

## The Portrait of the Christian Pedagogue in Religious Literature and Patristic Philosophy

Ion Albulescu, Mirela Albulescu

*Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

**ABSTRACT:** Christianity has provided humans an ideal and a conception of life, synthesized in principles able to serve as stable benchmarks for moral and intellectual training efforts. The purpose of Christian education was to help the believer to take care of his soul, to reach that interior perfection, which would allow him the access to "The Kingdom of Heaven", which allows us to conclude that we already are in front of a new type of pedagogy. The Fathers of the Christian Church have fulfilled, through the transmitted teachings and by personal example, for the most of believers, a teaching mission. Their activity marked the beginning of an educational model oriented towards acquiring basic elements of Christian dogma, forming ideas about the world according to this dogma, nurturing a certain attitude towards life. Its content was marked by strong ethical load, as the man fallen in the native sin must be prepared for a happy future life. Therefore, the meaning of education is to facilitate the acquirement of virtue, as a guarantee of the fulfillment of such an objective. The patristic literature and philosophy promoted Christian values: prayer, virtue, charity and the love of the close ones, but also universal human cultural values. For the transmission of these elements a dedicated pedagogue was needed, whose profile was clearly outlined in the writings of the Holy Fathers. We tried to capture in this study, the main qualities of a Christian educator, like these have been presented in the writings of the early centuries.

**KEYWORDS:** *Christian pedagogue, education, patristic philosophy, pedagogical attitude.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Parents of the Christian Church have approached in their religious and philosophical writings their current religious themes, establishing principles and drawing a coherent way of achieving both the education of children and young people as well as of adults. Among the topics covered there is also the profile of the educator, which has always been discussed up until today. The importance of good education and therefore of a good educator has always been highlighted and, apart from rare cases, has been recognized by everyone.

References to the qualities of a good educator are still in Plato's Republic or in Quintilianus's *Institutio Oratoria*, as a result of the belief that such qualities are a guarantee of the proper training of children and young people. Such preoccupations are also encountered by the Holy Fathers of the Church, who have often argued that the teacher must have certain qualities in order to achieve his work correctly and with good results and succeed in his noble mission.

The ideas of the Fathers of the Church and of the classical authors who influenced them, including Plato and Quintilianus, were transmitted throughout the Middle Ages, influencing those with concerns about education. We can invoke, for illustration, the Dominican Peraldus, who in the thirteenth century demanded from the educator, under the influence of Augustine and the Antiquity, to be a talented and inventive spirit, to lead a moral life, to accompany science with modesty, to prove eloquence, experience and practical dexterity in teaching children. As promoters of the Christian ideal of education, the Holy Fathers left to the posterity authentic pedagogical role models.

### II. THE EXEMPLARY ROLE MODEL

Christianity was not limited to the cultural, liturgical dimension, but it developed a true theological doctrine, based on the teachings preached by the Greatest Teacher. From the beginning, Christianity manifested itself as a religion-teaching, and consequently the preoccupation to shape an ideal teacher profile was inevitable. The role model was Jesus Christ, commonly called the Master, the appellant that He Himself instituted: "You call Me Master and Lord, and well you say because that I am" (Matthew 23: 8-10). By concrete and symbolic parables and deeds, Christ pursued the shaping of the believer's personality.

His teachings and deeds are primarily aimed at guiding man on the path of salvation, which involves a long process of inner transformation. Salvation is gained through faith and through a steadfast work of soul education. The wisdom that emanates from His parables, concerning repentance and good deeds, is the foundation of Christian pedagogy. Christ is an exemplary model that every Christian believer seeks to imitate, even though he will never be able to reach the same level of wisdom and virtue. By learning from Christ, we will certainly be better and happier people. In this sense, He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14: 6). Man's path in life should be that of Christ, who is our Archetype, our role model. For the faithful Christian, He provides the role model, principles and values of education.

The Holy Fathers further developed the Christian pedagogical model, based on the biblical precepts established by the Saviour. God-Christ is the Teacher, the Educator, the Pedagogue by excellence, the absolute foundation of the Christian pedagogical doctrine. An assumption of this exemplary model, that of the Perfect Teacher, in pedagogical thinking, we come across for the first time in patristic literature at Clement Alexandrine.

Clement Alexandrine redefined the pagan philosophical concept of Logos, which defines a fundamental principle of Christian gnosis. Christ is the incarnate Logos; He is the authentic Teacher. The writing *Teacher* is, in fact, a Handbook of Christian education and moral in which Christ is presented as Christians role model educator. Here, Clement Alexandrine speaks of the acquisition of virtue inspired by the supreme role model represented by Christ. This is the path to the salvation of the soul, opened by faith and education. God's contemplation is the source of virtue and daily compassion, inspired by the divine model. The teacher is the Logos, the Word of God, which leads us to salvation in the Kingdom of heaven. The Word of God is synonymous with the Teacher, because it guides the authentic education of men. In order to achieve his purpose, He resorts to encouraging parables, which strengthen the human soul and rules of conduct to follow in life, deriving from true faith.

Clement Alexandrine uses the name "the Teacher" to show that the Saviour guides us about the behaviours of our everyday life: "In all things the Lord helps us, and in all things, he is helpful; as man as well as God; as God he forgives our sins, and as a man he teaches us to sin no more. It is self-evident that man should be loved by God, because he is His creation. He made all the rest by commandment, but he made man by His hands and infused him with something of his own" (Clement Alexandrine, 1982, p. 170). The perfect role model of our life is Christ, who has assumed, in His hypostasis, the human nature and has deified it. Through all the salvation work accomplished, He educates us and opens our way to the Holy Spirit impartation.

### III. CHRISTIAN TEACHER'S MISSION

The Christian Dogma also owned a specific conception of the good education of the child. In this respect, the educator has the duty not to let the child's personality develop at the will of chance, but with a great ability to lead it to the Christian ideal of life. Most of the Holy Fathers of the Church have spoken of this duty to the child. Christian education, as it was conceived by the Holy Fathers of the Church, can only be accomplished by the idea that man is marked by original sin, and for this reason he needs a strong self-discipline, based on both the understanding and the observance of the divine commandments and also on the spiritual detachment from the earthly world subjected to sin. The one who succeeds is entitled to hope for salvation. Only the man who has received a chosen education can live by avoiding sin.

Because of the education received, man aspires to absolute holiness, to imitate Christ in what he does, to a meaningful life. As a teacher at the Alexandria School, Origen sought to lead his students to the Christian ideal: perfection to the likeness of God. Perfection is achieved through free choice, self-effort and imitation of the divine model. In the writing *Against Celsus*, considered the most important apology of early Christianity, Origen speaks of the fact that wisdom is the first of the so-called "charisms" given to man by God. After it comes knowledge and then faith, since simple people who approach, by their might, the godly life also must have the possibility of salvation (Origen, 1984). All Christians believe the same, but not in the same way. There are Christians who are content with simple faith, Christians who touch the gnosis, that is, knowledge through the interpretation of biblical texts, but also perfect Christians who reach the authentic meaning of the Scriptures and who by contemplation find in the divine Law the path of future happiness.

John Chrysostom also speaks about the Christian educator's purpose, in his *Homilies*. He accuses secular education based on classical Greco-Latin culture of indifference regarding the spiritual formation of young people in accordance with spirituality and moral biblical precepts. Whereas it is essential for the educator to take care of their spiritual cultivation to become virtuous and godly. In the absence of virtue and godliness, moral decay and social disorder are inherent. We need to teach our children the art of living well, that is to live in accordance with Christian principles and values. Essentially, it is the formation of man as a moral-religious being, freed from worldly impulses and passions.

The educational ideal proposed by John Chrysostom is a purely religious one: perfecting the soul by cultivating faith. So, we mustn't seek to educate the child as a man skilled in art, science, and beautiful speech, but as a devoted believer (John Chrysostom, 2001). John Chrysostom does not condemn the secular doctrine, which can be useful to man, but believes that religious education is more important, so that the soul can aspire to salvation. To educate is to take care of the children's spiritual purity, the cultivation of good-purpose, intelligence, morality and godliness, in other words, to take care of the salvation of their souls.

John Chrysostom (2001) develops his pedagogical conception as did many of the first Christian theologians, based on two essential ideas: 1) the child must not be prepared for earthly life, but for eternal life, in the afterlife; 2) the act of education has a holy function, that of purification and spiritual ascension. By education, children must be prepared to dominate their worldly passions or dangerous inclinations, and only follow in life what is in accord with the Christian idea of good. Education is the most important of all arts. But if the arts are beneficial to the earthly world, the art of education is accomplished in order to be able to enter the future world. Whoever wishes to use this art will have to prove himself more skilfully than any other artist. That is why the choice of the educator is not done by chance, but by considering a series of qualities which he must prove: virtue, sufficiency, convergence between word and deed. Only such a man, worthy of his purpose, will be able to influence others for good.

Like the previously mentioned Christian authors, Basil the Great believes that the ultimate goal of life and education is not in the earthly life, whose values he considers neither desired nor admired. The true purpose of man is the preparation for "the other life". Consequently, it is necessary to love and to strive with might and main to what can lead us to the future life and despise everything unrelated to it. Therefore, an ideal of piety, perfect in the Lord, is proposed by St. Basil the Great.

#### IV. PREPARING THE CHRISTIAN TEACHER

Education presupposes the assimilation of an elaborate culture, but the early Christians rejected the pagan Greek-Roman culture, considering it a dangerous one. Therefore, they have made special efforts to develop their own culture, different from the heathen one (Constantin Narly, 1935). But the new culture would develop over time, little by little, for which reason the foundations of Christian education at the beginning were assured by the study of the *Bible*, which contains principles, exhortations, suggestions that form a true moral-educational guidance for men, regardless of age.

At its beginnings, Christian education was accomplished in and through the Church; of course, the family's contribution was also important. The Christian truth as well as the moral principles contained in the Bible were far from the humanist ideal of ancient culture: "A Christian, writes Pierre Riché, could be scandalized by the immorality of the texts proposed by the scholar, and to consider unnecessary studies whose fundamental purpose was art discourse. The cult of the Muses risked removing the faithful from the cult of the true God" (Pierre Riché, 2001, p. 14). Intellectual curiosity may well be satisfied by studying sacred texts as well. There is no point in resorting to pagans, poets, historians or pagan philosophers, when there is a Bible rich enough in content to replace old literary texts. Here we find many principles and norms of education, exposed less systematically, but sufficient for good education.

Not a few were those who, in the early Christian centuries, rejected the ancient culture, due in particular to its idolatrous character. Tertullian (1981), for example, despised much of the heathen culture, in which he saw an impiety for God and a false guidance to wisdom. He countered the rationalism of ancient philosophy, whose representatives he called "the patriarchs of the heretics", making the famous statement: "credo quia absurdum". Christianity does not need the values of pagan culture, for faith in Christ is sufficient. In the writing of *De praescriptionibus contra haereticos*, Tertullian condemns Greek philosophy, in which he identifies the origin of all evils, discord and heresies. In order to provide an ideological basis to Christianity, we do not need philosophy, but only faith. Knowledge of God can only be achieved by the way of revelation, opposed to rational knowledge. Man is obliged to trust, without any reservation, in what he acquires in this way. But because the profane studies could not be abandoned in the preparation of children and young people, Tertullian admitted that it was necessary for the Christian child to attend the secular school but to take care of the idolatry and immorality of classical education. As a precaution, the young man must first be given the teachings of the Christian religion, which will keep him from the negative influences of the profane writings.

With all these criticisms and rejection attitudes, many Christians, while admitting the superiority of the *Bible* to the liberal arts, felt solidarity with Greek-Roman civilization and sought to acquire classical culture. They recovered ancient culture and assumed it: "The Holy Fathers received a classical education, learned to feel, to think, to write at the school of the ancients; the greatest of them, the Cappadocians, John Chrysostom, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, are among the most truly educated people of their time" (Henri-Irénée Marrou, 1996, p.15). It is not just an opening generated by intellectual curiosities: "Patristic does not only have contact points, relations, common interests with classical humanism, it is an integral part of it" (Henri-Irénée Marrou, 1996, p. 16). Conscious of the need for secular culture, the Church saw no other solution than to allow young people to form themselves in classical secular schools, even though they transposed the values of pagan culture.

Many of the Holy Fathers made their intellectual training following the courses of the great schools of the times, in Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Caesarea of Palestine, or Caesarea of Cappadocia. Moreover, Christians have become themselves scholars and rhetoricians, proving that the biblical message may fit into a form that originally was foreign to it.

A flexible attitude towards Greek-Latin culture is encountered by Clement Alexandrine, who tried a doctrinal conciliation with the Greek philosophy that is necessary for Christianity to strengthen its faith. The relationship between Christianity and profane culture, especially Greek philosophy, a report that questions the connection between faith and science, cannot be one of rejection but of closeness. Clement Alexandrine's work carries the spiritual climate of erudition and spiritual effervescence in Alexandria of the 2nd century, marked by Plato's philosophy and Neo-Platonism, by the ethics of the Stoics and, to some extent, by Aristotle's logic. He believes that teaching is indispensable to salvation, because through it we can gain knowledge of the divine and worldly things, through it we can gain wisdom and acquire the pre-operative skill. The Christian Gnostic is the perfect man who, after death, arrives in the Kingdom of Heaven. Through such a conception, Clement Alexandrine casts a lasting bridge of understanding between paganism and Christianity. While faith involves a comprehensive knowledge of the essential realities, knowledge enables the believer to better understand what he believes, and this understanding helps him to reach the perfect, complete faith.

Origen also sought to reconcile Christian faith with Greek philosophy and science by urging those who were studying dialectics, natural sciences, geometry, astronomy, ancient literature and philosophy at the catechetical school of Alexandria, to reach, later on, the Christian truths. The desire to initiate them in these areas of human knowledge started from the belief that Christianity cannot be based solely on dogma, but also on the history of culture and civilization. Even if it cannot replace divine truths, heathen teaching has its purpose, so it should not be denied. What is meant by the old Greek notion of "paideia" can coexist with Christian revelation and even finds itself in this true fulfillment. On the usefulness of the Greek science and philosophy for Christian dogma, Origen writes: "... Only by diligence and through the cultivation of good inclinations and abilities can man be wise, only in this way it is possible to achieve the so-called ultimate goal proposed by him in life. From these good inclinations you could be a perfect Roman jurist or a philosopher from the sect of the most famous Greek philosophers. But I'd prefer you to close your talent in the full power of Christianity, and yet do it creatively. To this end, I would like you to gather from all the fields that will help you in your Christian documentation, for example from geometry and astronomy, which will prove helpful in explaining Holy Scripture, because, as philosophers' disciples say about geometry and music, grammar, rhetoric, and astronomy that they are auxiliaries of philosophy, so let us also say that philosophy is useful to us in Christianity" (Origen, 1982, p. 354). He cherished the values of classical culture but believed that above them were the values of Christianity, that ultimately the secular culture was subordinated to the Christian doctrine, which it must serve. In Alexandria's school, no object of study was forbidden; on the contrary, it encouraged the deepening of the various fields of knowledge, for a solid spiritual preparation. However, Origen believed that, even if it is important, pagan doctrine cannot replace divine truths.

Neither St. Basil the Great did not entirely reject classical literature, which he even recommended, especially when its content proved to be consistent with the ideas contained in Christian dogma, as happens, for example, with the old approaches to the problem virtue. A similar point of view we encounter also with John Chrysostom, who, in *Of vain glory and raising children*, presents us with a consistent and systematic view of the education of children, founded, as it was naturally, on the *Holy Scripture*, but also on the pedagogical ideas of the ancient Greeks or the experience accumulated by people over time. Not the birth of children, but their proper upbringing truly confers parenthood. Following this assertion, St. John Chrysostom proposes to evangelize the concept of education and provides advice on formative practice.

Most of the Holy Fathers of the Church were, as a form of education, the product of the old culture. As their spiritual formation was accomplished through the study of literature, science, Greek philosophy and Latin, they carried in their soul, sometimes even against their desire, the effigy of classical culture. Beyond the "danger" represented by the reading of pagan authors, most of these primitive Christians, as Paul Foulquié said, were convinced that there was no true culture beyond familiarity with the masterpieces of ancient literature (Paul Foulquié, 1947). Overall, the Church and the Christian world have taken up much of the "liberal arts," out of which the inadmissible aspects have been removed. Trivium's arts (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics) could be studied without the danger of corrupting young people, contributing to their intellectual formation, as well as those in the Quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy), but they remained reserved for a numerical reduced and specialized elite.

A first guarantee of good education, which the Holy Fathers demanded, was that the educator had a book science. They demanded from the educators truly special qualities. St. Jerome, for example, required the teacher to be a very good man (Constantin Narly, 1935). In addition to the science of books, they also demanded from educators to be industrious and endowed with a series of important attributes.

Among the writings of Basil, the Great there is a short treatise titled: *To Young People. How to use effectively the literature of the wise writers*. The problem here is to know how to train young Christians at a time when all literature, philosophy and moral of Greek language were the work of pagan writers and the expression of pagan culture. Basil the Great offered his own example, by leaving to the posterity a work full of quotes and parables taken from the ancient culture but penetrated by an authentic Christian spirit. While drawing attention to the immorality and impiety of pagan writings, he insists on the useful things in them for the acquisition of virtue. Not only do the teachings of the old ones often prove useful, but also the parables they have left us are sometimes worthy of imitation, provided we guide ourselves in the cultivation of the soul.

As a cultivated spirit, Basil the Great did not despise the classical culture, his *Homilies* containing references to Homer, Hesiod, Plutarch, Pythagoras, Diogenes, Plato. His commitment to the acquisition of ancient culture is justified in the belief that through it we come to understand more easily what virtue is, and thus we are approaching the right faith. He urged the youth to read the classical authors, for they are thus preparing to deepen the *Holy Scripture*. Their reading is not only an intellectual ambition, but rather a preparation for understanding the divine truths, the ultimate goal of our soul's quests: "... the essential fruit of the soul is the truth, writes Basil the Great, but the outer garment of wisdom must not be despised; it resembles these sheets that lend the fruit a useful shade and graceful adornment" (Basil the Great, 1989, p. 6). The study of holy books can be united with that of pagan authors, which gives Christians the weapons they need to defend the truth. Of course, a selection is required, because not everything written by the classical writers is good, in their works also being encountered disrespectful, immoral things. The ultimate Christian ideal, perfection, does not forbid the assimilation of the values of carefully chosen pagan culture. On the contrary, a soul enriched with the treasures of culture, which does not contradict the truths of religion, will be closer to God.

Augustine continued the tradition of the Holy Fathers, Clement Alexandrine and Origen, drawing attention to the importance of Greek philosophy for understanding the Christian faith and the basis of any theological speculation. In *De civitate Dei*, he argues that the efforts of pagan thinkers find fulfillment only in the Christian idea of divine grace, and that pagan education must be considered as an indispensable prolegomenon (foreword) of understanding the Christian truths. Starting from such considerations, St. Augustine elaborated "the program of a Christian humanism based on faith in the unity of the whole truth, for the whole truth has a divine origin" (Maurice Debesse, Gaston Mialaret, 1971, p. 106). Liberal arts are useful provided they discourage moral errors, philosophical prejudices and, moreover, receive positive pedagogical significance inspired by the Christian ideal.

Strongly marked by ancient culture, Augustine could not categorically reject classical studies. He recognized their formative value, just like other Fathers of the Church, but in order to make them fit for an authentic formation of the Christian, he set before them the revealed truth. The truth is absolute and not relative, believes Augustine, and it is reached through faith. Man believes what he understands, but he is not able to understand what he does not believe. Not through discursive reason it reaches the ultimate truth, but by living as such in our soul. Christianity is not only understood but lived, and this experience is the result of our whole attitude, not only of intelligence. All truths are of divine origin and can only be found through mystical knowledge, after our minds have been purified by prayer and contemplation.

Referring to the formation of the theologians, Augustine considers it necessary to precede it with an initiation in the liberal arts. Training based only on pastoral and liturgical life is not enough. Of course, people's education in general must be religiously oriented, so that it does not limit itself to an accumulation of deeds but constitutes an illumination of the soul. From pagan literature we have to make a selection, excluding what can pervert the soul, as well as philosophical sophistication.

## V. Pedagogical attitude

An ample approach to what we call "pedagogical attitude" we meet at John Chrysostom, one of the most prolific authors of the first Christian centuries. Fundamental for children's education are the Christian family and human society. Within the family there is a true spiritual work that gives meaning, that of raising and educating children. In *Comment to Epistle to Ephesians* (Homily 21), John Chrysostom says: "Everything must be secondary to us in our care for children and their growth through the teaching and research of the Lord. If a child learns to think like a believer from the beginning, he has gained more wealth than any wealth as well as the greatest glory". In his *Homilies* we find many tips on the education of children in the Christian family. The foreground is how parents shape their character. Moral character and not ability, deeds, and not words open the way to the Kingdom of God. These are spiritual goods. Good guidance is not enough to acquire them, for sometimes there is a need for reprisals, but with discernment. Only in this way can the child acquire the necessary inner structure for the development and completion of his personality. Satisfying the child's every desire, will make him a selfish man and with such a character, he will be unhappy. The child will understand that he who reprimands him does it with love and not to cause suffering. Scolding must not be perceived as coming from anger, but from the care of a parent who is concerned about his child. Severity, reprisals, even threats are allowed, if they contribute to correction (St. John Chrysostom, 2001).

This is precisely the pedagogue's appropriation: not be hasty in punishing but pursuing the correction by prudently applying the punishment. It is also important to draw the child's attention to the virtuous people, to take them as an example, to show them the beauty of nature and art, and to give him a certain freedom of expression after warning him that the inappropriate things do not have value. The main concern of parents is the spiritual growth of the child, who should not only learn to obtain material benefits, but also to grow in the Lord's teaching. Unfortunately, many parents give as examples successful people in earthly life thus bringing into the souls of the young men two great evils: the love of material wealth and the love of worldly glory. The value of the personal example is very important, because you cannot advise the child well if you yourself do wrong things. Therefore, an appropriate pedagogical attitude must be cultivated at the level of the parents, in order to fulfill their mission of "transmitters of God's love and presence". The child growing up in such an environment trusts God's love for men, a confidence that transpires from the behaviour of his parents.

If St. John Chrysostom was mainly preoccupied with the pedagogical attitude of the parents, St. Augustine debated, in the pages of several elaborate papers, on the attitude of the teacher in the school. The challenge he is addressing to the teacher is to live in communion with his students, to form together a true community of interests and aspirations. He regards the educator as an embodiment of wisdom and balance, an example to be followed by students.

As far as the way in which education is concerned, he advocates an intuitive and enjoyable education, recommending that the teacher should rest longer on those issues that interest the pupil and move faster over others so that education does not appear as a constraint, for "no one works well when working against his will, even if what he does by coercion is good in itself" (Augustine, 1985). In learning, free curiosity is more successful than coercion and fear.

As a pedagogical attitude, St. Augustine recommends goodwill for the child, countering corporal punishment and, in general, treating him too harshly. For the success of educational activities, St. Augustine requires teachers in *De catechizandis rudibus* to know how to raise the interest of students, because in this way the understanding and affective adhesion to what is communicated is better achieved. Cheerfulness and enthusiasm must characterize the teacher's relationship with his pupils is the expression of a kind of instinct of educability, a basic feature of human nature. The tendency towards education is something original, like an instinct.

Augustine requires from educators a great ability, cheerfulness (hilaritas), because God loves a cheerful giver. Cheerfulness must be accompanied by other attributes: observance of pupils' individuality, patience in correcting misconduct, love for them. From the plenitude of love, the teachings will spring, uncontrollably and cheerfully. Pedagogical enthusiasm has to characterize the educator, because, due to it, he will be able to make students activity interesting and to create together a genuine spiritual communion. If during the lesson the pupils want to talk, even to combat what the teacher says, then they will be given all the necessary liberty, and then will be patiently convinced of the contrary. No matter how much science the teacher possesses, he will always discover new aspects, new depths of the proposed ideas, which only intimate communion with the students reveals to them. For Augustine, training is an effort and not passivity, it involves spiritual communion and therefore productive harmony.

In *Confessions* and *On the Beginner's Guide to Christianity*, St. Augustine supports the need to adapt education to the individuality of children. Education should not be tedious, constrained and routine, but attractive, enjoyable. The teacher will stimulate his students to personal discovery, which requires enthusiasm, talent and pedagogical tact. Through his work called *Christian Education*, St. Augustine seeks to provide the teacher, lay and clergy alike, a methodical guide, including elements of hermeneutics of the text of the *Holy Scriptures*, orientation and construction of the didactic discourse, as well as a series of teaching techniques. In *De magistro*, he addresses the question of the ability of knowing and communicating the truth by the teacher. The true source of knowledge is in Christ. Generally speaking, we do not owe it to the one who speaks to us to endeavour to communicate it, but to the truth which has been planted in our spirit by the Divinity. Christ is the inner Master, the source of authentic knowledge, man being nothing but an instrument that proclaims it outside with the help of words. In essence, it is about God's infallible power and eternal wisdom, from which any rational soul is judged, but "everyone is revealed to him as much as he can receive, according to his own good or his good fit" (Augustine, 1994, p. 113). As an Inward Teacher, Christ engages in dialogue with man, which allows his limited spirit to move from the partial and incomplete perception of things to the understanding of the original Logos.

## VI. CONCLUSIONS

The success of the educator depends on a series of personality traits: motivation, level of competence, beliefs, ideals, attitudes, etc. Also, balance, lucidity, pedagogical tact are indispensable qualities. They are added to a series of moral qualities, such as probity, generosity, modesty, gentleness, kindness, honour, dignity. All these things are spoken of by the holy Fathers of the Christian Church. They are considered excellent pedagogues who, thanks to their cultural baggage and spiritual gifts acquired through divine enlightenment, have managed to penetrate the depth of the human being in order to understand it and guide it.

The Writings of the Holy Fathers offer us authentic pedagogical models based on the evangelical precepts. Many of their ideas are still current, providing the foundation for the so-called Christian Pedagogy. Of these, they show their perennality about the personality of the educator, the qualities he has to prove: virtue, sufficiency, convergence between word and deed. Only such a man, worthy of his purpose, will be able to influence others for good. Today, in the educational system, the Word of God, the exemplary model offered by Christ, is often lost. This shortcoming can be overcome if we understand education as St. John Chrysostom considered as an action carried out under the responsibility of the parent or teacher, grounded in the moral and spiritual work of the word of God, which can provide a safe guide for life.

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