THE STRATEGIES OF SECULARIZATION AND THE CONTEMPORARY KINSHIP

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Abstract: The framework-hypothesis of this study is based on the recent research, which generally highlights the impact of Christian religious behaviour, and particularly of the Christian orthodox one, in modern society. Thus, from the perspective of Christian morality, the Kinship is a powerful axiological filter for "symptoms" or "marks" of the secularizing process in contemporary society. The objectives of the present study are taking shape around the central idea of the role played by the "kinship" or spiritual descent in the dialectic of secularization as a cultural-historical process of Christian "belief conditions". Thus, cultural-religious component of descent – filiation and parenting – guides the strategies of secularisation in a positive or negative sense. Continuity of kinship being supported by the "genealogical memory" contributing to the "removal of secularization" and the accumulation of cultural and religious capital. This, in turn, constitutes a spiritual-religious resource that can be directed towards achieving stability, harmony, making family relationships across the generations.

Keywords: Secularizing process; Christian Family; Religious Marriage; Contemporary Kinship; Parental Responsibility

1. Introduction. The paradigm of secularization between latent Modernity and Post modernity

The evolution of mentalities and religious symbols brings us to the "desacralization phenomenology" joined by "the multiplicity of religious experience" as a characteristic of the modern spirit called for dialogue, "otherness" and "cultural communication". Emphasizing the timeliness of Mircea Eliade's thinking on "the social and religious mentality" of the European man (modern, our note), socio-anthropologists note the presence of religious, political and (multi)ethnic diversity, which require acceptance and correct interpretation in the spirit of "otherness" and of "creative hermeneutics". In this spiritual context, our study focuses, from a paradigmatic perspective, on certain hypothetical coordinates conditioned by the assessment and reassessment of the secularization process in relation to the manifestation of the religious phenomenon in modern and postmodern society.

From the scientific findings on the religious phenomenon in the secularized modern society we learn that it is presented as "an existential alternative" pertained to the actual type of modernity. The problem, as Mihail Neamţu highlights in "The Grammar of Orthodoxy …", for example, is
mainly caused by multiple and serious "confusions and indeterminacy" regarding the status or role of theology in modernity and postmodernity. In a famous work entitled *A Secular Age* (2007) considered a paper of reference for studying the transformation of religion in the West, John Taylor distinguishes "three meanings" of the term "secularity" namely: "gradual abandonment" of faith in God which becomes "the central axis of political life"; "decline of faith in God"; "new conditions of «belief» that currently influence, religious or nonreligious experience. In the conception of Taylor, the term "belief" which means "faith" has a broad referring to a holistic approach to options existential in general, compared to the term "faith" which refers to "religious belief".

As Ioan Alexandru Tofan shows, in Taylor's view, secularization pertains to "the conditions of faith" taking "the shape of a complex of cultural, scientific and theological factors", which make the manifestation of religious belief as an existential "option" more or less comfortable. From this perspective, defining the secularization as an *emerging process* for the existential choices of modernity as "a concrete era" cannot be reduced either, to the strict reporting of the religious institution to the laical one or to the presence or "absence of transcendental reference" in the public space on the one hand or to issues related to religious beliefs, the weakening of faith, "church attendance or involvement into the religious life as a whole" on the other hand.

In Taylor's view, *the new conditions of belief* are emerging in modern society following some steps:

a. In the first stage, the cultural minority imposes "exclusive humanism" as "an alternative to the Christian faith";

b. The second step is to diversify *in extenso* the religious options belonging to the intermediate layer, placed between "the exclusive humanism" and "Christian faith coded by the Church" (*the nova effect* at the elite level that causes fragmentation of culture);

c. The third stage, traced near the 60s, is represented by the "expressive revolution" that produces the generalization of fragmented culture throughout society.

The holistic perspective that permeates the philosophical, historical and sociopolitical analysis of John Taylor, nuances however, significant differences between Europe and America on the tension between the "neodurkheimian» model" – embraced by the United States during the *Age of Mobilization* – and the "postdurkheimian» model" – adopted by the *European societies* with multiple challenges and dilemmas, with inherent deviant forms – which refers to "the recognition of a radical variety of religious nonreligious and atheist options within the public space". Practically, Taylor's approach completes the secularization framework analysis strictly from a conceptual perspective offering at the same time the possibility of widening the area of research over *the*
dimensions of the secularization process identifying "the signs or symptoms"\(^8\) of this phenomenon, referring, for example, to "the religious decadence", "the secularization of the religious" or the nihilism as a sort of "mundane drift" of the religious, "desacralisation", "privatization of religion" turning religious forms into secular ones-protestant ethic (Max Weber); "invisible religion" (Thomas Lukmann, 1963); "civil religion" (Robert Bellah).

As a result, the issue of modernity is emerging, at least in Europe, in relation to two defining aspects brought to our attention by Mihail Neamțu namely "the answer of the medieval social ideological fall patronized by the Church for centuries ..." as well as " ... the tolerant and philanthropic ethos of secular Europe" which was successful in the 60’s. That is, while "eastern societies have not succeeded in providing a model of friendly coexistence ..., Western Europe pays the price of "a mass axiological disorientation." As a result, the elite of the time split either into "the leaders of religions’ books" or "secular liberalism champions" are called to a "permanent interpretative exercise" being "engaged in a symbolic legitimation process of universal values". Responses to problem areas are soon given in the international circle of philosophical and theological debates being represented by important figures such as NT Wright\(^10\), Oliver O'Donovan\(^11\) or John Alaisdair Milbank\(^12\). Summarizing the contribution of the three experts in social theology, whose work is widely presented by Mihail Neamțu in separate chapters from "The Grammar of Orthodoxy …" we keep the following aspects in mind\(^13\) (Neamțu 2007, 196-205):

a. Emphasizing the relationship of the Church with secular power, the authors contest the separation between Church and State adopted by the modernists and, at the same time the reduction of the spirit of Gospels to "politically correct";

b. Analyzing the genesis of modern social thought – European and North American patterns of thinking – through the relationship between theology and culture whilst proposing the separation of the logos of theology from "the secular terms adopted by humaniores";

c. Highlighting the risks of post modernity which emerges as "political paradigm made to tolerate variety and mixture". At the same time, the trend reveals the bulimic tendencies of contemporary man as "myth and logos" which sustains “the entertainment postmodern culture”;

d. Propose a "hermeneutics of modernity" deeply indebted to "the Christian vision of man" asking theology to rethink “the community project drawn by Church”.

In conclusion, we can say that research results regarding social theology bring up to date, in the spirit of "creative hermeneutics", Mircea Eliade’s vision by highlighting the positive aspects of secularization (as editor and publisher of the journal Academica, Elena Solunca Moise points in a recent interview\(^14\), only 5% of the approaches to secularization have "positive connotations") within the postmodern philosophy of the event namely the theology of the event proposing a "renaissance

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\(^10\) N. T. Wright, Bishop of Durham, internationally known biblical scholar.

\(^11\) Oliver O'Donovan, Anglican Priest, professor at the University of Oxford.

\(^12\) John Alaisdair Milbank educated at Oxford in the late 1970s belonging confessionally to the Anglican Church.

\(^13\) Neamțu, Mihail. 2007., pp. 196-205.

of religion" within the binomial desacralization / charity (proposed by Vattimo Caputo) or "redistribution of opportunities, meanings in relation to the ethical or political interest of time". As a result, "the secularization-event" interpreted as a gesture of "forgetting the fundamental liturgical nature of the Christian experience of the world" gives Christianity the chance of rehabilitation even "during the crepuscular era of modernity".

One aspect worth noting in the context of the analysis conducted by Charles Taylor on the manifestation of religious phenomenon in contemporary society, refers to the impact of migration on the religion-family-State triad using as an example the evolution of the American model and the establishing of some religious communities (the phenomenon of building "new Churches" very present in today’s European society, especially in the Romanian diaspora!). If at the beginning, "the sides of this triangle have supported each other" subsequent intermingling with each other will be affected by receiving "simultaneous strikes from each of the three constituent parts". Therefore, the "virtues" of "the American way of life" and "the positive image of the nuclear family" began to decline given the following considerations: the fight against the segregationist legislation during the 1876-1964 period (Jim Crow laws); "the agony", the anguish felt by the American people regarding the war in Vietnam; the feminism, "the new expressive culture" and "the sexual revolution of the '60s".

On the other hand, the analysts of these allegations consider the phenomenon of "the new Presbyterian Church" rather as denoting the "idea of social identity" than "that of God." Referring comparatively to the "new European identity" as well (tributary of the two world wars), John Taylor states that the phenomenon combines two dimensions – the "national and civilization character" – a model involving "distance", "passivity" and even "a certain repulsion" to "the original, intense form" of both nationalism and the religious sentiment (for example, in the synthesis "being British, decent and Christian").

Within the socio-political and cultural context of Europe, "the religious paradigm proposed to social life" practically places the fragile Romanian democracy in "an intermediate situation" in relation for example to "the dictates of religion" in the public space to the Islamic fundamentalism or to the "weak secularization" – "privatization of religion" and the Protestant ethic – or to "the strong secularization" of the Western world that oscillates between the extreme of the religious-spiritual phenomenon proliferation and the postmodern nihilism. An analysis of the Romanian context within which we witness the manifestation of modernity and (post)modernity reveals "successive transitions, quick and contradictory" which are associated with a number of problem areas caused by "particracy" and ideological deficit". Thus, the "transition after transition process" both from a historical and longitudinal perspective as well as "the double transition" – "institutional" and "attitudinal" – from a cross-cutting approach brings to our attention an ex-

Communist society "which encounters difficulties in consuming modernity and therefore meets even more trouble in assimilating (post)modernity"21.

Linking the religious phenomenon characteristic of the Romanian people to the European secularized or de-secularized context raises a number of questions, not rhetoric, in our view, such as: What are the "marks" or "symptoms" of secularization in the actual Romanian society? What type of modernity can the religious phenomenon, namely the Church be related to in Romania?22? The answers are very soon found, at least from the perspective of Mihail Neamțu, who refers to the causal determinations of secularization ever since the time of classicist culture in Romania focusing on the "opacity of the secular pole" coupled with "the reserve and marginality complex developed within evidently «pravoslavnice» circles"23. A further argument questions the dispute between "anti-Christian modernization" and "the structurally anti-modern Orthodoxy" highlighting "the risk of an ideological approach", a context in which very few "alliances" have been formed between "conservative moderns" and "Christians optimists". If the Church through the scholars of the time omits reflections on the "profound challenges of modernity" it insidiously establishes "the secular current of the interwar culture" characterized by "excessive confession" and "the removing of laity from the living sources of Orthodoxy". Of course, except for some cultural figures of the time (Ion Gh. Savin, Mircea Vulcănescu, Nae Ionescu or Nichifor Crainic) who denounced "tyranny" while representing a viable alternative to the "massification", "the totalitarian state worshiping" appears very soon announcing "the Communist fever"24.

An interesting phenomenon that catches our attention and which is very clearly defined in Mihail Neamțu’s thorough approach of social theology is "the civil religion of Communism" by desperate attempts to achieve a "mystical repositioning" balanced between "personal assumption" and "institutional failure". The decrease, sometimes to the lower limit, of the mystical experiences undergone by community has led to "the absence of a plural culture" the author focusing primarily on the negative effects of the phenomenon upon the bond with the Anglo-Saxon thinking25. The author summarizes the characteristics of "the Communists' civil religion" and also condemns "the diagnosis failure" conducted in the first place by the Orthodox theology. The next historic moment with negative influences on modern Romania is the "Enlightenment ideology" that produces "progressive ghettoization of Christian theology" induced by Kantian philosophy and the German model of idealism. Thus, the takeover "of Immanuel Kant’s sectarian perspective" and "the segregation of academic theology" induce "modernity dualism" where practically "theological culture loses its meaning" being born as a "defensive reaction to the challenges of postmodernity"26. The marginalization of theology in academic debates becomes obvious causing mutual misunderstandings.

25 Idem, p. 19. See the example of England, country which supported the importance of introducing a chapel in every college, as opposed to the 1886's France that forbidded priests to teach in academia.
26 Idem, pp. 16-23.
In cultural terms, Mihail Neamțu generates a tough reaction, defining the concept of "neopăşunism" or that of "the dictatorship of one's own opinions." However, in outlining some solutions, the author insists on the dialogue between tradition and modernity, the binder being represented by the "importance of education" within "the issue of modernity" aimed, in particular, at "assuming the public dimension of Christianity". So theological seminars are called upon once again as they were during the nineteenth century in Iasi (1860-1864), Cernauti or Bucharest (1889) in order to mitigate the "shock of secularization."  

As such, the Romanian Orthodox Christianity (86.72%) comes as a "proposal" not as "imposing" its spiritual deposit, the Romanian Orthodox Church thus contributing to "the de-secularization of faith". For example, one of the "social and cultural motivations" of the cultural fact lies in the interest and fascination shown by the "educated youth in post-December Romania" regarding "the close relationship between religion and culture" which would allow "the path towards the sacred". However, as the socio-anthropologist of religions shows, there are many cases in which "a man of culture wants to be faithful" and "he cannot" but assume "that the cultural fact is the best means toward the absolute ..." because "the meaning of culture" is given, paraphrasing Andrei Pleșu, "ultimately, by God".

Moreover, the "meaning of life" is conferred by "what love for Christ signifies within all of us", says Priest Constantin Necula, in a plea-invitation regarding "the resistance through the culture of love" as "therapy for the soul". On the contrary, "nothing of what we live and plan without Christ will be strong enough to succeed not even in the world that does not love Christ" concludes the same Priest, referring to what the philosopher Andrei Pleșu calls "memory fracture" of the Romanian people oppressed by Communism, which separates the West from Romania. Specifically, the separation refers to the gaps at the level of religious culture development and transmission, aspects that constitute the "marks" or "symptoms" of secularism in Romanian cultural space.

We list below in a synthesized conclusion like manner "the secularization symptoms" on social life as described in Nicu Gavriluță’s vision, professor of the sociology of religion:

- rationalization of social life or "privatization of religion" and "isolation" of the spiritual-religious phenomenon interpretation;
- increasing the autonomy of social institutions in relation to the Church;
- diminishing the resources dedicated to the sacred/spiritual and religious practices;
- the general orientation of people toward the empirical, the pragmatic, the concrete;
- the impact of "new media" and of modern technology upon the symbolic-spiritual and religious life.

27 Idem, p. 12.
30Necula, Constantin, Priest Associate Professor, PhD at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Andrei Șaguna" in Sibiu. "Love in Christ - therapy for the soul", part 1 – conference organized by ASCOR Iasi branch in Aula Magna "Mihai Eminescu"; Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, on March 10, 2015 starting at 6 PM.
31Gavriluță, Nicu, Professor, PhD at the Faculty of Philosophy and Social-Political, „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iasi University. 2014. „În căutarea sensului. O radiografie sociologică a secularizării”, interview by Deacon Sorin Mihalache during the program entitled „Lumina celui Nevăzut”, TVR Trinitas, Thursday, July 10, 2014. (for details see website: www.tvrtrinitas.ro/arhiva emisiuni).
Concerning the last issue defined as "a symptom of secularization", the socio-anthropologist from Iasi gives repeated explanations regarding the phenomenon of "desacralization" of social life, referring specifically to "the virtualization of orthodoxy" when considering "the religious fact in contemporary Romania". As an exegete, Nicu Gavriluţă highlights the lack of "mythological and religious" justification characteristic of the postmodern technique to whose challenge “authentic tradition” should respond. He also shows in an interview that "atheism is not a problem in Romania" not even "religious intolerance is", except for "intolerance reactions" of "philosophers who undertake research focusing on problematic areas" (regarding the Church, religion, etc.).

2. Secularization strategies of the Christian family and the issue of contemporary Kinship

"Love, where is your Church? I'm tired of faraway places!"

Beyond the explanations regarding "the American exception" versus "the European exception" concerning the secularization thesis, our approach focuses on its impact upon family life shown through the phenomena of globalization and cultural relativism, which represents, in fact, "family challenges for the future of the society and of the world". As the authors cited above highlight "the globalization of current relativization is the one referring to the Christian family" leading not only to a "reinterpretation" but also to a "desintegration" of it causing a strong alarm signal.

Moreover, the crisis of the postmodern world is linked to the upheaval of values and the confinement in the crucible "«death culture»", a reality revealed by the worrying demographic statistics – especially the fecundity aspect – which signal "Europe's demographic crisis". As regards this issue, Mons. Michel Schooyans presented within the International Congress "Family and Life at the beginning of a new Christian millennium" the causes that maintain the critical situation of the family using statistical analyzes concerning the fertility rate. The factors are summarized as follows:

a. The decrease in marriage rates, delayed marriage and the increasing age of first motherhood;

b. The demographic mobility of population (rural-urban migration), professional nomadism and female careerism;

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34 Gavriluţă, Nicu. 2015. Interview by Priest Dumitru Păduraru on "Religion class in school", Radio Trinitas, February 26, 2015, 2-2.20 PM.
37 Priet Professor PhD Leb, Ioan Vasile and Priest PhD Nicolae-Dragoș Kerekes. 2011. „Provincările familiei pentru viitorul societății și al lumii”. In Familia în societatea contemporană, coord. Priest Professor PhD Viorel Sava and Priest lecturer PhD Ilie Melnicuc-Puică, pp. 319-335. Iaşi: DOXOLOGIA.
c. Strong ideological socio-demographic policies (gender ideology, anti-birth techniques devaluation and even destruction of maternity) that lead to unfavorable measures against family (abortion, contraception, eugenics, gender choice) supported by an inconsistent, contradictory and even incomplete legislation;

d. The disastrous role of mass-media which maintains the bouleversement of family values presenting a deformed, distorted image of both sexuality and couple relationships, of family as a whole.

Our approach gives great importance to the analysis of modern and (post)modern family seen in crisis contexts which acquires specific connotations when viewed from the perspective of Christian morality proposing a positive sense of the term "crisis" of the family. Correlating "the Christian family" with spirituality, Priest Filoteu Faros tells us that "its origins are transcendent" that is, "even though family exists in the world, it doesn’t originate in it" and that family relationships – family or parental system, broadly speaking, (our note) – represent "our spiritual resources in times of crisis" defined by losing control "over our lives" and "then looking for help elsewhere". At the same time, viewing the crisis as "a potential creative conflict" reveals the need for successive transitions along life as "God created us with an innate need to grow and develop" in a "living, dynamic process." 41

The key question of our study starts from the interrogation, not rhetoric we hope, if family itself represents a value in contemporary society any longer. The answer can be found, from our perspective, by analyzing family relations in terms of the ideological component, namely the "religious-socializing" type of identification / transmission. In this regard, the issue of family relationship or "kinship" which has become the "key concept" of classic cultural anthropology brings us to the "modern form" of expression represented by "the nowadays parental system." 44 The bridge between socio-cultural anthropology and Christian theology which reveals "the transcendent origins of the family" – with reference particularly to the Christian family defined as the entity preserving "the spiritual resources" – is built by applying Christian morality to "the universe of parenting" 46.

The huge challenge of current research is that, although modern and postmodern contemporary society "invites us" (our note) to "redefine family" constantly attacking the legal basis for marriage (by proposing and even imposing through the legalization of "alternative non marital forms"), maternity certainty (see the legalization of substitution motherhood and "the syndrome of «mercenary mothers»" described by socio-anthropologists) 47, the attack against the
presumption of paternity, moderate but still an attack\textsuperscript{48} (the mother's husband may be excluded from paternity by a third party donor in the \textit{assisted procreation} situation), overfiliation, fictitious filiation and "unnatural lineages"\textsuperscript{49} (readjustment of paternity incontestability in the situation of filiations as a result of medically assisted procreation; establishing and proving parenthood of children either being adopted by homosexual couples or born from previous heterosexual relationships), \textit{pressures} made by homosexual couples in order to access the artificial procreation ... etc. ... And such examples may go on (some detailed herein) ... however, there is hope to reduce the negative / anomic effects of the phenomena concerned, namely, "the phenomenon of kinship"\textsuperscript{50} which, crossing the socio-economic and cultural component of the domestic space maintains its continuity by identifying itself in the \textit{moral-religious} area.

Thus, by reporting \textit{family relationships} to the \textit{Christian moral values} the concept of \textit{kinship} or spiritual kinship, reborn in contemporary society, is viewed as \textit{parentage} broadly speaking\textsuperscript{51}. The inclusion of "the ideological component within the parental system" outlines the "\textit{kinship}" of inter-generational descent which generates (family relationships), through "religious identification", effects on "the religious-socializing area", economic area, as well as the zone of social prestige\textsuperscript{52}.

All the aspects presented above argue the core idea of the distinction between the \textit{traditional family} and the \textit{modern family} which, in addition to "the split ... inside the parenting network ("kin") is characterized by "moving the focus ... within the nuclear family members"\textsuperscript{53}. This situation supports nuances, family sociologists drawing attention to the transition from the "conjugal family" to "parental family". In this context, as Emile Durkheim noted many years ago (1892)\textsuperscript{54}, the family is losing ground, while marriage is reinforced ("marriage seen as a binding component of society"), but "moral education" is based on reason and not on God!!! Reinforcing the idea of the French sociologist, marriage revival is indeed reflected today by the diversification of the marriage types including non marital alternatives which unfortunately cherish the unnatural, the frivolity and the instability. From the Christian moral perspective, these aspects are considered as ignoring family and therefore "the spiritual kinship".

We note that Emile Durkheim’s theory expressed many years ago concerning "the fact that family is losing ground", has re-occurred in today’s society while "marriage is strengthened" defining what we mean today by "nuclear family" torn from the \textit{parental network} or \textit{kinship}. The difference, I would say significant, is that Emily Durkheim’s reasoning is a secular one, very different from what the Church Fathers have always taught us about the \textit{Sacrament of Marriage}. Reiterating the message from the perspective of Christian morality we can strongly affirm that indeed \textit{religious marriage} can be the \textit{bonding component of family, kinship and society as a whole}.


\textsuperscript{50}Harris, Christopher C. 1998. \textit{Relațiile de rudenie}. Translation from English by Antonia Opriță. București: Editura DU Style. From Harris’s perspective, “the phenomenon of kinship” is determined, in a causal sense, by a “set of values, beliefs and rules that structure social action” having a broader meaning to the socio-legal sense of \textit{Kinship}.

\textsuperscript{51}Parenting” broadly means “the parental universe” or “the parental system” that aims the magnitude of kinship relationships or lineage but also other “selectivity variables” such as culture, organized in the spirit of social solidarity. The concept should not be confused with narrow-sense parenthood, which designates taking parental responsibilities related to maternal or paternal roles.


\textsuperscript{53}\textit{Idem}, p. 87.

This is true because even if civil marriage or free union is directly related to family relationships through co-parenting and filiation, the destruction of the kinship has negative effects on the whole inter-generational family system.

As shown in a previous work the hypotheses of our study focus on the results of recent research which highlights the impact of Christian religious behavior in general and of Christian Orthodox, particularly upon modern society. In this sense, the kinship or "spiritual kinship" plays an essential role in the dialectic of the manifestation of secularization as a cultural and historical process concerning the achievement of "the conditions of Christian faith". Thus the cultural-religious component of the intergenerational lineage can lead secularization strategies either in a negative or in positive direction, in the latter hypothesis, the kinship being a powerful cultural "buffer" (our note) namely Christian religious, the Orthodox branch, for "the symptoms" or "marks" of the secularization process in the Romanian society.

In this regard, Prot. Antonios Kallierghis in his study entitled "A Slow Death on the Couch" with a suggestive title as a variant of answer to the question "Why do you want to marry?", summarizes the "sociologists’ observations" regarding the crisis in marriage and family relations, as follows:

a. "Instability" seen as the inability of man to cope with contemporary rapid transformations related to "individualization, atomization living conditions" resulting in a reality "fragmented in limited realities"; for example, marriage and creating a family are separated from sexuality; the birth of children is separate from marriage; confusion between the roles of the spouses, etc.

b. Beyond statistics, the family is a relationship between persons, and in this respect, we witness discrepancies between "needs" and "capacity" expressed for example in the commodity of the contemporary man doubled by inauthentic communication; sociologists highlight that one of the effects of such attitudes is represented by "the incompatible roles of the sexes";

c. "Idolizing life’s expectations and needs" explained by "shifting the focus from the person of the partner" on "secondary issues" such as material issues (prosperity, well-being);

d. Exaggerations concerning "the achievement of equality" between the sexes which stem from a mentality supported by the "immaturity of men";

e. Idealization of marriage supported by the media offering a paragon;

f. "The fanatic approach to marriage" supported by superstitions and "the religious way of the time";

g. "Idealization of family and natality" expressed by the desire "of making a family" and "having children" aspect which carries the husbands away from living the Sacrament of Marriage from the Orthodox perspective.

2.1. Religious marriage and the issue of union between man and woman

In general, the writings concerning Christian theology, Christian morality or ethics / Christian bioethics bring to your attention that "the sexual issue" is linked to "the family issue" and we dare state, what we are going to argue later, that the Christian family crisis is, in fact, the crisis of sexuality, specifically the crisis of responsible love between man and woman. The remarkable Patriarch of Constantinople, St. John Chrysostom, using the historical, philological, critical and contemplative method, is a model for current scientific researchers because his surveys are always accompanied by moral conclusions, in comparison to current studies that separate the analysis of the biblical text from the moral and homiletic element. But how can the Christian family be defined? First, starting from "the essential purposes of creating a family", as St. John Chrysostom highlights in his book Life Issues, namely:

- mitigating carnal inclinations toward sensuality and sexuality through marriage fulfillment and conjugal discipline;
- proliferation of the human race, through the birth of children;
- acquiring holiness by the spouses working together and helping each other in the difficult process of attaining salvation.

In this sense, Priest Ioan C. Teșu, Professor, PhD from the Faculty of Theology within "Dumitru Stănileanu" University from Iasi, defines the family in terms of the Christian faith as an altar of sacrifice of the self to the exaltation of a community way of life, based on love and mutual giving of the spouses to each other and of both towards the children God blesses and adorns their existence with. At the same time, he describes, with reference to the religious literature, the fact that both men and women face the problem of self ignorance and of course, partner ignorance also proposing a Christian model of husband-wife relationship.

A profound argument of biblical nature is brought forward by Priest Professor, PhD Petre Semen from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, "Dumitru Stănileanu" University starting from the biblical Hebrew meaning of the term "baith" which refers "not only to the edifice housing those belonging to a single family (Iov.18, 5)", but also to "its members and descendants (Gen. 18, 19)". Further arguments show that breaking the matrimonial vows was permitted only in exceptional circumstances and "the sacred context of the legal prescriptions" was focused on the protection of women and the family in general. Moreover, the position of the Israelite woman in the family enjoys "honor" and "appreciation" on behalf of the husband who "often treated her as his equal (I Kings 1, 4-8; II Kings 4, 8-24)" being happy to meet "a virtuous woman and a good housewife" as "companion for life".

The theme of "natural love" is reiterated and this is related in the Orthodox Christian vision, to The Sacrament of Marriage, which belonging to The Sacraments of the Orthodox tradition of services is "of priceless theological depth." Referring to this beautiful "Orthodox service", Priest Professor, PhD Ion Vicovan insists on "its soteriological function" and its catechetical role that can

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60 Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur. Problemele vieții. The translation was made after the original Greek by Cristian Spățărelu and Daniela Filoareanu. Editura Cartea Ortodoxă. Editura Egumenița, pp. 102-119.
61 Teșu, C. Ioan. 2011a. „Familia contemporană între idei și criză”. In op. cit., coord. Viorel Sava (Pr. Professor PhD) and Ilie Melniciuc-Puică (Pr. lecturer PhD), 266-318: 287.
62 Semen, Petre. 2011. „Contribuția Bisericii, a școlii și a familiei la formarea religios-morală a tinerii generații”. In ibidem, 301-318: 301-302.
be (to the living, our note) "a valuable religious lesson." To underline the "richness" of the Sacred Marriage service, Priest Professor, PhD Ion Vicovan refers the "the perspective of the biblical historical personalities" mentioned during the service and who, "according to their life or to the moment of their life which is being invoked at the time of the service", "express a blessing, a prayer, a profound message" for the spiritual life and wealth of the family. Paraphrasing G. Chapmann, who writes about *The Five Languages of Love*, Priest Professor, PhD Ioan C. Teșu presents "Christian marriage" as an extension of "eternity" every one of us being obliged to give an account to the "Righteous Judge" of "the gift he or she received in the person of the wife or husband". But unfortunately, there is an increasing tendency today to alienate ourselves from the Christian model of the Sacrament of Marriage.

From the perspective of our research – based on a questionnaire survey conducted on a sample of about 100 couples (married / unmarried / divorced) and interviews with subjects in the target group – we underline worrying answers to the question: "Is it important for the spouses to have the same religion"? Few under half of the respondents (48.9%) pointed that it is important for spouses to have the same religion. It’s significant to note that an important percentage is represented by those who are not interested in this matter (30.5%), although to the previous question: "Is it important that parents be married religiously"? the majority of respondents (89.4%) stated the importance of parents being married religiously, the rest (10.6%) claiming otherwise.

Among the causes and manifestations of contemporary family crisis, which are defined, by the authors mentioned previously, as "the wounds of contemporary family" we summarize below the problem areas in terms of Christian morality, namely: "pornography or "the «dictatorship of sinful images»"; "autoerotism or masturbation"; "premarital sex" and "consensual union"; "betrayal of family loyalty – extraconjugal sex (adultery, infidelity)"; "homosexuality –"«terrible madness»"; "«loneliness in two», the absence of dialogue, communication crisis"; "family violence"; "divorce – «crime against nature and against the law»"; "abortion – "«deadly wound of the ethnic soul»".

We note that the contemporary Christian family issue revolves around the idea of sexuality which is clearly defined by the Church Fathers, ambiguities originating in our manner of interpreting and of relating to these moral precepts, depending on how we stand on the hermeneutical polarized scale the "worldly sense" and the "Divine meaning" of things. Contrary to views that see religious marriage as a restriction of freedom (namely sexual restrictions), the conjugal relationship, "as one of the most intimate aspects of family life" is of interest to both traditional and modern theologians. Thus Priest Professor, PhD Ioan C. Teșu shows, paraphrasing St. Paul, called the "Apostle of Nations", that inside the "Christian family", "the woman isn’t the owner of her own body any longer because it belongs to her husband; similarly the husband isn’t the owner of his own body anymore because it belongs to his wife (I Cor. 7.4)." Basically,
regulating the relations which should exist between spouses, it shows that they become "one body" and their giving up to "bodily pleasure" – "soul and body abstention" for spiritual practice, through "fasting and prayer" – "must have «the spouses reciprocal agreement»" (I Cor. 7.5).68 Although according to the Christian faith, as Priest Professor PhD Ioan C. Teșu highlights "sexuality is an innocent and righteous affection" which became part of the "human nature", "together with the other feelings through the original sin, it is however at the same time, "the sensual (animal-like) aspect our nature".69 In other words, it is very important the "use or direction" these feelings are given by man because as long as sexual impulses and instincts are satisfied within the "normal limits", they "support the overall spiritualization of the man", whereas losing control and indiscipline or "over satisfaction" lead to addiction and therefore to "sin". The sin "of excessive self-love" is considered "the source of all evil and the mother of all passions."70 Therefore, "reducing the gender relationship between a man and a woman to sex" post-modernity places the relation between a man and a woman out of the "natural logic" proposing an "immoral «șamoralț» game" which, in the name of freedom of expression and human rights sets the modern and (post)modern couples in a state of confusion, self-delusion and false power that excludes them from the "metaphysical mysteries."71

Also, analysts note that we are confronted with the phenomenon of the fear of marriage which is maintained by such matters as: "precaution" towards "the traditional model" of family; "lack of confidence toward the opposite sex" which is sometimes reached because of the "transient" and irresponsible relationships; "the fear" against the worsening of "personal" problems which could be doubled by the problems of a "second person"; "the fear" against the worsening of "personal" problems which could be doubled by "possible pregnancy and children". To the question of a male listener addressed from the perspective of a father – "Why don’t people marry any longer nowadays?" – Priest Mihai Aurel72, answers synthetically using the following arguments: "lust" corroborated with "the decline of human nature"; "careerism" linked to "the desire of acquiring proprieties"; "refusing to live with parents" as an expression of "libertinism".73

2.2. Conclusions. "Sacrificial love" vs affective conjugality and their effects on parental responsibility – The results of a sociological study.

Also significant in terms of our research is the intrinsic link described by St. John Chrysostom, between the spouses living happily together and the good upbringing of children, with positive effects on relatives, friends, neighbors and therefore of the community as a whole. "Why? Because if the spouses live in good understanding, then their children will thrive and the neighbors will be delighted by the scents of their Christian life, their friends will be glad and the relatives will be proud. But if the reverse happens, all will clutter, all the family aspects will be disturbing and

72 Answers given by Priest Mihai Aurel during the "Answer listeners" issue made by the Priest Ciprian Ulinici on topics related to family. Radio Trinitas, Monday, May 4, 2015, 21.30-22.45 h.
confusing.”

Given the role of imitation and therefore the pattern of family "taken as a model" by children, Priest professor PhD Petre Semen from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology "Dumitru Stănîloae" Iași, in the section entitled "Risk Factors in Educating the Young Generation," asks not rhetorically, "what kind of family could be considered a model" because one encounters "families and families."

a. The inclination of some parents towards overprotection who, focusing their attention on applying "the rules" in the family, behave more like "policemen or judges" losing sight of the establishment of a "true and stable relationship from person to person."

b. Parents neglecting their children as opposed to the overprotection issue, a phenomenon which is defined as "carelessness or negligence in raising children, total or almost total indifference specifically to the fundamental needs of the child" (shelter, food, clothing, healthcare, education and collaboration with school, healthy lifestyle);

c. Family abandonment and the divorce of parents directly affecting the vulnerability of children represents another "major problem" with destructive effects on family in general and on the children in particular. At this point, Priest professor PhD Petre Semen refers to the serious difficulties faced by neglected children ranging from emotional and material insecurity, the feeling of guiltiness, "mimicry", addictions of all kinds (psychoactive substances, people, gambling etc.) idolatry and "suicide";

d. School abandonment is presented not only as a negative effect of child neglect by parents, but also as "another huge problem" affecting school, "family, Church" and "society" as a whole.

The definitions proposed today by parenting researchers, in a psycho-socio-legal approach, are visibly different from the meaning of the term "parenting" proposed by the French dictionary Le Petit Robert, which classifies the qualities of "parenthood" into the quality of "mother" and the quality of "father". Or, as we argued previously, the current trend, supported mainly from a legislative perspective, is to redefine family through virulent and insidious attacks of what precisely is relevant and defining for the existence of the family in socio-cultural and religious terms: marriage, maternity and paternity. The alternatives proposed by the zealous legislators are already known. What seems very serious is that by attacking marriage as a civil and religious institution, we don’t harm parenting as an abstract term, but its contents, namely motherhood and fatherhood which are inextricably linked to the child's identity. Giving up the terms of "mother" and "father", as current family and demographic policies propose, means to give up our identity intimately linked to family and kinship as essential resources in achieving socio-cultural protection – with spiritual and religious meanings – of family and children in the European context. Or maybe we believe that by giving up love, namely family, marriage, mother and father we become "multicultural Europeans"? Or maybe we think we will better protect the children whose parents are alienated from the natural and the essentially sacramental aspects of existence in living their so-called "love relationship"?

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Indeed, we witness today the emergence of the parental family as a denial of marriage crisis doubled by the harsh reality of divorce and separation. The myth of the "child king" who brings forward the primacy of his rights and interests above all is denied by the myth of the "child-prosthesis" or "crutch" of the parental couple, the child's interest being regarded as "an empty bottle inside which everyone deposits whatever he wants to find". "Investment" in the child crosses the traditional paradigm of "the promise for the future", who is perceived through the prism of "adult interests" as "the primary source of love" the child becoming the substitute for trust within the couple relationship as a vector of a negotiated relation!

We define in our research, starting from the concept of parenting in extenso – contemporary kinship within the extended family and kinship relations including the religious component – as a resource on parenting in the narrow sense. As a result, our attention focuses, by means of our sociological investigation, on the term "parenting" related to the process of assuming parental responsibilities including religious identification and transmitting the moral, religious values related to maternal and paternal roles. Only in this way, "affective conjugality" and assumed parenthood could be prerequisites for the reconstruction of the contemporary family, this regaining the status of "ruined or changing sovereignty". The answer to the question of whether the couple parenthood and filiation "can rely only on willpower" is negative on the grounds that "individual will" and "family rights", promoted to the rank of "fundamental realities", deny precisely "the meaning and depth of human development".

Therefore we get to analyze nowadays controversial triad, namely the interdependence between Family-School-Church affected by the changes produced by the secularization strategies which have negative consequences on our children, whose bright future we all strive to assure not always managing to choose the correct approach. Sociologists of religion have identified and explained, for example, "the decline" of human identity - "one of the faces of secularism" – which results in "losing the ecclesiastic meaning" of life and paradoxically, "the pagan search for meaning (be it «duhovnicesc», ecclesiastic)!

From the sociological perspective of Cristinel Joja from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Arad, the drama "of the contemporary Christian identity", is "Christian pagan" and "pagan Christian" life which has undergone a "spiritual decline" or spiritual-religious "syncretism".

However, the sacred voice of St. John Chrysostom cries from the depths of existence: "I beseech and implore you to take special care of your children and look for their soul's salvation." Suggestive in this regard are the results of our research that highlight the special care that parents have for the socio-professional safety, followed by authority and rules; unfortunately they focus less on communication and developing a personalized parent-child relationship (with significant

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79 Ibidem, p. 158.
80 Joja, Cristinel. 2015. Interview with the program „Dialogues Trinitas” Radio Trinitas, on 31 March 2015 from 18.30 to 19.00 hours.
81 St. John Chrysostom. Op. cit., p. 120.
differences between mothers and fathers). However, the answers given by parents regarding the communication on religious matters and religious practices such as Holy Sacrament of Confession and Church attendance by children are surprising and auspicious.

A significant percentage of favorable responses applies to the statement I make every effort to offer everything the child needs (92.9%), while only 68% of parents are aware of the child's reading list, and 32.6% watch the child’s activity on the internet. These results indicate an increased involvement from parents regarding the child's social life path, but a lower presence concerning the child’s individual activity and his consumption habits.

The first aspect that has gathered the most positive answers is related to the reactions of parents when they see that the child has done something wrong: 82.3% percent of those questioned use verbal punishment: I scold him whenever I think he is wrong and only slightly above average (56%) of the parents surveyed said they generally go to the doctor at any sign of illness of the child, the same percentage of parents having the habit of reading to their children or talking to them before bedtime. Distribution of answers depending on the gender of the subject shows that mothers are more concerned with maintaining a direct contact with the child. At the same time, with a significant difference compared to the percentage of fathers, mothers are those who engage in initiating a positive context for the bedtime discussion – be it reading or conversation (70.9%). On the opposite side, only 37% of fathers have this habit. Two thirds of respondents said they talk to their children about topics on religious subjects (67.9%). The children of 67.1% of the respondents go to confess to the Priest, and 43.2% often go to Church. Only 29.3% of respondents' children use to read various religious books. All religions sociologists provide a solution to the phenomenon of "re-sacralization of social life", specifically, family life. Thus "the search for meaning" as the sociologist of religions, Nicu Gavriluță, stated in an interview at Trinitas TV, "relating to God“ must be a constant preoccupation of our lives consisting in "communicating our spiritual state" – here, the sociologist referring to the "lack of wonder, contemplation, special experience through Prayer" – "communion within the Church" (as a spiritual therapy against individualism, our note) and the ability of "concentration, will and control" (as antidote to abate positive energy in a secularized world, our note).

References

82 Nicu Gavriluță. 2014. Interview to Trinitas Radio, see endnote 19 of this Article.


Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur. Problemele vieții. The translation was made after the original Greek by Cristian Spătăreu and Daniela Filioroaneu. Editura Cartea Ortodoxă. Editura Egumenița.


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