Chapter 14

The Decisive Factor for a Successful Religion Class:
The Gifted Teacher, With Vocation and Character

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ABSTRACT

The success of the Religion class depends on a number of factors, some of them related to the students, others to the educators. From the second category, the essential factor is the teacher employed to teach the school subject. This study aims to examine the determining factor involved in teaching religion and to explain the paradigmatic profile of the teacher. His/her strong or weak points are decisive for accomplishing or missing the objectives of the Religion class. In the present study, the authors mainly consider the paradigmatic profile of an educator, in contrast with that of a mere school “employee.”

PRELIMINARIES: ESSENTIAL FACTORS IN EDUCATION

In order to understand the place and the role of the teacher in the religious educational act, it would be useful to start with an overall view on the factors involved in education. Considering our topic, two categories are to be taken into account: “general factors” – found in lay sciences studies (Bontaș, 1994, pp. 35-46) –, and “special factors” – found in Christian pedagogical texts. Therefore, based on multidisciplinary research (in philosophy of education, psychology and sociology,
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genetics etc.), secular pedagogy established three general factors in personality development: a. “Heredity” (as an internal factor); b. “Environment” (as an external factor); c. “Education” (as a mixed factor, both internal and external). These three factors led to as many related theories: heredity-based theories, environmental theories and theories of the double determination. The special factors, essential for our topic, are: Family, Church and School.

General Factors

1. **Heredity:** It represents all predispositions of anatomical, psychological and physiological nature, innate or transmitted by the parents via genetic information, from previous generations to the young ones. According to the scientific criteria of hereditary factors analysis, three groups of hereditary predispositions were established:
   a. Predispositions of the senses (hearing, smell, sight, taste, touch).
   b. Predispositions of the central nervous system (especially types of temperament: melancholic (excessive sensibility, low mobility, inhibition), choleric (impulsivity, agitation, courage, lack of balance), phlegmatic (inertia, excessive inhibition, derision, perfidy, imperturbability), sanguine (balance, dynamism, discernment, self-possession).
   c. Predispositions regarding instincts (lat. „instinctus” = “innate behavior, instinct”) – not only those of biological nature (food, defense, perpetuation of species etc.), but also those related to the spiritual side (ethical innate dispositions, that tend towards the perfection and fulfillment of the human being). Regarding hereditary dispositions, according to Orthodox dogmatics, nobody should fear certain negative influences (such as curses, consequences of sins etc.), if they are integrated within the Church, which is One and True due to the Holy Sacraments. Not only that the original sin is erased by the Sacrament of Baptism, for example, but also all the consequences of our forefathers’ sins are eliminated through Confession and Eucharist. The Old Testament sentence, “The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children’s teeth are set on edge” (Jeremiah, 31, 29), is amended by the prophet that uttered it himself, even in the following verses (messianic verses, in fact): “But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge. Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel...” (v. 30, 31). And the prophet Ezekiel says: “The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him” (18, 20).
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