uncle and niece.¹⁸

The social situation of women was not as good throughout the territories inhabited by Greeks. In the Spartan State women had no political rights but they were treated with dignity and respect by their husbands. They could participate in processions and celebrations dressed very bold and at sports exercises girls appeared in public with boys. Nevertheless in Athens woman's situation was totally different. According to Xenon's testimony women should "see little, hear little and ask as few questions as possible. Women should take care of the house and obey their husbands" while Sophocles states through his character Ajax that "Women's worthwhile ornament is to remain silent" and that "a man's life is more valuable than a thousand women's lives."¹⁹

What Hesiod says about the woman's origin is: "Concerning humans, Zeus sent them a woman, this «beautiful disaster» (Th. 585) as Pandora, «the gift of all gods» (Works, 81 ff.). The

¹⁶ Cicero, *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, II, 1, 41, 106, after Nicolae Lascu, *Cum trăiau romanii*, publ. Științifică, Bucharest, 1965, p. 268.

¹⁷ Nicolae Lascu, *Cum trăiau romanii*, publ. Științifică, Bucharest, 1965, p.275.

¹⁸ Ovidiu Drimba, *Istoria culturii și civilizației*, vol. 1, publ. Științifică și enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1984, p.590

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 591.

woman was considered «deep and hopeless trap doomed to people», ... «since from her it has proceeded the rung, cursed tribe of women, terrible damnation installed among mortals» (Th. 592 ff.)".²⁰

Demosthenes captures the fate of women of those times in these words: "We have: courtesans for the soul voluptuousness; public women for senses' sufficiency and legitimate women to give us children and to guard the house."²¹

Children's education was totally different in the two states of ancient Greece: Athens and Sparta. "In the Spartan State the child belonged to the family only until the age of seven, after which, a Spartan was at state's disposal - until the age of 60! Spartan education consisted of hard physical exercises and military training, with the intention of creating the child or the young the perfect spirit of discipline, of blind obedience, as well as the ability to withstand the most absurd physical privations and miseries: they were walking barefoot and with their head shaved, they were training completely naked, they were eating miserable and insufficient, sleeping on a cane mattress and were often being whipped just to learn to bear the pain. Otherwise they benefited of an absolutely minimum intellectual training (which was not for all children); they could also do reading-writing and possibly a few basics of arithmetic and military music. Permanent barrack-room life led to open and usual practice of pederasty.

The girls also received a military training: running, marches, fighting, discus and javelin throwing.²² "In the Athenian state the accent was put on physical education but also on the intellectual one. Children received their first educational lessons in the family until the age of seven. The mother was helped by the slaves of the house to care about the children. By the age of 18 the father's duty was to be in charge of the children. In Athens, but not in other Greek cities, the state had the civic obligation to provide children education, who started school at 7 years old. Those who had material resources could continue their education in the schools of the sophists and rhetors, which were true superior education institutions that prepared their students in the art of eloquence, policy or courts' activities. All forms of official education were available only for boys, girls' were taught in family and they were limited to housework. Ancient Greeks considered the woman obedient to the man who bought her and who became her master because the family's existence in general and woman's existence in particular, remained tributary to the current politico-religious system, respectively slavery and polytheism.

I.7. Family in Islam. Muhammad did not bring many innovations in the structure and mentality of his inferiors regarding the family, in comparison to the Arab tribes of his time. He maintained polygamy and strengthened the abusive power of man to his wife and children, that's why the Islamic polygamy weakened the family morality leading to degeneration of mental and intellectual Muslim woman.²³ Nevertheless He put some barriers designed to stop some abuses allowing Muslims to have no more than four women in contrast to the unlimited number of women that a man could have had before. "If you are afraid you will be unjust to the orphans then marry

²⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credințelor și ideilor religioase*, vol. I, 2nd edition, translation and afterword by Cezar Baltag, publ. Științifică, Bucharest, 1991, p. 254.

²¹ Priest Gh. Perva, *Taina iubirii*, publ. Cristiana, Bucharest, 1987, p. 319.

²² Ovidiu Drimba, *op. cit.* vol. 1, p. 586-587.

²³ J.-L. De Lanessan, *La morale des religions*, Paris, 1905, p. 502 and 540.

two, three or four wives, whether you're happy, and if you fear that you won't be right, then take only one or the ruler of your slaves. That's the way you will not make a mistake."(IV, 3)²⁴

The Koran stipulates that a Muslim can marry besides free women, also concubines from his slaves as many as he can sustain honorably with its financial possibilities, he who cannot afford from economical point of view to marry a free woman may to take as a wife a slave or a prisoner of war (IV, 29). No matter how much some might try to defend polygamy its physical and spiritual shortcomings - suffered by Muslim women because of this sad legacy and practice whose origin is lost in the mists of time - cannot be overlooked. Polygamy brought Muslim woman only contempt, humiliation and suffering, and it has darkened man's conception over mankind and it has been society's obstacle to progress. Therefore, one can properly say that polygamous civilizations have not reached monogamous civilizations' level and they have never proved the same vitality.²⁵

The harmful influence that Islam religion has exerted on the situation of women in Islamic society is due to the fact that the female is considered an impure human being. Especially engaged and old women in Islam are regarded as dangerous and misfortunate by their evil eyes. This idea is one of the reasons why Muslim women live most of the time confined in their house, and when they come out they cover their face with a veil."²⁶

Muslim Marriage does not cause any real communion between the spouses, the woman retains the right to dispose of her property as she wants. There are also other provisions which grant partners the right to inherit each other. According to this right a woman was regarded as a property that was inherited, and under the influence of levirate law of Moses religion, after the death of her husband the wife was taken over together with her belongings by the legitimate offspring of her deceased husband. In these situations, because of the abuses that took place, Quran stipulated to be requested the consent of the widow woman: "Oh, you who believe, you are not forgiven to inherit women against their will nor to stop them marry others in order to take a part of what you have given to them (as dowry) (IV, 23).

Woman's consent was required because it was customary for widows to be confined in their house until they died and then to inherit their fortune, or were subjected to harsh treatment and determined to ask for their repudiation in exchange of money. If the Koran stipulates that women may be tied up and beaten in storehouses (IV, 38) we can realize the deplorable situation of women in the Muslim family.

Chapter II

The Family in the light of Holy Bible

II.1. Family in Paradise. From the fact that God created man and woman we can detach two learnings:

- God created man as to be sociable, giving him socializing and communion as destination, otherwise man's single existence was nonsense, because in this state he would not be able to fulfill his purpose;

²⁴ *Coranul*, translation from Arabic Dr. Silvestru Octavian Isopescu, publ. Cartier, 1997, p. 90.

²⁵ Emile Calot, *Civilisation et civilisations, Recherches d'une philosophie de la culture*, Paris, 1954, p. 76-77.

²⁶ Priest Magistrand Dumitru Soare, *Situația femeii în islamism și creștinism*, in „Studii Teologice”, 2nd series, year IX (1957), no 3-4, March-April, p. 247.

- God decided to give him help and find someone worthy of him, namely a woman, whom He created right out of his body, and so He instituted monogamy. The genesis of Eve, the first woman, from Adam's rib in the divine vision, illustrates that two human beings who have the same origin, form undoubtedly a whole till merging. The status of the first family in heaven was a state of innocence and lack of evil, happiness enriched by the Holy Spirit, enlightened by the holiness and closeness to God.

God strengthens and confirms the link between man and woman, commanding them: "Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!" (Genesis I, 28). "Thus, God created man "in His image", adorning him with reason, will and feeling He established the great sacrament of marriage and laid the foundation for the first family, future family model and the cradle of the human race."²⁷

The first family consisting of Adam and Eve in paradise was a spiritual family, a sacred family, its members had no family connection, they were working and communicating as a whole, "they synchronized, they were complementary to each other and were directly related with their Creator.

II.2. Family in the Old Testament. After the fall not only people's spiritual life has changed, but also social life which was taking place in fields outside of heaven, and the road to the previous state was guarded by "cherubim with a flame of a whirling sword" (Gen. III, 24). Woman's condition worsened from several points of view: social (you will be attracted by your husband and he will dominate you), moral (you always multiply your troubles) and physical (with pain you will give birth to children). The whole family will suffer, including Adam: "...cursed is the ground thanks to you! In painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, but you will eat the grain of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat food until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return" (Genesis III, 17-19). All this state of suffering was covered with physical and spiritual death because the charge for the sin of disobedience to God is death.²⁸

Marriage at Hebrew people had no religious or sacred character, - as it would have later on in Christianity where love would become "the fullness and the integrity of Christian life"²⁹, - it was held in a solemn joyful parents' respectful setting, and it was not done without the blessing of the parents for the grooms.

Family characteristics were indissolubility and monogamy, whereas immorality and polygamy in the Old Testament were resembled with deviation from serving God and idolatry, punishment was coming over such families for breaking the sacred bond of marriage (Hosea, I, 2-6). The family was characterized by cleanliness and sanctity and it had educational, religious and worshipping duty.

The status of women at Hebrew people had degraded to such an extent that she was considered "...in the state of bondage to the man who bought her, similar to heathen people, or

²⁷ PhD Associate Priest Leon Arion, *Familia în Sfânta Scriptură*, in B.O.R., year CXIII, (1995), No 1-6, January-June, p. 223.

²⁸ *Epistola către Diognet*, chapter XII, 2, translation by D. Fecioru, in P.S.B. 1, publ. I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 1979, p. 345.

²⁹ PhD Nicolae Chițescu, *Atitudinea principalelor religii ale lumii față de problemele vieții pământești*, in „Ortodoxia”, year IV, (1952), no 2, p. 256.

semi-slave as to Hebrews where her future husband could take her in exchange of many gifts given to the young woman's parents and relatives (Genesis XXIV, 1-61), XXIX, 1-30). In both cases ... the marriage was no longer a free consent between newlyweds, the bought women called their husbands: "my lord and master" (Gen. XVIII, 21, I Peter III, 6)."³⁰

Hebrew people practiced divorce that was actually abandoning wife arbitrarily for the simple reason that she "had not gained kindness in his eyes" (her husband's eyes), or simply because "he had found something unpleasant about her". She "was given a certificate of divorce" and was "released from his house" (Deut. XXIV, 1), her only right was to be able to remarry another man, on the basis of this certificate of separation. There are known many cases when Hebrew people practiced polygamy, though "in comparison to the other peoples of antiquity, at the Hebrew people the social status of women, although it was not equal to men, was far superior in this regard. She was called the mistress «Baala (h)» as well as her husband was called «Baal», because the slaves were under her authority. She rejoiced, as well as her husband the same honor from children (Exodus XX, 12), was praised for her qualities (Parables XII, 41; XIV, 1) and was entitled to the fortune inherited from her parents. If she was dishonored, the law punished by lapidation the one who committed this act (Deut. XXII, 25), or by payment 50 shekels of silver to her father, and the perpetrator was forced to marry her and never divorce her (Deut. XXII, 19)."³¹

II.3. Family in light of the New Testament. By passions and His sacrifice, Christ the Saviour, the "second Adam" has restored the image of God in man and "has regenerated temper to newness of life"³² and through renewal of life, the Savior has also given the family established by God in paradise a new meaning. The Savior sanctified the family and raised it to the level of Saint Sacrament through participation in the wedding at Cana (John II, 1-11) where, according to Blessed Augustine's word "Christ at Cana reinforced what it had been set in heaven"³³ because "neither the initial sin, nor the flood could ruin the sanctity of marriage."³⁴ On this occasion, family and marriage relationship between man and woman are raised from the order of nature to the order of grace. In this sense marriage is understood and practiced as a free and sacred union of a man with a woman, over which, in the Church, Christ's grace flows to fulfilling their God-given purpose since the creation.

The unit of the two marriage partners is based on "the fact that God created man as male and female and therefore he who unites with a woman completes her totally that they make up a unit. The male became whole man through this woman and vice versa, anyone becomes a complete person in union with each other,"³⁵ this union is not formal or "convenient" but a spiritual union "symbiotic"³⁶ because they are no longer two, but one flesh in Christ.

In the New Testament, the union of man and woman is wisely defined by the words of St. Apostle Paul: "This sacrament is great: and I say in Christ and in church" (Ephesians V, 3) because

³⁰ PhD Ioan Mircea, *Dicționar al Noului Testament*, publ. I.B.M., Bucharest, 1955, p. 86.

³¹ Priest PhD Dumitru Abrudan, Deacon PhD Emilian Cornițescu, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

³² Saint John Chrysostome, *Homelies sur l'épître aux Ephésiens. Homelie XX, 3*, in *Oeuvres complètes de Saint Jean Chrysostome*, translation by l'Abbe J.Bareille, tom., XVIII, Paris, 1872, p. 385.

³³ Paul Evdochimov, *Sacrament de l'amour*, Paris, 1962, p. 175.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 175.

³⁵ Priest Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. III, book published with the blessing of The Right Reverend Teoctist, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, E.I.B.M.B.O.R., Bucharest, 2003, p. 191-192

³⁶ PhD Associate Priest Leon Arion, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

this union between man and woman has as argument and model the love between Christ and His Church (Ephesians V, 25). Christian marriage differs from all other marriages through its monogamous nature and through sanctifying it and both spouses because each body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. The foundation of Matrimony Sacrament stands on the faith in Christ, equality, trust and love between the couple.

It can be easily seen from the above mentioned ideas that if at the pagan peoples marriage or union between spouses was based on material possibilities and had as aim childbirth and perpetuation of the human race, in Christianity, Jesus Christ the Savior laid the foundation of marriage on love, giving it as final purpose besides the birth of babies, also the salvation of its members. He restores religious and spiritual nature of marriage, by the grace of the Holy Spirit purifies, sanctifies and ennobles conjugal love giving new meaning to family life. Marriage is the right environment to acquire salvation, even if the two will have to fight against many difficulties and temptations, all these struggles will turn into virtues with which they will move towards union with God, towards their deification. The purpose of marriage is having children, staying away from promiscuity and finally gaining salvation. For those who cannot keep their virginity, marriage is the "deadly cure for immorality."³⁷

Unlike pagan societies where the man was the family despot³⁸, he could arbitrarily lead the life of the family and also the material goods as an absolute master, in the Christian family, the Savior has brought equality between spouses in front of God, the sole owner of the family, and the union of spouse is on their free and conscious consent as partners with equal rights and duties. Woman was not entitled to the sacred rituals as her husband in pagan societies; in the New Testament she is requested to salvation and to the same life of grace through the sacrament of marriage, as her husband, with the same rights and duties to each other and to their children.

Christianity revolutionized world thinking and attitude towards women, "so look at the woman, as well as at the man in a double perspective: the earthly life and heavenly life. This explains the fact that Christianity has, among women, the most devoted followers, while in Islam women are, in all respects, a second plan."³⁹

In the New Testament and in early Christian period, the family institution received new coordinates and perspectives that the Church has grown, has cherished and passed down to generations of Christians together with anathematization punishment for those who dare to denigrate marriage.⁴⁰ Church considered abortion as murder and the Church punished it accordingly⁴¹, adultery was considered a moral death⁴² and similar to physical death a reason for divorce.⁴³

³⁷ Saint John Chrysostome, *Cateheze maritale: omilii la căsătorie*, translation from Old Greek by Priest Marcel Hanceș, publ. Oastea Domnului, Sibiu, 2006, p. 9

³⁸ according to Fustel de Coulange, *La cite antique*, Paris, 1927, pp. 90-100.

³⁹ Priest Magistrand Dumitru Soare, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

⁴⁰ Canons 1 and 14 of the 3rd local Convocation, Cangra, apud N. Milaș, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe*, translation in Romanian by Nicolae Popovici and Uroă Kovincici, 2nd volume, 1st part, Arad, 1934, pp. 40, 47.

⁴¹ Canon 91 of the 4th Ecumenical Council, apud *ibidem*, 1st volume, 2nd part, Arad, 1931, p. 472.

⁴² Apostolical Canon 48, apud *ibidem*, 1st volume, 1st part, Arad, 1930, pp. 261-262.

⁴³ Canon 9 of Saint Basil the Great at *ibidem*, 2nd volume, 2nd part, Arad 1936, pp. 60-65.

The spirit of justice and Christian love has penetrated the consciousness of many people causing great changes and attitudes towards family and the woman. Thus Roman law has known profound changes on the family: marriage between persons of different social classes was acknowledged, cohabitation was officially abolished, women's right to inheritance was secured, and tutorship over women was abolished.⁴⁴ With Christianity, the only time when the woman had gained the dignity of a free and appreciated person, the world saw the beginning of a new era.⁴⁵

Divorce. The Savior's commandment on the separation is clear: "What God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mark X, 9). The Pharisees asked the Savior: "Why, did Moses command to give her certificate of divorce and leave her?" (Matthew XIX, 7) the Savior replied that "for the hardness of your heart" God has made this concession and exemption "but from the beginning it was not so" (Matthew XIX, 8). About the sin of fornication, as the only reason for separation the Savior warns that: "And I say to you, that whosoever shall put away his wife, except for the cause of fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery; and he who marries the divorced woman commits adultery" (Matthew XIX, 9)," and if the woman leaves her husband and marries another one, commits adultery" (Mark, X, 12).

The Woman in New Testament. Wisdom and divine justice has appointed woman to a great honor and appreciation, in Christianity, which she had no longer enjoyed until then, through the worthiness of the Virgin Mary as Mother of God-Man Jesus Christ. Son and Word of God, born of the Virgin Mary wiped forever the feeling of contempt and infamy that old world had towards women and raised her to the highest level of moral dignity. In the family institution, the woman enjoys a greater honor and dignity, love and respect from the man who "will leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh" (Matthew XIX, 5). Christian Marriage is not simply a contract or promise as it is to other faiths or religions but a sacrament, a sacred covenant which is concluded with the blessing of the Church and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ Savior completely changed the attitude towards women; He brought a new, high, renewed, luminous, irreversible concept towards women.

II.4. Christian Family in Holy Fathers' thinking. The Holy Fathers' dogmas on the Christian family are in perfect harmony with that of the Savior which is based on love, freedom and equality between spouses. Regarding the text from (Galatians III, 28) about the subjection of woman to man, the question here is not about two mutually exclusive realities, but about some complete complementary realities to each other. Hereby spouses are equal from ontological and soteriological point of view, without subordination between the two of them with the only amendment that man is the first among equals. This preemption is not discriminatory, arbitrary, but a practical one for organization, and responsibility as well as one of sacrificial love after Christ's model.

In Christianity subjection of woman to man is not an absolute subjugation to a tyrant, as we have seen happening in other religions, but an obedience out of love, not a humiliating subjection,

⁴⁴ Iorgu Ivan, *Biserica și instituția căsătoriei*, in „Studii Teologice”, year VIII (1940), volume II, p. 127; Idem, *Biserica creștină sprijină și binecuvintează orice acțiune menită să întărească familia*, in „Studii Teologice”, 2nd series, year V(1953), no 7-8, July-August, pp 513-525.

⁴⁵ A. Baudrillart, *Moeurs paiennes, mœurs chrétiennes, Première serie: La famille dans l'antiquité païenne et aux premiers siècles du christianisme*, Paris, 1929, p. 79.

⁴⁶ Iorgu Ivan, *Biserica și instituția căsătoriei*, in „S.T.”, year VIII (1940), p. 127.

but one that honors both spouses. According to the comparison made by St. Paul, husband and wife form a complete being, man is the head and woman is the body of this being. While, either a disembodied head has no value, or a headless body has any, that's why a couple cannot achieve its purpose on this earth rather than together in a loving and harmonious cooperation. Women are only required a reverent obedience "similar to the one for the Lord" the fear she is being recommended towards man (Eph. V, 33) is not a common fear that she knows in the most unhappy way, but is the fruit of mutual love between spouses, as the fear of God is nothing but a result of our love for Him. There can be no special privileges between men and women for one or the other because "no man can be born without the woman, neither the woman without the man. But as woman came from man, so man is through the woman. All, however, are from God (I Corinthians XI, 11-12).

Marriage established by God at creation is the foundation of society. This love's model is God's love for mankind who sent His Son out of love to sacrifice Him and to save humankind. From this association also results the duty of spouses to be part of the Church for the good living in their marriage.⁴⁷ Saint Apostle Paul speaks clearly about marriage as sacrament and about family as the "domestic church", comparing relations between spouses, with the relationship between Christ and the Church. Christ is the icon of man, the Church is the icon of woman. Christ leaves the sky out of love for the Church, so does the man leave everything to receive his wife in his heart to love her more than himself.

For Saint Apostle Paul marriage is a divine institution, for "as woman came from man, so did man come through woman and all things are of God" (I Corinthians XI, 12). Love is the principle that Apostles sit at the base of the union of the spouses and it is the same to the union between Christ and the Church.

Regarding the morality of marriage besides love and mutual respect Saint Apostles emphasize the need for marital honesty promised before the Holy Altar under full ownership to one another, for through marriage "She did not have authority over her own body, but the husband; the husband didn't have authority over his own body, but the woman (I Corinthians VII, 4), Saint Apostle Paul exhorts Christians to refrain from any form of fornication sin and stop all ties with fornicators (I Corinthians V 1-5, 9.11).

The birth of children is a duty of the family and co-operation work done by man and God, man participates in God's creative work. Rejecting this responsibility of procreation, man rejects God resemblance, he also rejects his Creator and thereby alters his own humanity. Another duty of parents is to early educate their children "in the discipline and wisdom of God (Ephesians VI, 4).

II.6. Family in the Middle Ages. Even if doctrines and Christian principles of equality and love were known in the Middle Ages, the father still "had full authority (mundium) on the family: a regulation of Charles the Bald in 864 entitled him to reduce his son to slavery or to force him to become a monk. If on one hand mundium ceased when the son was able to bear arms, on the other hand the woman remained under the authority of her father or husband for a lifetime because she was deemed unfit for warlike action. Family heritage was not at the father's discretion, he could not dispose of the family property without the consent of the children (as established a regulation of

⁴⁷ Priest Popescu Mălăiești, *Explicarea Epistolei către Efeseni*, in *B.O.R.* 2nd series, year 43, no 9 (539), september 1925, p. 529.

818). The rules of succession tended to favor the children who remained to work with their father despite the children who had formed a separate household."⁴⁸

In this historical period, the development of industry and agriculture also influenced family life both in cities and in the countryside.

The social situation of the peasants' family was dependent on working the lands, the land lord leased land area to families with the right to inherit it but not to sell or divide it so family: husband, wife, children and their families were forced to stand united and work the land leased. The works were carried out by the whole family: men, women, children and slaves alike.

While aristocratic women were involved in the general administration of their property when their husbands were gone, women of modest social status were very active in the social life being determined to do so as a consequence of the obligation to earn a living. Usually girls as well as boys were guided from an early age to work in various trades as apprentices. Most poor women lived exclusively from their salary, being paid less than men even if the labor was equal. A certain solution of subsistence for women could offer marriage but not all were going to be given something like this because the number of women was 20-25% higher than men. And even if they got married, they were forced by poverty to continue working in their trades or together with their husbands in various jobs, doing heavy, dirty work, inconsistent with their character. There were frequent cases when women worked in several places or trades. Women practiced almost all handicrafts (butchers, shoemakers, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, painters, grocers, merchants etc.) but especially in occupations related to weaving and food. At the countryside wife worked beside her husband with her children at all labors.

Chapter III

Family situation in our country

III.2. Romanian Christian family tradition. Northern Danube land residents were rough men, simple and sincere, speaking a lot and bluntly, they were using tough words when they were angry and gentle words when they were peaceful and their souls were reconciled. Life at lordly courts resembled the homes of peasants, "a peasant life". The teacher I. Voiculescu did in 1898 a detailed study of Romanian countryside society from the nineteenth century from where we learn how ordinary people lived and worked in Romanian villages and which the social condition of the Romanian peasant's wife from this period of history was. Romanian peasant's daughter, says illustrious teacher, at the age of 14 begins to think about marriage, and at 16 – 18 years old she marries. The engagement is "a simple bargain" made between the bride and the groom's parents together with other relatives, the discussions are usually held by men, women talk less because "the woman is supposed to mind her threads", the groom is also present but as a spectator and the bride is not allowed to participate in bargaining⁴⁹, her humble condition does not give the right to express her desire or opinion she is unconditionally subjected to her parents and after which she will support greater humility often unwittingly from the new family she enters.

⁴⁸ Georges Duby, *Doamnele din veacul al XII-lea*, publ. Meridiane, Bucharest, 2000, p. 583.

⁴⁹ I. Voiculescu, *Rolul femeii în familia plugarului roman, studiu de moravuri cu propunere de îndreptare asupra stării săteanului*, publ. Autorului, Typography Alexandru Georgescu, Buzău, 1898, pp. 9-10.

The wealth brought by the girl in her husband's house and her virginity were very appreciated, the same importance had the bargaining before the wedding with the goal to obtain a bigger fortune from the bride's parents while the feelings that should exist among the youngsters were passed into the background or not even taken into consideration. These things happened in the lower social strata as well as at the peak of the society where marriage meant not a union between a man and a woman who loved each other but especially a transfer of power and property between two families, dominated by economic and social reasons to the detriment of feelings.

The young wife, shy, alone in a new house expects love and comfort from her husband but she gets "the most disrespectful cursing" and from the mother in law, she gets malice and contempt. Despite all the hardships, she rarely has the courage to leave her husband and return to her parents' house because anyhow she becomes the subject of gossip and shame to the village if she dares to make this gesture, so often she suffers and endures with resignation searching in her life full of trouble a motivation to keep her husband and her children together kids who are growing in a few years and will not live with their in-laws. Being forced to build a home, the one that works the most is still the wife she cares for children, kitchen, and all her household, she sticks with earth and whitewashes the entire new house because her husband is gone after other things that women can't do, or shouldn't do because they are "women". Man, for he is a "man", decides what's best for him.

In the long winter nights the woman works, sews, mends, spins wool and hemp, and does the laundry while, during the day she keeps the house clean and warm. The man wakes up later "leisurely" he puts on his shoes slowly because "he has few work to do outside (namely he doesn't want to find)" and the woman "in a minute" brings fresh water for washing to her "respectable" husband.⁵⁰

Daily activity of the spouse in winter days is to feed two oxen, two horses and 10-15 sheep because the birds are fed by the woman. The husband treats animals with swears, cudgels and knocks over ribs "liberally" things that woman is often aware of. Although she tries to take care of home, family, children and also to be together with her husband in the field, she can't do them all just as well as they should be done because there is no time.

Woman's hard work without outstanding results shows the insecure social status of woman living with Romanian peasant, a state that cannot be fully attributed to her but rather to society. And how could Romanian ploughman's woman always stand up to her mission and fulfill all her obligations to the highest degree if she is not herself properly educated and schooled. The few intellectual education that she received when possible was from her mother or from church because schools cannot be spoken about during this period.

In the eighteenth century "the age of a visible and audible life of women" is loomed through their participation in balls organized by foreign officers, Germans or Russians and also in the Romanian balls. Women, even the simplest and most modest ones begin to put aside modesty and humility and show their beauty and qualities. Once women became more visible in social life, some decreases of her character occur and N. Iorga doesn't condone "The Ursuline School in Sibiu, began to receive in the 1800 Wallachian boyars' girls in "kerchief" and "headscarves" dresses adorned with "cashmere" shawls ... Marița (as an old Romanian name) was fast turned into Mimi, but they

⁵⁰ I. Voiculescu, op. cit. pp. 28-29.

will continue to make faces, betray and lie, dirty and ruin clothes, hit with their feet and elbows, mock, scream as the gypsies and even walk trundling".⁵¹

The struggle for women's emancipation. Romanian society had to observe and accept the actions of women's emancipation, due to the pressure of Church teachings, influenced by socio-economic and cultural development of the country and by the spread of Enlightenment ideas of the French Revolution from 1789.

If previous centuries were characterized by absolute silence of the woman regarding her rights, with the Romanian Revolution of 1848 the voice of women is heard through public claims for increased wages, reduction of working hours, the right to organize women's associations, women's right to education in schools etc.

Revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century have provided the context and the moment for women's affirmation and strengthened her status in the family and in the Romanian society. Therefore Romanian Revolution leaders requested the interim ruler through the minister of public instruction in the name of "... the new institutes that call on all citizens to the same rights, to truth and light ..." and knowing "... that until we have good women citizens and even better wives, we will not have future better generations" to approve "equal and parallel training for both sexes"⁵² starting from the beginning of that school year. It can be said that through the Organic Regulation of 1832 the foundations for girls' education are laid in the Romanian Principalities.

C.A. Rosetti, Gh. Bariț, Ioan Heliade Radulescu, N. Bălcescu, Dimitrie Bolintineanu and all men of culture of the nation have supported and fought in this period for women's freedom and rights, realizing that having educated mothers we will have worthy children that will honor the nation. Constanta Dunca-Schiau, Elena Negruzzi etc are known to fight for woman's emancipation. Women were alongside of their husbands in actions to defend their rights not only in cities but also in villages; however in the 1907 Rebellion women like Dina Mirea Piperea and Maria Tănăsioiu were in the front rows.⁵³ After the defeat of the revolt provincial schoolmistress' protests Atena Grigoriu⁵⁴ or the protests of the prestigious writers Elena Farago, Riria Xenopol⁵⁵ have been heard across the country.

III.3. Christian family – the nowadays ideal environment for perfection Viewed from a Christian perspective "the family is a school of virtues, an altar of self-sacrifice for a community-ascension life based on love and mutual giving of spouses to each other and to their children that God blessed and adorned them with".⁵⁶

Based on "mutual love appeared from honesty"⁵⁷ the Christian family answers to that ideal and existential longing to have a "home"⁵⁸, a privileged and blessed place to find refuge and

⁵¹ N. Iorga, *Femeia în viața neamului nostrum*, publ. Tipografia „Neamul Românesc”, Vălenii-de-Munte, 1911, p. 118

⁵² V. Alexandrescu-Urechia, *Istoria școalelor de la 1800-1864*, Bucharest, 1892, pp. 339-340.

⁵³ Maria Groza, *La femme dans la Roumanie contemporaine*, Bucharest, publ. Meridiane, 1970, p. 8.

⁵⁴ *Marea răscoală a țăranilor din 1907*, publ. Academiei R.S.R., Bucharest, 1967, p. 450.

⁵⁵ *Studii de literatură română*, publ. Didactică și pedagogică, Bucharest, 1965, p. 647.

⁵⁶ Priest Ioan C. Teșu, *Familia contemporană – între ideal și criză*, in „S.T.” 3rd Series, year VII (2011), no 1, p. 84.

⁵⁷ Priest Nicolae Chifăr, *Taina Nunții după învățătura Sfinților Părinți*, in „Familia creștină azi”, publ. Trinitas, Iași, 1995, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Priest Nicolae Achimescu, *Familia creștină între tradiție și modernitate. Considerații teologico-sociologice*, in „Familia creștină azi”, publ. Trinitas, Iași, 1995, p. 114.

strength every time; a place where one can communicate and share feelings with the loved ones in order to move forward together on the thorny road of life.

In the Christian family "husband and wife are together counselors and workers in acquiring personal salvation, the salvation of their soul mate, of their house or home that God has blessed life with."⁵⁹ In the conception of St. John Chrysostom woman's subjection to man is not understood as a "blind obedience", not even as an "obedience to nature" but as a "submission to God".⁶⁰ Love is the virtue and the glue that unites the two (husband and wife) and makes obedience easy and pleasant and also makes authority gentle and easy to accept. When a wife feels that she is loved and appreciated "she also becomes loving" nevertheless when the husband sees his wife's obedience and love he becomes "mild and gentle"⁶¹ too.

The Christian family must be a school of love and self-sacrifice, an ideal environment for acquiring salvation for the spouses. Since in this world nothing is acquired easily but with harsh labor and intense efforts, spouses should strive to fulfill family duties. Each thing and good deed in this world bears invisibly a cross above⁶², a waivers' cross that man must do to acquire life in Christ. Every family has its cross to bear which may take various forms: sickness, weakness, lack of children, fights etc.

Mother is essentially the teacher of the child, she is the first person a child sees and knows; the child receives not only food but also advice and education from her. She is the apostle of God in her family, for which she has the duty to maintain the child in a state of bodily and spiritual purity and to make him increase the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The mother is the feminine, loved and appreciated human being, who gives birth to a baby. The Christian ideal mother is Mother of God, Virgin Mary who gave birth to our Savior Jesus Christ. Motherhood also implies being a wife. Therefore the wife who doesn't love her man can't be a good mother. Pure love that derives from the soul overflows and effuses over others, similar to good thoughts. Elizabeth, mother of John the Baptist, Anna, mother of Mary and others are examples of loving and devoted mothers.

The Saviour has given special attention to the woman as wife and mother not only as a servant of her own household but also as an obedient to His word, then as an apostle of His teaching. She was appreciated for her effort and sacrifice to be "helpful and sharer to the legitimate marriage " and for her toil that her womb fruit reaches "the image and likeness of God."⁶³ The Saviour has totally changed the attitude towards women in his teaching, now she has another status than that provided in the old law when only men were allowed to be teachers and preachers of the Law, the Christian woman is now called for social diaconate, for serving sufferers and widows, for listening and preaching of the Gospel etc.

⁵⁹ Priest Ioan C. Teșu, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

⁶⁰ St. John Chrysostom, *Comentarii sau Explicarea Epistolei către Coloseni. Omilia X*, apud PhD Liviu Petcu, (anthology and introductory study) *Lumina Sfințelor Scripturi (Antologie tematică din opera Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur)*, 1st volume (A-I), publ. Trinitas, 2007, p. 288.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*.

⁶² Priest Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, volume I, ... , p. 358.

⁶³ Priest Lecturer Nicolae Necula, *Doctrina și viața religioasă a Bisericii copte reflectată în textele ei liturgice (rugăciuni și imne) (Teză de doctorat)*, in „Ortodoxia”, year XXVIII (1976), no 3-4, p. 564.

III.5. The Church - example and family icon. Marriage and family are "great sacraments" in our Church teaching and tradition for it has as model the relationship between Christ and Church. Christ the Saviour is "the head of the Church" and her bridegroom while the Church is the "body of Christ" and His all immaculate bride. The same goes with the family, the husband is the head of his wife and her groom, while she is the body and the bride of her husband. And as Christ loved the Church and sacrificed for it, so husband should love his wife to the ultimate sacrifice. And as the Church submits to Christ, so the wife should obey her husband, and be devoted to him, not out of fear or obligation but out of freedom and love. Through the parable of love escalated to the sacrifice on the cross for the world and His Church, the Saviour gave us the perfect example of love which should also exist in the family. Father Stăniloae called this kind of love "complete self-oblivion" and it can even reach sacrifice of one for the other.

Chapter IV

Nowadays Christian family

The family is sacred because it was created by God, "the character of sacredness is highlighted by the fact that the human family has Holy Trinity as model, which has the characteristics of perfect love, communion, unity and equality of Its Persons."⁶⁴ Hence, the family is where society is born and developed as the child who sees the daylight is the future of the society, the one that will contribute to its good. The family comes to help society when children are cared for and educated in the spirit of Christian morality. It is the one that creates the spiritual fulfillment and acquisition of affection. Therefore the welfare of the society, its positive development largely depends on how families are. The spring from which each family must drink is God and His love. Marriage is a sacrament of communion and love. Those who join through this Sacrament should be in full loving communion, should have previously broken down the walls of distance, of selfishness and deceit; this is the best place and way for man to fulfill his mission.

Conjugal union is blessed because from the time of doing the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony, God demonstrates His love for His creatures by blessing their union, making them partakers of many heavenly blessings. Even the union between man and woman is a "new creation" based on love, fidelity and harmony. The fact that man is able to love it radically separates him from all other finite beings, apart from the angelic hosts.

IV.2. Christian family crisis due to secularization and globalization. Until May, 1968⁶⁵, Europe was under the domination of a moral, so-called traditional, which by promoting family life to the detriment of the individual, created a strong aura of love around family. After May '68, this traditional approach has faced with numerous doubts. The desire for personal affirmation rebelled against morality and family. It takes place a real "revolution of morals" from which libertine

⁶⁴ Priest Lecturer Mihai Vizitiu, *Familia în învățătura Mântuitorului și a Sfinților Apostoli*, in *Teologie și viață – revistă de gândire și spiritualitate*, Metropolitan Church of Moldova, no 5-7/1994, p. 25

⁶⁵ The name "May 1968" means a group of riot movements emerged in France in May-June 1968. These events constitute a marking period in contemporary's French and European history, which may be characterized as a spontaneous cultural, social and political uprising against traditional society of capitalism and imperialism. Triggered by an uprising of young Parisians students, then extended among the working class and basically including all population categories from the entire country, it remains the most important social movement in France history of the twentieth century.

behaviors are born. From here many disastrous consequences for the Christian family have derived like: acceptance of libertinism, of all kinds of contraceptives, condoms, homosexuality, pedophilia, etc.

Due to certain immoral influences Christian family is facing today many situations that do nothing but to destabilize and subdue it to purely human interests. The marriage has been devalued, most often because of some interests material ones or those characterized by selfishness. To place a premium on professional affirmation keeps people away from family problems and therefore they cannot meet their absolutely necessary family obligations. Nowadays families are faced with delaying child birth because of a desire to gain professional affirmation and "favorable" social positions.

Present crisis of christian family is manifested through malthusianism, neomalthusianism, secularization, globalization, trial marriages, abortion, divorce, abandonment of children, homosexuality, pornography, surrogate mothers (carrying) etc.

Chapter V

Factors determining the disintegration of families nowadays

We are powerlessly witnessing today a process of disintegration and dissolution of the traditional family worldwide. People's conceptions and traditions have been changed and replaced with all sorts of practices with the purpose of distracting them from their traditional values to the immoral ones, that lead humanity towards a moral and financial crisis determining population reduction.

Medicine, science, education, law, economics which used to be frames and means for protection and development of the human being have become instruments of corruption and manipulation of population according to somebody's interests. Very often in contemporary society, medicine is no longer serving life but death through abortion, euthanasia or through killing people for organs' traffic. Science no longer serves man and God, but anarchy by violation of the creation laws with the help of genetic engineering in order to mutilate human beings by creating monstrous hybrids. Scientific findings are no longer being used for good purpose and for serving man as a fulfilled person, according to the divine command. On the contrary they are used against him, to destroy him.

Among the sins which cause marriage breakup or threaten the unity and welfare of the family, the most important are: lack of love, aberration from Christ and His Gospel spirit, unbelief, atheism, dishonor spouse, adultery, fornication, incest, perversion and infants killing in the womb, prostitution, pornography, some vaccines, genetically modified food, slowly poisoning of the population through various methods etc.

Denying God education supported by different philosophies and trends of the contemporary world and even by some international organizations like the UN and World Bank encourages global fornication, cohabitation, divorce, abortion law-making or even imposing it as in China.⁶⁶ The destruction of the traditional family is just the beginning of this diabolical process of changing

⁶⁶ Jacqueline Kasun, *Războiul împotriva populației*, publ. Provita Media, Bucharest, 2008, pp. 107-142.

family values and its purpose because what follows next is redefining it by legitimizing homosexual couples, the legal recognition of marriage between them, the adoption of children by these couples etc. The population is misinformed that these plans and prospects are pursued just for the sake of family and society.

V.6. Anti-Christian education of children and of contemporary society. In nowadays society young people are educated to deny the existence of God because a child raised and educated in the closed atmosphere of modern ideologies that denies God will be easy prey as an adult. A person who doesn't have a transcendent ideal, who hasn't Christ as a life model becomes easy prey to world's trends and philosophies, magic and other harmful practices of the social life. It is also intended that all family ties with God to be broken. "In this perspective, the key feature of the modern educational system and of the ideologists who want to possess the soul of children is to move them away from their parents and to integrate them into a standardized system such as nurseries, kindergartens, public schools, places where their indoctrination through various atheistic ideology becomes more easy."⁶⁷

In order to achieve these plans the United Nations organization, on 10th of December 1948 approved and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which is the base of its educational methods and practices for all populations. It stipulates *the woman's right to own womb*, before the baby is born, specifically the right to kill her child as she pleases, but it mentions the right of the child to be born. From an early age *UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization)* establishes the right to sexual education which is achieved through all means of mass communication, including schools according to another right - *the right to information*.

Another method of state-aided education for removing man from God is purifying the language of words that express the relationship between man and God and enriching the dictionary with new words expressing other realities towards which education should be moved.

The perpetuation of the human being through family strength in the contemporary world is in conflict with the utilitarian interests of the planet's most powerful and richest men who fight on all fronts to destabilize and reduce population through various means and methods. Medical or school programs of sex education constitute the main ideological method for education and reduction of the population. Family planning states that the average of two children per family should not be exceeded all over the world. Contraception, abortion, economic and food crises, with lots of methods of education in this regard are proposed as alternatives to support this statement.

A major importance in contemporary society education has mass media: press, radio, television, internet, advertising, sexual orientation movements, opinion formers etc.

Another negative element in young people's education is the use of mobile phones. Radiation from electromagnetic waves transmitted by mobile phones cause serious health disorders to mature individuals and especially to young people. Swedish teacher Lennart Hardel in September

⁶⁷ Petru Molodeț, *Educația anticreștină a societății contemporane*, in „Presa Ortodoxă” magazine publ. by Asociația pentru Apărarea Familiei și Copilului și Asociația Familia Ortodoxă „Sfinții Ioachim și Ana”, with the blessing of The Very Reverend Pimen, The Archbishop of Suceva and Rădăuți, no 2, year 2009, p. 18.

2008 stated that children and young people who use mobile phones excessively are five times more likely to develop brain cancer than others who do not use them or use them very little.

Chapter VI

Christian family - implications and perspectives

VI.1. Secularization and its influences in the family and in society. Initially, the concept of secularization had legal connotations, signifying the shifting of a person from being a cleric to being a layman or passing the Church property into state property.

From historical point of view, the term "secularize" was used to designate land expropriations of the Church, in order to divide them to different principalities due to the Treaty of Westphalia (1648).⁶⁸ The term is used in the same sense in the Romanian Principalities in 1864 when Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza proclaims the Law on secularization of monastery estates. A cultural meaning of this term was shaped at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, expressing the emancipation of modern life in economic, political, scientific, philosophical aspects under the trusteeship of the Church.

Religious or theological reasons that favored the emergence and development of secularization were firstly the heresies which arose in the bosom of Christianity and then the exclusive use of reason in the interpretation of Divine Revelation and the formulation of the doctrine of faith.⁶⁹ Heresies have altered the truth of faith and purely human conceptions were granted priority to the revealed divine sacraments; man was seated in the place of God and reason before faith. Due to the radical rupture between the natural and the supernatural world, the Christian family lost its transcendent support and profound meaning of spiritual communion in Christ and the Church. Secularized Man seeks to replace the laws of God and to remove the Church from society, replacing them with a secularized culture. Secularization means setting a personal and social life without reference to the fundamental principles of Christian spirituality. Salvation has not the meaning of an ontological restoration in Christ.

The secularized world is marked by a profound spiritual crisis, self-loving man does not betake to the kingdom of God. The center of modern man is himself, denying the transcendent. Apparently secularized thinking "exalted" man on the top pedestal of Aryanized humanism but he really fell in excessive anthropocentrism and ended in idolatry, polytheism and Gnosticism. Human exacerbation led to his devaluation.⁷⁰ Self-deification failed to devastating and dehumanizing nihilism, the man has transformed from God's image to devil's image. While leaving the image of God, man has become a slave of sin and death. Secularized man denies the idea of God and also the sacredness of man and the world. Modern man purely reduces everything to utilitarian value being spiritually impressed by the inability to really feel the personal presence and love of God. He thinks that God's presence cancels his freedom and therefore does not feel the need of that presence anymore. Modern man does not have the goal of salvation and for him salvation has no meaning of ontological restoration in Christ. Today, the Christian family is facing an economic, moral and

⁶⁸ The Very Reverend Antonie Plămădeală, *Biserica slujitoare*, doctoral thesis, Bucharest, 1972, p. 148.

⁶⁹ Priest Ștefan Buchiu, *Ortodoxie și secularizare*, publ. Libra, Bucharest, 1999, p. 81.

⁷⁰ Ilie Fonta, *Starea actuală și perspectivele relațiilor Stat – subiecții instituționalizați ai vieții religioase din România*, in B.O.R., no 7 – 12 / 1997, p. 231.

spiritual crisis, as a result of young population decrease, migration and cultural change that enhances individualistic, exacerbated, mercantile, and nihilistic mentality of postmodern man.

The message of the Church to secularized society is to add to its historical development “spiritual and moral development of man capable of transforming violence into love, through the Holy Spirit, so that man can live in a communion relationship with God and with others. Violence and power end up where communion, peace and love in God start.”⁷¹

VI.2. The mission of the Christian family in today's society. Cohabitation of man and woman is a divine institution dating back simultaneously with humanity. According to the teachings of our Holy Church, the Christian family goals are: the birth of children, for the multiplication of the human race and of the Holy Church believers; co-helping of spouses to facilitate their life; and protection of spouses' morals or remedy against the passions. A natural consequence of marriage is gaining inheritors. The birth of babies is not an exclusive purpose of marriage. The birth of babies is also the union of spouses' fruit and the expression of their participation into the creative work of God.⁷² The family is the primary social frame man needs to be born, to live, to develop and to reach perfection. It is the first natural society and true social cell. Family is where respect, dignity, interior freedom and constructive serenity are cultivated.⁷³ Marriage is important because it is useful to society for its development, however, its specific value is determined only in relation to God and the fulfillment of its mission on earth to unite with God and help others to continue along this path.

VI.3. The work of the Holy Church to complete the family. As a communion of two people, marriage is not limited to the sphere of material life and feelings. The initiative of self-giving spouses have in marriage does not allow any of them to return love from its finality, or to reduce it to the limits of a pleasure, a disease. Marriage is a special vocation to attain the completion of God's being and this is done by the grace of God in Church. The Church is the Body of Christ and at the same time the plenitude of the Spirit being a communion of persons through Christ. He made us all one with Him and in Him one with us through the Spirit. Thus, there are people's life and love communion with God through Christ in the Holy Spirit and people's love and compassion communion with the persons of the Holy Trinity. The Church is a sacramental community, because it is a visible and earthly communion of people with God, with Christ through the Holy Spirit where they are sanctified and redeemed because they receive the Eucharist of Christ and receive the sacraments grace of the Holy Spirit.

Through divine Sacraments and its work, the Church participates in strengthening the family, in raising and educating children and in guiding them to union with God. All that is celebrated in the Church is celebrated with the whole Church together as well as the marriage of its members. The union of the spouses signifies the union of Christ with His Church, a union with a supernatural purpose. The great sacrament of Christian marriage is represented by the supernatural unity of the spouses as limbs and organs of Christ's body. It reflects the mystery of Christ's union with the Church.⁷⁴ Christian marriage is a sacrament, and the perfect celebrant is Christ Himself. By the grace of Marriage, family communion is raised, in a certain way, to the level of ecclesial

⁷¹ Priest Prof. Dumitru Popescu, *Ortodoxie și globalizare. Cultură globală și culturi particulare*, in O, no 1-2, year 2006, p. 2.

⁷² Saint John Chrysostom, *Omilia la Coloseni 12, 5*, in PG. 62, col. 387.

⁷³ Priest Prof. Corneliu Sârbu, *Familia în cadrul învățăturii creștine*, in M.M.S. magazine, no 3-4, year 1968, p. 151.

⁷⁴ Priest Viorel Sava, *Taina Nunții – aspecte liturgice, duhovnicești și pastoral-misionare*, op.cit., p. 51

communion which is helped to accomplish in the family. The ecclesial communion understanding of Christian marriage is a decisive step toward strengthening the family.

The challenges of post-modern secularized world firstly hit in the unity of the family. Therefore an alleged freedom is spoken so often about according to which the couple can whimsically dispose of their marriage, rather choosing selfish living then the communion one. All kinds of structures with claimed skills in family counseling come to support this abnormal things' state, forgetting that all problems a couple has could be solved in the Church, through active participation.

VI.4. Moral principles used for young people's education. Firstly, during the educational process of children it is necessary that parents should be concerned about the child's soul inoculation with love of God through: the practice of virtues, the hate for vices, teaching catechism and age-appropriate moral principles. Secondly parents should: use appropriate and kind warnings, affectionately encourage children and when they forget about their duties to kindly remind them, emphasize the healthy decisions.⁷⁵ Education is not scheduled to take place on certain days, hours or locations, but it is continuously tracked in the conduct of daily life in a family environment full of confidence, in a style of love.⁷⁶ Essential elements underlying the educational methods are: love and reason. Love is the foundation of education while reason and religious education are the material of which it is built. We can teach through love and love belongs to the heart. Without love we cannot reach the souls of children who reject the hardness and severity, which although are not recommended, unfortunately they are still practiced.

The education of children is a very complex activity and it must be based on principles such as:

- Do not ever punish unless you have consumed all other means. It is certainly easier to get angry than to endure, to threaten a child than to convince him. It is more convenient for our impatience and pride to punish those who oppose us instead of listening to them through strong support and kindness. An unexpected punishment given before one sought other means seldomly helps. Parents who don't forgive anything to their children are used to forgive everything to themselves. It is recommended that where the warning is sufficient not to use reproach, and where the accusation is enough not to go further.⁷⁷
- Wait for the perfect time to correct. Don't punish the child for his mistake right in the moment he commits it, one must leave him time to reflect, to enter into himself, to become aware of his mistake, and so springing in his heart the correction desire. Do not act out of passion or anger, but above all wait to be in control of yourself. At such serious times, a reference to God, an act of humiliation done to Him is more helpful than a storm of words.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Eugene Smolensky & Jennifer Appleton Gootman, *Working families and growing kids: caring for children and adolescents*, National Research Council of US: Committee on Family and Work Policies, National Academies Press, Washington, 2003, p. 43.

⁷⁶ Calist Patriarch, Capete despre rugăciune, translation Priest Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, in *Filocalia sfințelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, vol. 8, Humanitas publ., Bucharest, 2002, p. 40 and following

⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

⁷⁸ Morton Deutsch, Peter T. Coleman and Eric Colton Marcus, *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution*, p. 137.

- Hope of forgiveness must be always left. The great art of a good teacher is to forget mistakes and make them lost in the memory. God forgives us through the sacrament of confession and throws our sins (mistakes) into the Sea of Forgiveness. The pain and the fear inspired by correction must be avoided and it should always be told a word of reinforcement. Sometimes it's enough to make them believe that we do not think that they did it with malice and thus we can prevent them from falling into the same mistake again.⁷⁹
- However, if it is necessary to apply a punishment, it must be in such a way to determine children become better. It was observed, for example, that a simple gesture that expresses parent's dissatisfaction, a look not at all loving on some children produce a greater effect than it would do a slap. Let us remember that the force punishes vice, but it does not heal the vicious.⁸⁰

The communication between parents and children, the content and quality of the discussions, are one of the successful methods of Christian education. Child's education should not consist of: hardness, high or threatening tone, the refuse to fulfill child's wishes with no logical explanation and without him understanding the reasons; there should be no gaps or decreases in education.

VI.5. Family - Christian living model. Family promotes the link between church and society, and human longing is eternal life which is achieved through union with Christ. The gift of giving birth is the biggest consolation for the loss of immortality, a picture of fallen humanity resurrection.

The second goal of the family is mutual helping of the spouses to facilitate life. Husbands unselfishly help each other on the basis of their soul link, namely their love which is a creative love incorporating the nostalgia of eternity. Communion between the two is an existential one which includes giving from soul to soul. Good understanding between the spouses makes each one of them to take care of the other's salvation, as if they were a single body.

Another aim of marriage is to morally protect spouses and their growth to moral stature of Christ. Marriage is a communion of persons and it is not limited to the material plane and to senses. The personal relations of the spouses must be primarily spiritual in order to maintain their union.

The purpose for which man lives on this earth is to gain salvation, and the family purpose is to support and help each other member to fulfill this mission. At all times the families have formed the basis for spreading the Christian faith (Acts V. 45). Families have always been holy and sanctifying institutions for their members from where they acquire the first teachings and moral precepts necessary for life in the Church and society.

"The family is first called to the apostolate within it, but much more is called outside, its members giving testimony of their faith by serving others. Thus, there are multiple sides of the family apostolate: the apostolate among families; spouses themselves are apostles of other spouses. This aspect is reflected in fiance preparation for receiving the Sacrament of Matrimony in helping young couples and families in need. Then we can talk about the hospitality apostolate; Christian family should not be closed in itself, but must be hospitable, and to help all those in need. The

⁷⁹ Joan McCord, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

Christian family must be sympathetic to social issues and assist school in training children; it's parents' right to give children an exquisite education."⁸¹

The Christian family is called to help spreading in the world and strengthening in history of the Kingdom of God by participating in the life and mission of the Church.

CONCLUSIONS

The Christian family is a huge responsibility and obligation to society. There is no other emphatic social responsibility then in family ties. Society and family are two concepts and realities that are correlated. A society is strong and lasting as far as it cherishes the family and supports its functions. Morally and physically healthy family members, are equally good citizens. The state protects marriage and family, defending the interests of mother and child, because it needs strong and durable families who will offer healthy, trained, capable, effective, robust producers as citizens for the nation's economy, worthy supporters of social life dynamism. In the human context the first school of life is the primary family group that transforms the human being into a social individual, the school of altruism and civilized behavior, of respect and mutual support, par excellence the perfect educational environment for descendants.

From theological point of view, far from being a mere association, union or legal agreement conjugal union was always understood as an existential community of love, blessed by God, where spouses devote themselves with all their being, they celebrate each other, they give birth to children and educate them according to God's will and with His help. This was always Romanian people's direction but lately it has been noticed a major failure on these principles and laws of God. In particular one should observe these divergences in the civilized world but far-off God which seem to be supported and encouraged by some obscure interests through lots of methods and practices.

A very serious and with long-term effects thing is the fact that these principles and unhealthy practices are taught to children and they become components of their personality and education.

The quality and outcomes of family education fundamentally determines the whole evolution of the young, the quality of his integration into social and professional life. Family education objectives are multiple: the physical development, intellectual, spiritual, moral, religious, ethical, aesthetical, civic, domestic and sexual education. In any society, the family is the essential element in the training and socialization of the child. The family represents the vital frame where the psychological and social needs are met and fulfilled their whole stages of growth and development.

But the family is not the only factor of social integration; schools and other cultural institutions for leisure time, social small groups - street, neighbourhood, group of friends - carry the same parallel action with the family. Based on the natural attachment that a child has for his

⁸¹ †Varšanufie Prahoveanul, Priest Bishop of Bucharest Archiepiscopate, *Vocația misionară a familiei creștine*, in „Bucuria nunții binecuvântate, Cateheze pentru familia creștină”, printed with the blessing of Saint Daniel the Patriarch of Romanian Orthodox Church, publ. Cuvântul Vieții of Metropolitan Church of Muntenia and Dobrogea, Bucharest, 2011, p. 145.

parents, the family manages to have a greater share in this action. It is considered the main agent of social integration because it has to forward those social norms and roles that form a person for life.

Family of all times is the most important cell of society. Discipline, order, sense of dignity and social justice, love, respect and helping one another, altruism and Christian love are the values acquired and appropriated in the family. Inside the family man is not isolated, it assures him roots in the past, support in the present and hope and safety in the future.

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