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- abstract -

The Pedagogical Ideal in the Thought of Saint John Chrysostom

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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| Abbreviations list | 4 |
| I. INTRODUCTION | 7 |
| I.1. Preliminary | 7 |
| I.2. Biographical | 12 |
| I.3. Bibliographical | 26 |
| II. PEDAGOGICAL IDEAL IN ANTIQUITY | 37 |
| II.1. Knowledge and education in Greek philosophy. Plato and Aristotle | 37 |
| II.2. Education and family in the Jewish world | 53 |
| II.3. Pedagogy and educator in patristic literature of the first four centuries | 73 |
| II.4. Education and urban space: Antioch and Constantinople | 88 |
| III. PEDAGOGY, RETHORIC, PHILOSOPHY | 103 |
| III.1. The preaching ideal of Saint John Chrysostom | 103 |
| III.1.1. The quality of preaching | 103 |
| III.1.2. The qualities of the preacher | 109 |
| III.1.3. The pedagogical training | 115 |
| III.1.4. Pedagogy and audience | 121 |
| III.2. The Criticism of St. John regarding Hellenism; The meaning the true philosophy | 124 |
| IV. DIVINE PEDAGOGY | 130 |
| IV.1. The pedagogical sense of Revelation. The importance of Scripture | 130 |
| IV.1.1. The universality of Scripture | 132 |
| IV.1.2. Scripture - path to completion | 133 |
| IV.1.3. The importance of Scripture in the life of believers | 136 |
| IV.1.4. Reading Scripture | 140 |
| IV.1.5. The interpretation of Scripture | 147 |
| IV.2. The pedagogy of salvation. Christ – the supreme teacher | 151 |
| IV.2.1. The Christology of the Antiochian School | 153 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| IV.2.2. Christ - the new Adam | 159 |
| IV.2.3. The healing of sin | 164 |
| IV.2.4. The new life | 169 |
| IV.3. The space of the pedagogy of salvation – the Church | 173 |
| IV.3.1. The mystery of the Church | 173 |
| IV.3.2. The Unity of the body and the diversity of the members | 175 |
| IV.3.3. Rebirth in Baptism | 179 |
| IV.3.4. Eucharistic communion | 184 |
| IV.4. The pedagogical mission of the bishop/priest | 189 |
| V. EDUCATION AND THE PEDAGOGICAL IDEAL | 195 |
| V.1. Family and Education | 195 |
| V.1.1. Marriage, family, society | 204 |
| V.1.2. The risks of deforming the family | 212 |
| V.1.3. The alternative of virginity. The ascetic education | 219 |
| V.2. The children | 234 |
| V.2.1. Raising the children | 234 |
| V.2.2. Rules on raising the children | 237 |
| V.3. The purpose of education. Virtues and salvation | 250 |
| V.3.1. Freedom and grace | 250 |
| V.3.2. The good deeds | 253 |
| V.3.3. The inner transformation | 256 |
| V.3.4. Love | 258 |
| V.3.5. Forgiveness | 262 |
| V.3.6. Friendship | 264 |
| V.3.7. Virtues and happiness | 267 |
| V. CONCLUIONS | 270 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY | 278 |
| index | 301 |

Keywords: church, children, education, educator, Greek philosophy, family, freedom, (St.) John Chrysostom, knowledge, saint, salvation, scripture, teacher, teaching, virtue.

ABSTRACT

I accomplished, in this research, an exegetical analysis of the vision of St. John Chrysostom on pedagogical ideal. The analytical framework of this approach was generally seconded by comparative study.

We cannot talk about education without referring to the ideal of education. Always oriented education is something education “aims” something – namely the formation of its subjects in the spirit of a certain configuration values considered essential by the community in which it operates an educational system or another. I chose to analyze in this paper the pedagogical ideal shaped by the author who is universally considered as the greatest orator of the patristic age, St. John Chrysostom.

Beyond highlighting general pedagogical issues, we analyzed how St. John Chrysostom sees its theological purpose. The message of St. John Chrysostom even if addressed to Antiochian or Constantinopolitan community, is not confined to the population of these cities. He has not reported to the human community as a well-defined, having common concerns and a well-defined geographical area. Like the Apostle Paul, St. John Chrysostom is a preacher whose message remains valid for the whole of Christianity, even if operating in a historical, social and political well-established context.

In the introductory chapter I synthesized the biographical and bibliographical landmarks of St. John Chrysostom.

In Chapter II of the work we treated about "The pedagogical ideal in antiquity." First, we considered the problem of knowledge and education in Greek philosophy, looking to the two great representatives, Plato and Aristotle - whose vision had complex echoes in the Christian tradition. If Plato's myth (or allegory) Cave illustrates that education was not a simple transfer of knowledge to the ignorant souls, but an awakening of latent abilities in the soul. As mediator between the two worlds, the soul must move towards the ultimate realities, mainly where knowledge can be accurate. Plato says that the only true knowledge comes only through the intellect, because the world of ideas can be conceived only through what belonged to them and not through the senses and perception. For Aristotle, knowledge is accomplished by the intellect but inseparable from sensation and perception. It is the spirit that leads to the knowledge of things under the original unit and to the highest principles of science. For both Plato and Aristotle, education means a long road training and transformation.

The Fathers of the first centuries highlighted the role of education, both before Baptism, during catechumenate, and during the entire Christian life, following an ideal towards which never cease to climb. Since the primary period, Fathers as Clement stressed the idea of an increase in knowledge of Church doctrine and morality. The two great schools of Christian antiquity, Alexandria and Antioch, have developed a complex picture of Christian pedagogy based primarily on knowledge of scriptural texts. Explaining these texts has an essential formative role; exegesis does not involve only the transmission of information but engaging in a moral or allegorical meaning. A case in discussing pedagogical vision in the early centuries of the Christian is that of Clement of Alexandria. Christian education after Clement has a Christocentric character. The Supreme Teacher of humanity is Jesus Christ, and pedagogy is „a good leading man to virtue since his childhood“. Pedagogical process modeling is one mind. Man strives for good and has the power to become good. For it must use all the powers that God has given them, and the teacher's role is to lead them to his students closer to Christ. The principles laid down by Clement of Alexandria in his work had many echoes in the writings of the patristic authors subsequent: Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, and those of Christian teachers from all the times.

In the fourth century we find a complex interaction between Christianity and pedagogical values of classical Greek thought. Besides the desire to know the components of philosophy, a crucial element in teacher training will be the Christian rhetoric. And in this regard, St. John Chrysostom could be considered as „the most talented Christian preacher of his era“ and „the last of the great orators of the ancient urban world“ (P. Brown). Without a solid grounding in the field of rhetoric, his sermons certainly would not have reached the hearts of so many Christians. Active in a major cultural center, studies have been decisively marked by Libanius, considered one of the best teachers of his time.

We have developed in Chapter III of my work St. John's vision on the relationship between "Pedagogy, Rhetoric and philosophy". To talk about pedagogy of St. John, is needed primarily to explore his ideal preachers. Homiletics art is intertwined with pedagogical always. From a historical perspective, it is hard to speak of teaching and preaching as separate entities. The early church expressed confidence that the sermon is, by definition, a teaching, a teaching process knowledge, a culture of people of faith.

For St. John, the sermon is of paramount importance towards salvation of believers. Her goal is not just to explain, but to liberate and transform. The role of preacher is reserved for bishops and priests. They need many skills and a thorough preparation, their mission is one huge responsibility. Preaching is hard work to be accomplished and it requires a certain predisposition, a certain appeal in that direction. Doctors, says St. John, were on hand all sorts of means to cure patients. The priest, however, apart from the personal example does not merely preach at hand. If personal example involves an intense exercise in virtue, preaching requires a thorough preparation involves first of all a perfect knowledge of Scripture. Taking a life model and a thorough knowledge of Scripture and doctrine of the Church, the preacher can achieve its aim of perpetual change for the better life of his community, to cause the formation of a lifestyle of high moral character. A better understanding of how Scripture and doctrine entail a departure from the classical philosophical thinking space, which for St. John is not only worthless, but completely harmful. In the face of divine pedagogy, the whole culture of Antiquity loses all relevance.

Chapter IV of this paper is titled "divine pedagogy". It aims first issue Revelation and Scripture. Since they contain the word of God to people, their amount exceeds all the creations of world literature. Its main author is the Holy Spirit, because He found the holy authors what they had to play in writing. Wishing to emphasize the more salient role, St. John says even that is written by the Holy Spirit. Addressed to all men, Scripture is the spiritual food of the soul believer. Knowing God's Word, by reading and studying Scripture is, after teaching St. John Chrysostom, the fundamental duty of every Christian.

In the center stands Pedagogy divine plan of salvation, or Christ - the supreme Teacher. Christ is positioned in the center of history, the reality of the Incarnation constitutes the kernel of Christianity, vital truth that lies at the foundation of the Christian life. Comments on this issue accompanying guidance Christians at any time of their life in the Church. And this new one as their very life is nothing but life in the body of Christ. For St. John incarnation marks a profound shift in the order of creation and targeting a whole history for a different perspective on existence. St. John prefers to treat theme Christology in a double direction: that of apology against heresies and work towards concrete effects of the Savior in the life of humanity, specifying how anyone can have access to salvation.

The grace of Christ bestowed on human nature results in liberation from the slavery of sin, transforming and healing old man deformations occurring through Adam's sin. Moreover, not only reborn man will return to Adam before the sin, but will have access to a wealth of gifts much higher. By restoring life Christ offers the possibility of restoring order creation. At the level of human life, the gifts offered by Christ must be accompanied by the practice of virtue. Healing humanity as a whole will require a living angel. How heavenly life is made accessible to all those who in faith and love have fellowship with the risen body of Christ. Man regains the grace released by the vicissitudes of existence, sickness, poverty. Redeeming grace is accompanied by a continuous ascent but in sanctification. The ideal preacher is perfection all believers. His work teaching has no end, not ends in a point. The pedagogy aimed at continuous improvement of life, a continuous way to the kingdom.

The area of the pedagogy of salvation is the Church. Once inside the history, gradually covers the whole earth, and God's plan on creation cannot be diverted by a similar act first men fall. The church is a reality indestructible, even if subject to risks such as the fragmentation and secularization. The Church is, first of all, the great mystery of the union of man with God. And this union it is not possible to man alone, apart from the others. Therefore, the Church is communion space. Man is saved in the community, even if the angelic life that is called asceticism presupposes. Union with God implies a continuous effort of communion with others, everyone is twinned as sons of God.

Church presupposes unity in diversity. The various states support each other, growing together. Christ the Savior in His body establishes unity in the midst of a complex diversity towards a communion of all. He wants all that to be fully incorporated into the Church united to take care of each other and each other to share their gifts received. Pedagogy has no such target a single building, but a community. For St. John, ecclesiological vision is deeply rooted in the social space. As he exhorted the faithful to a virtuous life involves transferring them to teach them by example. The event in good to others is a priority for the baptized.

Church life together-sharing implies a liturgical. The Eucharist reveals the mystery of the Church as the Body of Christ union. The communicants become one flesh. They remain on distinct individuals, and in this case Saint John provide bread image which is composed of many grains of wheat. Eucharist celebrates not only the union of man with God, but of people between them. The Eucharist unites Christians only when sharing the same body, but also by brotherly love that flows from it and extends throughout the life of the faithful. The Eucharist thus extending the life of the Christian, causing or being inseparable from the benefits of others. Any member of the Church must, according to St. John, to go with him in his own house what he heard and learned during liturgical service and sermon and share his family, meditating on them and trying to put them into practice permanent. Married couples, for example, carry with them at home first love, faith, prayer, charity, humility, fear of God and the practice of virtue in general. Preparing for sharing one of the priorities of the preacher. It is a mystery so great care of approaching it must be greater.

Chapter V of this paper is titled "Education and pedagogical ideal" and points to the concrete spaces where education takes place. First it is relevant how St. John deals with the theme of family.

The family is the foundation of any society, changes in relationships within it may indicate structural changes in society. Hence the great importance of the family in society once the trial. Complementary relationship between man and woman after St. John Chrysostom is based on the very act of divine creation. The ideal family is therefore primordial achieve full communion with God through the perfection of human nature, man and woman after the man had exceeded this apparent division by stabilizing the better of them reflected a full interpersonal communion of which was to develop mankind.

Childbirth is seen as a blessing and family brought a fruit of love between spouses. The care of child manifests on all levels. The biggest concern of parents is for their education because children's education is a goal of all parents.

St. John insists in numerous homilies on the essential role of the family in children's education. Parents should follow, on the one hand, maintaining chastity of their children, and on the other hand, training and learning their piety, modesty, wealth and embrace contempt of all virtue. He recommended parents to enrich their children do with the material, but with virtues that they buy a more secure future for body and soul.

The purpose of education is to create a moral man. As St. John tells us, a child who was raised so as to bring him all the requirements of a good education is respected and loved by all, even if it were poorer than all. Acquiring committing virtues and good deeds lead to a real transformation, both the Christian and the community. They make possible the ideal city of angels, the material values of spiritual goods are replaced. Virtues lead to true human fulfillment. St. John insists that if something we can truly enjoy in this life, in the here and now, that something is the virtues. Good works arising from the virtues marks an inner transformation, spiritual growth, rising of human nature.

A special pedagogical component extensively treated by St. John is the ascetic education. Frequently, St. John speaks of the ideal of virginity as the most authentic form of Christian life, superior marriage, reproducing the primordial purity and

anticipating the final union with God. Of course, that virginity is not limited to abstinence, but primarily means purity of mind. St. John Chrysostom wants to show the superiority of monasticism, but that the monks will conduct we can we live better in the city. Renunciation of worldly goods monks bring to the fore the spiritual things. Removing the material goods they offer and lack of care towards them. It is easier to acquire wealth, but very difficult to acquire true treasure of wisdom. Cultural formation of monks is particularly important because in some cases they have to be defenders of Christianity not only in prayer but also through his speech of defense against complainants.

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Contemporary Christian religious education histories inevitably include the history of Christian preaching, which is one of the most traceable forms of educating the lay Christians. Beyond the specific terminology century IV - orator, philosopher, teacher, preacher, trainer or tutor - Saint John Chrysostom can be considered fully educator, or more - as it was so great preacher, the It was a peerless educator. The sermon was the favorite form of education, and his ideal pedagogical went far beyond simply teaching knowledge.

Saint John Chrysostom can be seen not only as an educator of ancient communities of Antioch and Constantinople, who were witnesses of the immediate pastoral teaching and his care, but also as an educator over the centuries. Through his work, he continued to educate more than 1,600 years Christians who strove to move forward towards understanding Scripture. St. John distinguishes such as perhaps the most able of all the Eastern Fathers of being labeled as a Christian educator. He was essentially a practical theologian. His sermons show that his main interest address how God's word can transform everyday life of the whole community, promoting Christian faith lived. The way he excelled in the mission had much to do with education and culture which in turn received: have all the advantages of an education rigorous gained both in schools rhetorical Antioch century IV and the theological school of Antioch Christianity. It was so competent as a rhetorician that his great teacher and pagan Libanius would have liked successor. But it was so devoted to following Christ, that he learned ascetic training intertwined with a real memorizing Scripture before you start preaching. Education

classical antiquity intertwined with Christian ascetic practice led him to a practically ideal, which aimed not only the transmission of knowledge to its community members, but transforming them and society as a whole. His ideal pedagogical represent him, as we have repeatedly stressed throughout this paper, the acquisition of virtue and salvation of the shepherd.

According to St. John, the Church's life is in constant advance in virtue, in a perpetual blessing. In it, creation becomes "heavenly" and the matter of satisfying object of passions, becomes a means of expressing love. Entry into the Church thus involves not only a formal conversion, not just going through a manual catechism. Baptism is the beginning of an endless life "angels", continuously growing in sanctification. Therefore, St. John Church indicates primarily a way of life.

The objective of the sermon of St. John was the hearts of men, and his pedagogical ideal targeted this transformation. To the extent that members of the Church and its teachings were aware of deep increasingly clear that new realities of life reborn social conditions were to change by itself as a natural way of living the Christian city. St. John watched what was so spiritual and intellectual regeneration of his flock. Those who assumed the new lifestyle were informed choice. The tools for change were St. John preaching and spiritual guidance, never force or political pressure.

For St. John, the virtues crowned by love, within the ecclesial communion, can gradually heal all human flaws and weaknesses of the human community generated by the fall. The life of the Church must be a continuous outpouring of love, to fill the whole earth. Finally, this is the expression that Saint John gives to the pedagogical ideal, the culmination of Christian education being the holiness – a holiness that aims to change the society in which it manifests itself. The entire pedagogical effort of Saint John goes in this practical direction. The force of his message has swept down the centuries, teaching and inspiring, bringing us constantly remember that education means transformation not only of reason nor the individual as a whole, but the whole society, and finally the whole world in the light of God's Kingdom.

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