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NOTES ON RELIGIOUS AND MORAL EDUCATION  
IN THREE (MODERN) PRINCIPLES  
OF THE DIVINE PEDAGOGY  
OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

**Abstract.** The evolution of any society directly depends on the quality of its educational system, and it must include two essential components. The first considers education itself, that is, the gradual process of learning and accumulating general and special knowledge, aimed at discovering and exploiting the abilities of every individual. The second refers to the religious moral education based on the same principles, but which has a more noble goal, namely, to cultivate and develop a person's spiritual qualities in view of their social integration and the establishment of normal interpersonal relationships.

In this essay, I set out to show that within the general framework of the elementary education process, which takes into account the age and training of every individual, religious-moral education has always had a predominant role in society because it makes the junction between material, natural aspirations and the spiritual that are as important as the former. A human being is a microcosm in which two worlds, apparently contradictory but fully compatible, meet, namely, the human and the divine, body and soul, earth and heaven.

My analysis considers the experience of Saint John Chrysostom, whose pedagogical principles, although based on strategies specific to the religious domain, are not in disagreement with the methods of modern pedagogy, because both pursue the finality of the educational act. In other words, I intend to show that, despite the passage of time, the principles of Chrysostom's pedagogy retain their relevance and effectiveness.

**Keywords:** religious education; pedagogical principles; educator; virtues; parables.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religious education is a long-term psycho-pedagogical process that begins in childhood, usually in the family, and continues during adolescence, at school (if the curriculum allows for such a subject), but especially in catechetical programs run by the Church. To have an effective result, it must be done with tact and responsibility, taking into account the social environment from which young people come, their intellectual and moral capacities, and also the evolution of the society in which they live. All these factors are determinants in the development of their future religious character.

Religious education is based on a set of values that shape the behavioral profile of the subject itself, where moral values are crucial. Morality is a goal, but at the same time, it is a prerequisite for the development of personality<sup>1</sup> because it maintains the aspirations of young people in a world that often turns out to be hostile. Morality maintains and completes itself by gaining skills to always act positively, which is an exercise in strengthening one's willingness to undertake an effort that will result in the fulfillment of some ideals. In fact, in real life, the best way to ensure the moral health of the youth is to enable them to fight the negative influences of the world they live in, overcome negative temptations and constantly aim for higher goals, not avoiding confrontation out of fear of defeat.

Religious education, like any other type of education, could not have achieved its goals without assuming some pedagogical principles, most of them being taken over and developed under the social evolution of modern pedagogy, as is the case presented in the work of Saint John Chrysostom.<sup>2</sup>

St. John sees pedagogy as a symbiosis between punishment and forgiveness, a balance of the soul that must face life's temptations, being convinced that the one who manages to overcome them gains God's heavenly

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<sup>1</sup> Constantin Cucuș, ed. et al., *Psihopedagogie pentru examenele de definitivare și grade didactice* [Psycho-pedagogy for the completion exams and educational degrees] (Iași: Polirom, 1998), 75, states: "The term *person* designates the specifically human specimen. *Personality*, by contrast, is a theoretical construct developed in psychology to understand and explain – at the level of the scientific theory – ways of being and functioning that characterize a psycho-physiological body that we call a human person."

<sup>2</sup> It is amazing how the Chrysostomic principles have kept their freshness to present, especially since in his time, there was no systematic Christian pedagogy. He was a visionary, a man gifted with extraordinary intuition, and his merit in the subsequent development of a pedagogical strategy and methods is indisputable, Josephine Seydlmayer, *Die Pädagogik des Johannes Chrysostomus* (Münster: Münsterverlag, 1926), 45.

favor.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, he carefully follows how God prepares his speech according to the capacity of people to receive the message. Thus, he speaks to pagans in one way, making full use of both the testimonies of their poets and philosophers, as well as the facts they were accustomed to. Yet, he speaks in another way to the Jews, bringing into the discussion the Law of Moses and their traditions. Chrysostom fully applies this method of adaptation to the level of understanding his audience and transforms it into a general principle of divine pedagogy.

Besides, he makes full use of biblical examples as the best educational tools for his listeners. Everything he says, in various circumstances, is in accord with the moral values of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>4</sup> Nothing is accidental, but everything unfolds according to a well-laid plan, in a permanent gradation of the level of information necessary for the acquisition of man's salvation, in which the struggle between good and evil is usually present. Saint John looks at and describes each biblical example in this pedagogical note, in which fall into sin is not important, but rising from its degrading state and restoring the image of God in man.

The portrayal of the expulsion of the first parents from paradise after their violation of the only commandment that God had given them is seen rather as an act of care and not as a punishment, as a pedagogical means of correction and control. Human beings and, even more so, children who have an extremely rich imagination, understand the positive meaning of punishment if it is shown as a moral exercise necessary for salvation. God punishes Adam and Eve out of love to give them the chance to rehabilitate and make them aware of the seriousness of disobedience.<sup>5</sup>

Also, in the same way, we can understand the episode of the liberation of the Jews from Egypt. God does not destroy Egypt, but he punishes it terribly (see the plagues), so that later they turn into heaven on earth. This place of loss will become a place of prayer and fasting where one of the most flour-

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<sup>3</sup> Ion Albulescu & Mirela Albulescu, "The Portrait of the Christian Pedagogue in Religious Literature and Patristic Philosophy," *American Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research* 2/8(2018): 158-159.

<sup>4</sup> Kalina Nikolova, "John Chrysostom on Education," *Mozaik* 2 (2005): 2-3; <http://koed.hu/mozaik/16/kalina.pdf>, accessed: 20 November, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, "Homily on Genesis XVIII.10," in *The Fathers of the Church*, transl. by Robert C. Hill (Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1990), 9, file:///C:/Users/Admin/Documents/john-chrysostom-homilies-on-genesis-18-45\_compress.pdf, accessed: 21 November, 2023.

ishing monastic communities will emerge, a place of pilgrimage and prayer for future generations.<sup>6</sup>

The divine pedagogy that John Chrysostom acquires can be seen in numerous other situations that he relates intending to show people that the struggle with their passions is a natural process from which they can emerge victorious if they seek God when they strive to fulfill His commandments.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, healing the soul and taking care of it makes a man discover, little by little, in the measure of spiritual progress, all the gifts that he received at birth from God that he must use for his and his fellow man's salvation. In other words, the entire educational process must lead to well-being, peace, and love among people.

#### THE MAIN PRINCIPLES OF SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S PEDAGOGY

While modern pedagogy, defined by a series of educational steps, is substantiated by the strength of the human mind to decipher the characters (principles) of human behavior, Chrysostom's pedagogy builds on divine wisdom revealed through the power of faith. In other words, Saint John is a supporter of a full Christian education that requires knowledge of the mysteries of divinity and the human soul. However *the principles of his pedagogy* do not contrast with those of *modern pedagogy*, but on the contrary, they confer the latter certain spiritual values.

We consider here three such principles: *the principle of combining theory with practice, the psychological principle and the principle of insight (intuition)*.<sup>8</sup>

#### THE PRINCIPLE OF COMBINING THEORY WITH PRACTICE

In modern thought, this principle refers to the fact that everything that is learned through the didactic and pedagogical process should be capitalized

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<sup>6</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, VIII.5-7," in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers [TPNF]*, vol. X, ed. Philip Schaff (1888, reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 53-55.

<sup>7</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew, XL," in *[TPNF]*, vol. X, 263.

<sup>8</sup> For all three, see, especially Carmen Maria Bolocan, "Principii didactice moderne în opera chrisostomică [Modern didactic principles in Chrysostom's work]," *Revista Teologica* 2(2008): 77-87.

by practical work, because this inter-conditionality also brings additional motivation. This principle implies permanent connections between knowledge and their applicability by putting the subjects in concrete situations, experimenting with real actions, but also by living states of transition from thought to deed. More specifically, it leads to the establishment of some complementarities between rational and intuitive knowledge, bringing an existential equilibrium, by avoiding falling either into intellectualism or coarse empiricism.<sup>9</sup> A teacher must seek to correlate, giving examples and exercises to develop one's imagination and ability to find immediate solutions.

John Chrysostom explored these practical issues in his teaching theology based on the *personal example of the educator* as a direct reflection of the supreme model, Jesus Christ. Most of the time, the examples he often used in his sermons and homilies were taken from real-life situations to induce the human soul the concrete desire to follow them. He says that the only means of healing the souls of believers are the parables converted into action and teaching with the word. Actually, they must operate primarily on the educator himself to become credible to his audience. For instance, Saint John, speaking about the Savior's prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, which shows the full communion between His human and divine nature, His human and divine will, developed the theory of consistency between word and deed as follows:

*For since it was not enough for the foolish to show His face only, He uses words also. Again, words sufficed not alone, but deeds likewise were needed; these also He joins with the words, that even they who are in a high degree contentious may believe, that He both became man and died.<sup>10</sup>*

John Chrysostom is a theologian of the soul. All the teachings in his homilies have as a goal to create spiritual empathy between a teacher and disciple in order to build the religious consciousness of the latter, and the first condition that a teacher must meet to be credible to his disciples *is his example*.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Bolocan, "Principii didactice moderne în opera hrisostomică," 74.

<sup>10</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew," [TPNF], vol. X, lxxxiii, 497.

<sup>11</sup> Kalina Nikolova, "John Chrysostom on Education," 3.

Our author was not only a great theorist, or an excellent preacher, but also a profound man who lived his uttered teachings. He was the first to fulfill the facts he expressed in words, and the first to obey the rules and principles that he set forth.<sup>12</sup> The life of an educator has to be without blemish, keeping the high precepts and principles of the Gospel that he preaches, and following the model of Jesus Christ who taught the holy Apostles. Vocation, understanding, patience, moderation, indulgence and pedagogical tact should not be absent, but above all, he must show love. He who does not love his profession cannot truly love those whom he addresses, or the message he wishes to send to them will be without authority, only weak and inefficient.<sup>13</sup> This truth is more relevant when we speak about a Christian pedagogue who has as a goal, the salvation of believers.

Therefore, Saint John puts great value on a teacher's behavior and conduct when he says:

*Let us then so live, that the name of God be not blasphemed ... that we may be as luminaries, that we may be appointed Teachers of others, that we may be as leaven; that we may converse as angels among men, as men with children, as spiritual with natural men, that they may profit by us, that we may be as seed, and may bring forth much fruit. There were no need for words if we so shone forth in our lives, there were no need of Teachers did we but exhibited works. There would be no Heathen, if we were such Christians as we ought to be. If we kept the commandments of Christ, if we suffered injury, if we allowed advantage to be taken of us, if being reviled we blessed, if being ill-treated we did good (I Cor.iv.12); if this were the general practice among us, no one would be so brutal as not to become a convert to Godliness.<sup>14</sup>*

Actually, Chrysostom says that the report between teacher and disciple is similar to that between a parent and his child.<sup>15</sup> The joy that a parent lives

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<sup>12</sup> Ioan G. Coman, "Personalitatea Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur [The Personality of St John Chrysostom]," *Studii Teologice* 9-10(1957): 597-598.

<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the structural relation between the personal example of an educator and the learning achievement of his disciple was a constant concern for Christian pedagogy (Dorin Opriș, *Dimensiuni creștine ale pedagogiei creștine* [Christian Dimensions of modern pedagogy] (Iași: Sf. Mina Publishing House, 2010), 164.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on Timothy," *TPNF*, vol. XIII, x, ed. Philip Schaff (1843, reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 440.

<sup>15</sup> St. John claims in numerous occasions that the role and example of parents is essential in the spiritual formation of their children. It is obviously not inferior to that of the Christian educator, Teodor M. Popescu, "Părinții creștini ca educatori (Sfântul Apostol Pavel, Clement Alexan-

when he sees that his child follows his advice and gives him the respect that his parent deserves will be compared with that the teacher feels when he sees interest in his disciples regarding his teachings, seeking both to understand and implement them. He is like a tiller who knows his job well, who resembles the spiritual seeds in the furrows of his listeners' souls. Equally important is the attitude of the latter. The human soul is like land which, if not sown, will give weeds, but if it is sown with good seed and maintained appropriately, will bear fruits in good and useful deeds:

*For if ye retain these things, ye will the more encourage us with respect to what is to come; but if ye reject and cast them from your mind, we shall be the more backward as to the rest. Just as no husbandman would care to pay attention to a soil which had destroyed the former seed. Wherefore I entreat you to revolve these things.*<sup>16</sup>

An educator is also likened to a doctor of souls who, before giving drugs to his patients, is the first who experiences them. Also, he speaks of the medicine of the high teaching about God, Who heals both, the passions of the body and soul. Equally important is the attitude of his "patients." They must receive Him with confidence and open hearts to be worthy of the best care and get rid of disease and helplessness.<sup>17</sup>

John Chrysostom says that every Christian teacher is highly motivated even by how the disciples respond to his efforts. When he sees that his efforts are being noticed, and his teachings are followed, then he has a feeling of professional fulfillment and lives in great joy. If he sees that his zeal is useless, all his impulses to acquire good things and abandon bad things do not find an echo in the hearts of his disciples, he is filled with sadness because his care is not only to educate them as responsible people, but he also works for the salvation of their souls.<sup>18</sup>

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drinul și Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur [Christian Parents as educators (St. Apostle Pavel, Clement the Alexandrian and St. John the Golden Mouth)]," *Glasul Bisericii* 1-2(1949): 85, 90.

<sup>16</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew," *TPNF*, vol. X, xi (2), 12.

<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, *TPNF*, vol. X, xi (10), 74.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, *TPNF*, vol. X, xi (9), 73.

## THE PSYCHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

In modern pedagogy, this principle envisages the knowledge of a subject's inner nature, including one's possibilities to gain much knowledge and make a continuous systematization of it. In the educational process, a pedagogue has to take into account the individual peculiarities of everyone, so that the amount of information and its complexity will be in full compliance with one's psychological development. In other words, the informational material and its method of presentation must be well selected to meet, on the one hand, the needs and desires of the young people, and on the other, the requirements of an advanced education.

The principle in question also refers to the systematization of this knowledge, so that there should be continuity between what is being taught and what has been learned. Therefore, a pedagogue should have a clear and selective strategy for delivering the information and should avoid transferring it in a sequential, isolated and discontinuous way, but deliver it in logical and coherent succession. In other words, religious education must take place consistently, gradually, in a manner that keeps its heterogeneous character in terms of actual content and its structural and integrative nature regarding the exposure mode.

A fine psychologist who loved truth and people, Saint John Chrysostom gave examples from almost all concrete life situations, lessons that he applied to the spiritual needs of his listeners. Therefore, one of his most used methods is *graduated exposure*, taking into account age, the reception capacity of the audience, but also the complexity and volume of information itself.<sup>19</sup> Childhood is often characterized by ignorance and instability, and a pedagogue plays the role of a caring parent. Meanwhile, youth are likened to a "whirling sea," in whom passions and wild desires create turbulence and uncertainty. Thus, a helmsman must be skilled and experienced in order to bear the ship to the desired shore. Next follows manhood or maturity, the age at which man faces "the cares of life," where passions are more difficult to carry, and a pedagogue becomes an advisor and partner in dialogue. Finally, in old age, a pedagogue becomes one's confidant and friend. Every age has its peculiarities, and Saint John, aware of the important mission of

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<sup>19</sup> Bolocan, "Principii didactice moderne în opera hrisostomică," 78-79.



the Christian pedagogue, takes account in his exposition of all these stages of human psychosomatic development.<sup>20</sup>

The same goes for the quantity and complexity of the information that he wants to give his listeners. His entire teaching process is conducted in stages, in a well-established hierarchical order. It is like the educational process of the first grade in primary school, when the teacher takes the child from his parents and teaches him first of all to read and write, and later deals with forming his personality.

At first, a pedagogue talks about simple things, easily assimilated, so that, in time, after students have become accustomed to his rhythm and modalities of expression, they increase the level of knowledge, so that the objective of religious education can be accomplished. Giving religious education according to grade levels is the fundamental principle of divine pedagogy. Saint John says that God Himself acts this way when He allows us to confront the difficulties of life. Some teachers play harsh roles, for, after we have managed to overcome all obstacles in this world and have defeated our helplessness and temptations, they then show us the path to His kingdom.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, the Church Father compares *gradual religious education* with *a moral exercise* in which only someone may take part who departs from their sins and approaches virtues. It is like a spiritual pilgrimage in which the soul is the one who dictates the body, releasing it from the power of temptations and weaknesses:

*Imitate at least the little children's diligence in these matters. For so they first learn the form of the letters, after that they practise themselves in distinguishing them put out of shape, and then at last in their reading they proceed orderly by means of them. Just so let us also do; let us divide virtue, and learn first not to swear, nor to forswear ourselves, not to speak evil; then proceeding to another row; not to envy, not to lust, not to be gluttonous, not to be drunken, not fierce, not slothful, so that from these we may pass on again to the things of the Spirit, and practise continence, and neglect of the belly, temperance, righteousness, to*

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<sup>20</sup> For this very complex process, in which the power of the family's example is put in direct relation with the intelligence and specific training of a pedagogue, see especially, Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, "Despre creșterea copiilor," in *Despre feciorie. Apologia vieții monahale. Despre creșterea copiilor*, transl. and ed. by Dumitru Fecioru (Bucharest: Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române Publishing House, 2007), 398-428.

<sup>21</sup> Saint Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Statues, XXI," in *The Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers [TPNF]*, vol. IX, ed. Philip Schaff (1889, reprint: Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 482-489.

*be above glory, and gentle and contrite in mind... let us begin with the things that come first, and are easier.*<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, nothing takes place at random, but by a carefully developed plan based on a perfect correlation between the level of assimilation of these teachings and the height of personal aspirations.

#### THE INTUITIVE PRINCIPLE

In special educational literature, the *intuition principle* envisages the correlation between concrete and tangible reality and the abstract rational. In other words, human knowledge is defined through dialogue between sensibility and thinking, regardless of the method, namely, *inductive or intuitive*, through senses, from concrete to abstract, *or deductive*, through reason, from abstract to concrete. In the religious educational process, the teacher uses them both equally and selectively, depending on the requirements of some specific situations.

However, the intuitive method is most often preferred, because it provides access to the world of faith through the senses, where concrete-sensorial knowledge is the basis of abstraction and generalization of knowledge. Moving from the sensorial to the abstract level is done by decanting some intuitive data and removing materiality or avoiding purely objective thinking. *Intuition* itself in its substance concerns the direct influence of objects, states and concrete circumstances in the surrounding world on our senses.

The most important task of a Christian teacher is to be able to precisely sense the optimal time for their listeners to move from abstract thinking to the objective level. Intuition is the material source of our knowledge and shows the immediate influence of the environment on our senses. It envisages the understanding of certain realities with one's external and internal perceptions. The importance of this educational method is fully illustrated by the Lord Jesus Christ who always spoke to the apostles, His disciples and listeners using examples and parables, whose contents are entirely *intuitive*.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, "Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew," *TPNF*, vol. X, 74.

<sup>23</sup> As is known and as his apostles themselves testified, "Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing (Matthew 13:34)." In this context, I think it is appropriate to make a brief distinction between external and internal intuition. The first refers to situations in which Jesus Christ speaks in the open air to his listeners who can see Him at the

The *intuitive* method is admirably used by Saint John Chrysostom, both when he interprets the parables of the Savior<sup>24</sup> and when He illustrates the examples of biblical characters who have excelled in the practice of certain virtues.<sup>25</sup> He attires his teachings in intuitive pictures, easily understood and shared.

In one of his works on pedagogy, Saint John, using comparisons, urges parents and educators to care for the souls of their children, because they are their most valuable assets.<sup>26</sup> He compares the souls of children to *wax, paintings, and citadels*. They are like *wax* because, being soft, wax keeps the pressed figure imprinted on its surface. Similarly, the hearts of children imprint the good teachings that cannot be removed by anyone during their entire life. They are like *paintings* because they keep forever the pictures painted by their parents and educators who are responsible for their consistency and perfection.

Children are like *citadels*, and parents and educators are those who govern them. Chrysostom says that in any citadel, some people steal, others are righteous, some work, while others do everything completely at random. The same happens in the soul, where good thoughts also mix with the bad. Just as a citadel has laws that must be respected by all people, whether good or bad, the same case is in the soul where there are rules that determine one's actions. Just as a citadel has gates that can close or open to enter it, so the soul must have some gates through which it manifests itself in the world.

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seashore, on a mountain, or in a boat. The second can be related to prayer, Church singing, Christian worship, administering the Holy Sacraments, biblical exegesis, or practicing religious education; Mihail Bulacu, *Pedagogia creștin-ortodoxă* (1935, reprint: Școala Brâncovenească Publishing House – Constanța, 2009), 334-336). See also Dorin Opreș, *Dimensiuni creștine ale pedagogiei creștine* [Christian Dimensions of modern pedagogy] (Iași, Sf. Mina Publishing House, 2010), 101-102.

<sup>24</sup> Referring to the parable of the virgins, St. John Chrysostom shows that Jesus is using this social group precisely because virginity enjoys great respect in the eyes of the people and therefore the message has on his hearers a very strong and immediate impact, but he warns that “virginity is the light, and charity is oil. As the light of a candle is extinguished without oil, so also a virgin is extinguished without charity,” <http://www.ioanguradeaur.ro/387/omilia-a-treia/>, accessed: 1 September, 2023. The same happens when he speaks of humility and innocence as means of acquiring the kingdom of heaven by the example of returning to the status and experience of a child. Saint Chrysostom, “Homilies on the Gospel of Saint Matthew,” *TPNF*, vol. X. lviii, 360.

<sup>25</sup> The Holy Scripture gives us examples of righteous people who, through their lives, have become role models. One has shone through marriage and wealth (Abraham), another by poverty and virginity (Elijah) and another by rigorous fasting (John the Baptist). Saint John Chrysostom urges his listeners to take as a model the one who they consider closest to their soul.

<sup>26</sup> See Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, “Despre creșterea copiilor,” 389-428.

The gates of the citadel of the soul are one's eyes, ears, tongue, hearing, smell and sight. If we mentioned only one of them, then, perhaps, the most interesting would be the gate of the tongue that must have gold locks, not of wood or iron, because the citadel of the soul is made of gold.<sup>27</sup> This is because we hope that the citadel of the soul will be inhabited by the King, Jesus Christ Himself. Only good words should come out of the gate of the tongue, decent words of thanks should speak about higher, not lower things. As bees kill the wasps in the beehive, so the teacher must kill the bad thoughts in the soul of the child.<sup>28</sup>

By looking into the mirror of the citadel and the soul, Saint John wants to highlight the importance and complexity of the work of a Christian educator. Pedagogy is a true art. It requires much skill and understanding from those who are dedicated to this profession. The teacher is – according to Saint John – like an architect or builder. Just as only those who have skill participate in the construction of a house, the same happens with the construction of the citadel of a child's soul. This mission is not entrusted to anyone, but those who have the knowledge, skills and appropriate qualifications. The formation of a young soul is a complex phenomenon involving many people over a long time.<sup>29</sup>

Saint John is a master of intuitive imagination. He advises a teacher to make full use of this extraordinary quality of children to translate imagination into reality through stories. The creation of an imaginary world helps a child become creative. Through their imagination, a child is able to easily transcend the boundary between the real and unreal, the earthly and heavenly worlds.<sup>30</sup>

The fairy tales that they read or hear make them able to easily understand concepts like heaven or hell, or accept in pure faith that God is also the baby born in the manger of Bethlehem at Christmas, not just the old man with white and long plaits pictured in folk tradition.

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<sup>27</sup> Chris L. De Wet, "If a story can so master the children's soul: Christian scriptural pedagogy, orality and power in the writings of John Chrysostom," *Oral History Journal of South Africa* 2/1(2014): 132.

<sup>28</sup> Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, "Despre creșterea copiilor," 401-407.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, 401.

<sup>30</sup> Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, "Despre creșterea copiilor," 407-414. See the comments of De Wet, "If a story can so master the children's soul: Christian scriptural pedagogy, orality and power in the writings of John Chrysostom," 133-135.

## CONCLUSIONS

The didactic-pedagogical principles present in Chrysostom's work, in homiletic form, are not different from those of contemporary pedagogy, but rather complementary because, in addition to the educative and formative character of a youth's personality, they also bring the experience of communion with God. For those who admire Saint John's creative genius, his principles are a superior form of manifesting human spirituality. They overcome static philosophical systems, incapable of effecting a change in man's life, but only of deciphering the labyrinths of his thought, bringing the light and power of divine truth into man's soul.

Chrysostom does not give precise definitions of Christian pedagogy, nor does he propose compiling a manual of pedagogical theology, but only to introduce children, young people, and anyone who feels youthful at heart into the universe of authentic faith that cannot exclude Christ, because He is the source of wisdom, truth and light. Christ is the pedagogue *par excellence*, because He teaches everyone who He really is. He does not need anything from outside, while everyone else gives what they received as a gift. Saint John is convinced that the evolution of humanity is only possible through a profound change of man in light of Revelation through Christ.

Therefore, if we were to summarize our brief analysis in a single sentence, we could say that Saint John Chrysostom's general principle, to which all other pedagogical methods and strategies are subordinated, is that the education of children should be done according to God's will. In other words, nothing is higher than the art of education, meaning compliance with all the moral provisions of the Gospel of Christ that leads to the good order of the soul and the spiritual training of the mind.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Antonie I. Stylianakis, *Principiile psihopedagogice ale Sfinților Trei Ierarhi – pot fi aplicate în zilele noastre* [The psychopedagogical principles of the Holy Three Hierarchs – can be applied nowadays], transl. into Romanian by Ghețu Caroline Raluca (Bucharest: Egumenița, 2012), 15.

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UWAGI O WYCHOWANIU RELIGIJNO-MORALNYM W TRZECH [NOWOCZESNYCH]  
ZASADACH BOŻEJ PEDAGOGII ŚW. JANA CHRYZOSTOMA

Abstrakt

Ewolucja jakiegokolwiek społeczeństwa zależy bezpośrednio od jakości jego systemu wychowania, który musi obejmować dwa istotne komponenty. Pierwszy dotyczy samego wychowania, to znaczy – postępującego procesu nabywania i akumulacji wiedzy ogólnej i szczegółowej, mającej na celu odkrywanie i wykorzystanie zdolności każdej jednostki. Drugi odnosi się do wychowania religijno-moralnego, bazującego na tych samych zasadach, ale mającego ważniejszy cel, jakim jest kultywowanie i rozwijanie duchowego poziomu człowieka, w perspektywie jego/jej społecznej integracji i tworzenie fundamentów dla prawidłowych relacji interpersonalnych. W artykule dążę do pokazania, że w obrębie ogólnych ram elementarnego procesu wychowania, biorącego pod uwagę wiek i umiejętności jednostki, wychowanie religijno-moralne zawsze miało dominującą rolę w społeczeństwie, ponieważ stanowi ono pomost pomiędzy aspiracjami naturalnymi czy materialnymi a duchowymi, które są również istotne. Istota ludzka jest mikrokosmosem, w którym spotykają się dwa światy, pozornie przeciwstawne, a w rzeczywistości komplementarne, to, co ludzkie i boże, ciało i dusza, ziemia i niebo.

Moja analiza rozważa doświadczenie św. Jana Chryzostoma, którego zasady pedagogiczne, chociaż opierają się na strategiach charakterystycznych dla sfery religijnej, nie stoją w sprzeczności z metodami nowoczesnej pedagogiki, ponieważ w obu przypadkach dąży się do celowości aktu wychowania. Innymi słowy, moim zamiarem jest pokazanie, że pomimo upływu czasu zasady pedagogiki chrześcijańskiej zachowują swoje znaczenie i skuteczność.

**Słowa kluczowe:** wychowanie religijne; zasady pedagogiczne; wychowawca; cnoty; przypowieści.