

Youth education in the middle ages: patristic philosophy and the role of the educator based on the works of St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine

Educação de jovens na idade média: filosofia patrística e atuação do educador conforme as obras de São Basílio, São Crisóstomo e Santo Agostinho

Educación de los jóvenes en la edad media: Filosofía patrística y el papel del educador a partir de las obras de San Basilio, San Crisóstomo y San Agustín

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ABSTRACT

This article is an exploratory investigation into the education of young European Christians in the period marked as the end of Antiquity, but which has reverberations strongly identified with the first part of the Middle Ages, a period recently named Late Antiquity. The study focuses on education based on the historical and philosophical foundations found in the documents of three of the so-called Fathers of the Church, namely: St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine. In this study of the history of patristic education, we also seek to understand who the teacher of this period was and what influence he had on the formation of young people and the construction of the mentality that characterized Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages until at least the 12th century.

Keywords: Patristics. Formation of Young People. Late Antiquity. Middle Ages. History and Philosophy of Education.

RESUMO

O presente artigo é uma investigação exploratória da educação destinada aos jovens cristãos europeus no período assinalado como final da Antiguidade, mas que tem reverberações fortemente identificadas com a primeira parte do medievo, conjunto nomeado mais recentemente como Antiguidade Tardia. O estudo enfoca a educação com base em fundamentos históricos e filosóficos presentes em documentos de três dos chamados Pais da Igreja, a saber: São Basílio, São Crisóstomo e Santo Agostinho. Neste estudo de história da educação sobre a patrística, buscamos também entender quem é o professor desse período e qual a sua influência na formação dos jovens e na construção da mentalidade que caracterizou a Antiguidade Tardia e a Idade Média até, pelo menos, o século XII.

Palavras-chave: Patrística. Formação de Jovens. Antiguidade Tardia. Idade Média. História e Filosofia da Educação.

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RESUMEN

Este artículo es una investigación exploratoria sobre la educación dirigida a los jóvenes cristianos europeos en el período marcado como el fin de la Antigüedad, pero que tiene repercusiones fuertemente identificadas con la primera parte de la Edad Media, grupo más recientemente denominado como Antigüedad Tardía. El estudio se centra en la educación basada en fundamentos históricos y filosóficos presentes en documentos de tres de los llamados Padres de la Iglesia, a saber: San Basilio, San Crisóstomo y San Agustín. En este estudio de la historia de la educación en patristica, buscamos también comprender quién fue el maestro de este período y cuál fue su influencia en la formación de los jóvenes y en la construcción de la mentalidad que caracterizó la Antigüedad Tardía y la Edad Media hasta, al menos, el siglo XII.

Palabras-clave: Patristica. Formación de Jóvenes. Antigüedad tardía. Edad Media. Historia y Filosofía de la Educación.

INTRODUCTION

Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in the last quarter of the fourth century of the common era, a period still identified by historiography as Antiquity or the Ancient Age. The nearly four centuries that preceded that moment were marked by a slow approximation and assimilation of Greco-Roman culture by the evangelizers. The clear aim of the Christians was to spread the faith to as many people as possible, and this was indeed the case. Since Greek was the most widely practiced language in the Mediterranean and Christians took on the responsibility of bringing the Good News to the rest of the world, they composed their holy book with texts in that language, but later moved away from classical thought with the intention of forming a new mentality for the people who followed their religion (Le Goff, 2004; 2011).

Despite a large number of converts within the Empire, even at the beginning of the 4th century AD, Christianity remained a marginal religion. Operating on the sly, with services often held in caves and catacombs, within a few centuries converts had already numbered in the thousands in Rome. The growth was so great that, in 313 AD, Emperor Constantine himself was said to have converted to Christianity after dreaming of a cross on which was written “In this sign thou shalt conquer” (Veyne, 2009, p. 9).

After centuries of persecution, the emperor of the west, Constantine (306–337 AD), and the emperor of the east, Licinius (308–324 AD), after a meeting on the Italian peninsula in 313 AD,¹ published the Edict of Milan, authorizing all free people within the Empire to profess their religions, including Christianity (Le Goff, 2011; Guarinello, 2022). From then on, the Empire officially accepted Christian civil servants, including teachers. The teaching influence of these professionals boosted the growth of the Christian faith with a new generation of young Romans in public schools, who, among rhetoric and oratory classes, also learned about the history of the Messiah of Jewish origin.

Gradually, the *civis* (citizen), as a model of Roman social being, gave way to the new proposals coming from Christianity, which was establishing itself as an institution within the Empire. As a result, the question that emerged in the years when faith was coming closer to political power was: “Which Christianity should people believe in?” Although it is not the purpose of this article to deal with the

1 There are discrepancies regarding the month of publication, pointing out that the meeting in Milan could have taken place in February or July. These differences do not affect the content of this research.

great — and extremely interesting — variety of interpretations of the life and work of Jesus Christ at that time, we believe it is important to make the following assumption in order to move forward with the presentation: the authors gathered and studied here are constituted by an approximation in terms of their exegeses of the biblical texts. Therefore, we have chosen not to dwell on the analysis of doctrines such as Arianism, which, being considered heresies, are far removed from the proposal of the Church Fathers and the object of this work. As for the philosophy and education present in the work of the authors selected for this study, the central point where their thought converges is the search for an ascetic life, of acquiring virtues, with clear moral divisions between good and evil, always with a view to an eternal reward obtained with the salvation of the soul.

In this way, it is worth noting that, at least² since the work of Clement of Alexandria (150–215–7 AD) in the 2nd century, the meaning of the word “pedagogue” has extended beyond man (Migne, 1857; Jaeger, 1991). If, for the Hellenes, the παιδαγωγός (pedagogue) designated the slave responsible for guiding children to the tutor in charge, among the Christians, the pedagogue had an elevated *status*, and was even given a divine character. The relationship between the pedagogue and his pupils was compared by Clement to the relationship between God³ and his children: “Εοικεὸ Παιδαγωγός ἡμῶν, ὡ παῖδες ὑμεῖς, τῷ πατρὶ αὐτοῦ τῷ θεῷ.”⁴ Thus, from this exegesis, God begins to appear as the pedagogue of the whole world, representing the powerful will of Christians to break with the pagan world, as Henri-Irénée Marrou (1971), Werner Jaeger (1991) and Ruy Nunes (2018b) also write.

The Church began a phase of greater influence within the Roman state, resulting in the formulation of laws that increasingly entangled the faith with the Empire. In February 380, Emperor Theodosius I published the Edict of Thessalonica, ordering all subjects to profess the Catholic faith from that date.⁵ More than that, the new legislation condemned other sects and religions considered pagan, pointing them out as heresies. In the following years, new edicts were published, carrying out a process of political discrediting of those considered pagan, also banning their cults and proselytizing, confiscating their religious objects and temples (Guerras, 1992).

In the following years, although the idea still prevailed that, for political matters, the emperor retained his power, in practice, the establishment of a religious state subjected the Roman Empire to the Catholic Church. The famous event that illustrates this was the murder of thousands of innocent non-Christians in the city of Thessaloniki under the orders of Emperor Theodosius I. The case reverberated socially as a massacre promoted by Christians. In response, the bishop of Milan, Aurelius Ambrose, who was later canonized, forbade the emperor to enter the city’s Christian temple until he had repented the killings. Theodosius I, during the Christmas festivities of 388, had to enter the temple without the insignia of an emperor and publicly beg, with groans and tears, for absolution (Nunes, 2018a). In 391, still under the influence of the Bishop of Milan, pagan cults were banned in Rome by Theodosius I. The following year, the Edict of Constantinople, known as Christian Rome, completely banned pagan cults throughout the Roman Empire.

Despite religious hegemony and the concentration of power by the Church, there was a lack of elements to guarantee spiritual power over the population. Christianity had become the official

2 Werner Jaeger (1991) points out that, since Plato’s *Laws*, the understanding with regard to the pedagogue was that he had left the condition of slave and moved on to the distinct condition of conductor of the human soul. Jaeger (1991) seems to consider Neoplatonic education as a strong influence on the work of Clement of Alexandria. However, it should be borne in mind that Clement lived most of his life in the second century, with Neoplatonism being a current of thought that began in the third century. In any case, Henri-Irénée Marrou (1971) also highlights the strong quality of the education received by Clement, focused on the liberal arts and philosophy, in Athens, where he was born.

3 God-child. Jesus Christ as the pedagogue of the world.

4 “Our pedagogue, children, is similar to his God-Father, of whom he is precisely a son” (Migne, 1857, p. 252).

5 The term “Catholic” comes from the Greek καθολικός, and its meaning related to the idea of a universal faith.

religion of the Roman Empire, but the mentality of the people living in that region had been forged slowly over many centuries. Furthermore, as we have pointed out, the Church itself suffered from disputes between different strands of interpretation within the period called Early Christianity or the Early Church.⁶ It was therefore necessary both to establish the foundations of a unified Christianity within the empire and to think about how to form the mentality of young people for a new era based on the Christian faith.⁷

This brief set of information begins to reveal the changes in the mentality of young people at the end of Antiquity and the High Middle Ages. It also shows that the year 476 AD is just a conventional date to mark the end of Antiquity, since human processes transcend these dates. In this sense, Jacques Le Goff (2011) writes that, for the period between the fourth and eight centuries, the term Late Antiquity would be the best way to understand this transition process. Norberto Guarinello (2022, p. 162) points out that the effect of adopting this term is to “broaden the traditional chronological boundaries for the ‘ancient world,’ which today extend to at least the seventh century.”

With this in mind, in this exploratory investigation that looks at the role of the teacher/master/priest and the change in mentality that took place in the Christian society being built, we focus on the formation of young people based on the religious and philosophical foundations present in the documents of three of the so-called Fathers of the Church, namely: St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine. In order to study these representative patristic authors, we used as documents some volumes of the Greek Patrology and the Latin Patrology, published by Jacques-Paul Migne (1857), in the Imprimerie Catholique publishing house. We also used the organization and establishment of the text as carried out by the Augustinian Convent of the Basilica of Saint Nicholas of Tolentino (Italy) (2010a; 2010b; 2010c). More recent translations of the works of St. Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea, such as those produced by Francisco Antonio Garcia Romero into Spanish (2011), and Hildegardis Pasch and Helena Nagem Assad (1983) into Portuguese, are also present in the research. The same goes for the works of John Chrysostom (1978), Archbishop of Constantinople, translated by Simone Guffanti (2021) and Felipe Guarnieri (2016), and for the works of St. Augustine (2000; 2006), translated by Oscar Leme (2006), J. Oliveira Santos and A. Ambrósio de Pina (2000) and Antonio Minghetti (2015).

At the same time, in order to base these analyses in the field of the history of education, as already mentioned, we worked in the light of contemporary authors such as Henri-Irénée Marrou (1971), Werner Jaeger (1991; 2013), Franco Cambi (1999), Jaques Le Goff (2004; 2011) and Ruy Nunes (2018a; 2018b). Thus, from these introductory paragraphs in which we have established the parameters of our study, we shall divide our work into two more moments, namely: Fathers of the Church: education and Christian formation; St. Augustine, the only Teacher and Divine Illumination; as well as, of course, the final considerations.

CHURCH FATHERS: CHRISTIAN EDUCATION AND FORMATION

Following on from what we have explained above with regard to the establishment of Christianity, it was also in the fourth century, at the Council of Hippo in 393, that the canonical scriptures were defined. With the Old and New Testaments constituted as the foundations of Christian life, the new

6 These two expressions are considered here as synonyms for the purpose of understanding the construction of the Christian mentality in the fourth century. However, the use of these expressions usually refers to a period that began in the first century and extended to the fourth century BC.

7 As a result of these points, we should also mention that, for this investigation, with regard to the division of the Empire carried out by Theodosius in 395, in which his son Honorius inherited the western part and his other son, Arcadius, inherited the eastern part, we decided to focus our studies in the west.

man's way of being and thinking began to be disseminated in the form of culture and moral values throughout the Roman-influenced region (Febvre, 2004; Bloch, 2016).

Among the main materials used to spread the Christian faith were sermons. In general, this form of communication carried out by the Church had the people as its audience, most of whom were illiterate, memory being one of the main elements to be stimulated through rhymed or rhythmic summary formulas (Lauand, 2013). An example of the strength of this model is the Sermon on the Mount, considered special because it recounts the moment when Jesus passed on to his followers the most profound guidelines for Christian life: the Our Father prayer, the beatitudes, the salt of the earth and light of the world, the "treasures" to be accumulated in heaven, the turning of the other cheek and the love of enemies. The Sermon on the Mount came to be called by Saint Augustine (354–430 AD) (Augustine, 2017, p. 20), Bishop of Hippo, "a perfect program of Christian life intended for the direction of customs."

Although, from the beginning of evangelization, there were currents that supported the assimilation of Greek thought and currents that preached distancing from it, in the period when Christianity was still persecuted, there was a rapprochement with Hellenic culture aimed at the acceptance and dissemination of Christianity through the universal language of the time, Koine Greek — Κοινή Ελληνική. However, as the persecutions subsided and the Christian faith achieved the *status of* official religion of the Roman Empire, the relationship with the use of Greek as a linguistic reference and the cultural model of being human based on the Roman citizen (*Civis*) began to be more strongly contested (Lauand, 2013; Guarinello, 2022).

In the following century, Christianity promoted a generation of leaders who sought to mediate the influence of Greek culture, based on the justification that the way of life of the Hellenes was incompatible with the values that should be concerned with saving men's souls within the Divine Order. From this orientation came the proposals of the so-called Church Fathers, summarized for this investigation as: the consolidation of Christianity through its doctrines, and the formation of a new mentality with solid foundations in the Bible (1993). Hellenic influence was not completely abandoned, but was henceforth mediated by new teachers, the priests, through an education based mainly on sermons.

The Roman Empire, administratively divided since 284 AD between the west, with Rome as its capital, and the east, with Constantinople as its capital, produced Christian thinkers who influenced its entire territory. In the east, among those who were called Greek Fathers because they wrote in the language of the Hellenes, two names stand out for the purposes of this study: Basil the Great, who lived between 330 and 379 AD, and was ordained Archbishop of Caesarea in 370; and John the Golden Mouth (meaning Chrysostom), who lived between 340 and 407 AD and was ordained Archbishop of Constantinople in 398 (Mcsorley, 1907; Baur, 1910).

St. Basil the Great, Bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, present-day Turkey, had a strong influence on the construction of Christianity, combating doctrines that he considered heretical. In his work, St. Basil shows a remarkable dedication to controlling the reading, interpretation and quotation of Hellenic authors, also discussing parsimony and the monastic life. Thus, concerned with forming Christians within a doctrine that favored monastic life as opposed to the hedonistic and worldly lifestyle that still characterized the Romans, St. Basil advised his students, in the very first point of his work — *To the young: how to profit from Greek literature*:

So that's what I've come to advise you: that you shouldn't simply follow these men wherever they lead you, entrusting them with the rudder of their judgment, but accepting from them what is useful, knowing what needs to be discarded. Well, what to choose and what criteria to use is precisely what I'm going to explain from here on (Basílio de Cesarea, 2011, p. 16).

St. Basil argues that Hellenic thought can function for the reader/spectator as a distraction or as a kind of fiction/entertainment in which it is not worth getting involved, since, on the other side, there are the benefits of eternal life guaranteed through submission to the faith. It is possible, so to speak, that the reading of Greco-Roman philosophers and poets should only be carried out after a selection of works considered good and a censorship of works and stories considered pernicious to Christian education and the salvation of the human soul. Obviously, this censorship and choice of what should be read was carried out by the person responsible for disseminating this knowledge, whether to the general population, in Sunday homilies, or in monasteries, to new priests (Basílio de Cesarea, 2011; Le Goff, 2011).

It is also noteworthy that the Bishop points out in his speech that anyone who turns against the teachings of the Church and chooses to follow the paths of Hellenic thought will put their soul, those of their pupils and descendants at risk (Basílio de Cesarea, 2011). It was therefore necessary, based on his words, for parents, teachers and guardians to make a choice: they should offer either a liberal education, characterized in the history of Greek education by freedom of choice and the individual responsibilities proper to a citizen, which, in effect, would result in a life of pleasure accompanied by the extinction of the soul after death; or they should adopt the education of the Church fathers, with a view to the eternity of the soul in paradise, for a faithful and God-fearing being.

As a result of the implementation of this doctrine, the entire mythological repertoire of the Hellenic school was adapted or replaced with the names of biblical characters and holy stories. The works of Greek philosophers were Christianized, so that parts of their reasoning could always be quoted with a background of exalting the soul as opposed to the burning desires of the body. Pythagoras and Plato, for example, are two of the most quoted thinkers in the work of St. Basil of Caesarea, thanks to the transcendence present in their philosophies. Basil uses Plato as a reference for detachment from matter, even comparing him to the apostle Paul, when condemning the Hellenic hedonistic lifestyle.

In a word, if you are not willing to dive into the mud [pleasures], you should totally despise the body, as Plato says. ...”for providing a service to philosophy”, by saying something similar, Paul warns us that we should not worry about a body that gives impetus to desires (Basílio de Cesarea, 2011, p. 42).

The biased reinterpretations of the stories and philosophies produced before Christ put different allegories at the service of the Church, which from then on involved angels and saints, replacing the heroes of pagan antiquity (Le Goff, 2011). Homilies gained great importance in the education of the majority of the population, especially the poorest groups, for whom the preaching of priests was considered sufficient. Although it is not possible to state a cause and effect relationship, in fact, as public schools became extinct in the process of emptying Roman cities, there was a growing understanding that the best training for those who would prepare young people so that their lives would reach God took place in monasteries, abbeys or in the homes of Catholic bishops. On the other hand — now as an effect — we can see growing illiteracy, accompanied by a progressive increase in the importance of memorization, resulting in teaching that became predominantly oral. This change led to the pedagogical format of encouraging singing in choirs from a very early stage in Christian life, starting at the age of six or seven and continuing until the age of 15 (Marrou, 1971).

The practice of reading had become almost restricted to the aristocracy and those who opted for a religious education subject to the typical rules of ascetic life in monasteries. As we will see later, although St. Augustine is considered to have formulated the first rules of ascetic life, St. Basil also established a set of spiritual guidelines for life in monasteries, as well as pedagogical guidelines for teaching boys and girls, which became known as the *Great Asketikon* (55 Extensive Rules) and the

Small *Asketikon* (313 Brief Rules). Positioning himself as a tutor for young students, St. Basil directed the distribution of prizes in recognition of the students' efforts and pointed to a path that led to virtue, like the Greek *Arete* (Basílio Magno, 1983; Cambi, 1999).

A contemporary of St. Basil the Great in the fourth century, John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, also considered one of the Fathers of the Church, took an even firmer stance against the Hellenic *modus vivendi*. If for Basil (Basílio de Cesarea, 2011) the works and way of life of the Greco-Romans could lead to distractions, Chrysostom (1978) stated peremptorily that the theater, games and philosophy originating from the Hellenes led man to useless glory in the midst of a morality that did nothing to stimulate the growth of the soul.

In the case of the Romans, to which Chrysostom (1978) also referred, the moral code of conduct resided in a tradition originating from their ancestors, known as *mos maiorum* (Cardoso, 1985). Through examples set at victory celebrations, public funeral ceremonies, and theaters that portrayed the lives of heroes, the Romans were encouraged to achieve three pillars of their civic culture: seeking the love of the crowds, identifying with a trustworthy man and celebrating the civic honors won.

For St. Chrysostom, these were all values identified with city life and the mundane everyday life that had been assimilated by the Romans from Greek culture. By stating that the moral values of this culture were nothing more than (van)glory that attacked the Church like a beast, the religious decided to directly oppose the Roman aristocracy who, even with access to liberal education, maintained a traditional lifestyle. In his homilies, Chrysostom identified this elite as being mainly responsible for spreading the vanity of a glory that was useless for the growth of the soul. Not surprisingly, thanks to the power of Chrysostom's — the Golden Mouth's — oratory, the poorest social groups were won over and incited to rebellion against the rich. In short, for the Archbishop of Constantinople, liberal education, life and knowledge considered to belong to the pagan past were like an evil spirit with an attractive face (Chrysostom, 1978).

With this, Chrysostom's thought began to set out his proposal to build a new youth through education, far removed from the evils of the debauchery of Hellenic hedonism. In his sermons, the archbishop posed rhetorical questions to parents about the education of their children. In this work of moral and pedagogical formation, he advises parents that boys should stay away from theatrical shows, dissolute and voluptuous songs, guarding their souls against the fascination that such experiences could cause. In Chrysostom's *On vainglory and the education of children*, translated directly from the Greek by Simone Guffanti (2021), no room was left for other choices, since the misfortunes caused by exposure to pre-Christian values in life could condemn the soul for all eternity after death.

What will become of children who are deprived of a teacher from their earliest years? If, in fact, some men, brought up from their mother's womb and educated until old age, still do not live correctly, what terrible things will not those children do who are accustomed, from the beginning of their lives, to vain words? Nowadays, the greatest effort is made to educate children in the arts, letters and eloquence, but no one has any esteem for the exercise of the soul (Guffanti, 2021, p. 73).

In his homilies, the archbishop also called for corrective educational actions based on threats, when necessary. Such threats, however, should not become physical aggression, since the young person could learn to no longer care about the violence suffered. The education of children, therefore, should be concerned with controlling the passions, since only in this way could young people achieve a holy body and, with it, the kingdom of heaven (Campenhausen, 2007; Nunes, 2018a). For this reason, parents had an obligation to keep lust, vanity and pride away from their children, educating them in the discipline of heaven from their earliest years.

Let him not get used to being continually beaten, lest he be educated in this way: if he is continually educated with this discipline, he will learn to despise it; once he has learned to despise it, everything is ruined. But let him always fear be beaten, without being; let the whip be shaken without letting it fall (Guffanti, 2021, p. 81).

To the west, other priests followed the path away from Hellenic culture. One of the most famous examples of this was Eusebius Sophronius, known as Saint Jerome of Stridonia (347–420 AD). Although Jerome is not among the Church Fathers we have chosen to study here, he is worth mentioning for two reasons. Firstly, he was responsible for the translation of the Bible, completed in 404 and known as the Vulgate. For Jacques Le Goff (2011), Jerome lived as a hermit at a time of cultural intersection between East and West. His work may not reveal to be the foundation of European thought, but the fact that he made these important translations into Latin places him in the position of one of the founding fathers of the medieval Christian mentality. Secondly, as we shall see in the next few paragraphs, because St. Jerome helps us make a necessary link with the bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine.

Jerome's work, like Chrysostom's, pointed to the responsibility of parents to take care of their children's education. Notably, Jerome paid special attention to the responsibility of mothers when he advised some widows of the Roman aristocracy to educate and pass on moral values to their children by example (Cambi, 1999; Lauand, 2013; Nunes, 2018a). With this, chastity, modesty and zeal for the family, all of these forms to be followed in an education by imitation, formulated a new model of Christian mother. In Epistle 107, paragraph 9, dedicated to the widow Leta, Jerome advises on the education of her daughter Paula:

Make sure she studies a passage of Scripture every day. Learn the rhythm of Greek verse. And learn Latin immediately afterwards, because if you do not shape her soft mouth from the start, her tongue will become addicted to an exotic accent and her mother tongue will be tainted with foreign vices. May she find her teacher in you and admire you in her childhood. May she not see in you and in her father's attitudes that lead her to sin when she imitates you. May she remember her virgin relatives, and may she be better educated by example than by words (Jerônimo, 1995, p. 208).

The strength of the example of moral rectitude set by the parents cited by Jerome as teachers absent of vices is key to understanding his proposal for the education of young people. Jerome's prestige and ideas impressed the man who would become the best-known name in Patristics, St. Augustine (354–430 AD). About 23 years younger, Aurelius Augustine saw in this renowned intellectual, to whom the Church had entrusted the translation of the Bible into Latin, the possibility of rapprochement, a high-level debate and prominence within religion. Without accepting the position of Jerome's pupil, Augustine placed himself in an equal position in the debates on the subjects of the soul and salvation in a series of correspondences between 394 and 419 AD. The relationship between these two thinkers of the early Church helped underpin Augustine's rapid rise within the Church (Guarnieri, 2016).

THE ONE MASTER AND DIVINE ENLIGHTENMENT

The great weight of the Greek language and thought in Augustine's life is recounted by him in various works, such as *Confessions* (2000). Educated as a child in a liberal school, after his conversion at the age of 33, he began to observe the influence that pagan culture had on his life, along the lines of what Basil and Chrysostom had previously proposed. "*Nam in illis iam quid me*

foedius fuit, ubi etiam talibus displicebam fallendo innumerabilibus mendaciis et paedagogum et magistros et parentes amore ludendi, studio spectandi nugatoria et imitandi ludicra inquietudine?" (Sant'Agostinho, 2010b).⁸ In this way, theater, games, gods and mythology, petty theft, mischief and violence, as well as the process of learning the Greek language and writing came to be identified with his past life of youthful iniquities.

It is true that in grammar schools there are curtains hanging over the doors, but they serve more to cover errors than to honor their secrets. Let not these teachers cry out against me — for I no longer fear them — while I show you, my God, all the desires of my soul, and while I rest in the reproof of my perverse ways in order to love the uprightness of yours! (Augustine, 2000, p. 52).

The analysis made by Augustine (2000) in the above excerpts from *Confessions*, however, is still bathed in a pagan semiotics, Manichaeism. Before converting to Christianity and as a teacher of rhetoric, Augustine was close to the Manichaeans, a sect that preached that there are only two principles: good and evil. The simplicity of this doctrine's dichotomous reasoning helped him to organize his philosophy. Even after his conversion, the Bishop of Hippo brought aspects of Manichaeism into the Church, helping to build what would later become the medieval Christian mentality (Le Goff, 2018). With this, St. Augustine (2006) ensured that European society in formation had an identity for evil and an identity for good, a controlled space for Greek culture and a world for the new Christian social being, who could occupy the torpid City of Men or bask in the glow of the City of God.

In his work *Civitas Dei* (City of God), Augustine (2006) explains that the body is occupied by God and is therefore the true city where the Christian's moral values should be built. While Basil and Chrysostom identified the incorruptibility of the body with a reward to be achieved in paradise, Augustine pointed to the possibility of building the City of God within one's own body while still alive. The precepts of an earthly existence within Christian morality became even more pressing, considering the threats posed by pagan cultures. Like the metaphor that building a city is easier on land where nothing has been built before, Augustine understood that the education of young people was an urgent concern of the Christian faith.

Based on this idea, it is possible to understand the adaptation of the Hellenic Paideia to the morality of its religion; in other words, roughly speaking, to a Christian Paideia. According to Werner Jaeger (2013), Paideia is an expression that is difficult to define, its concept being broad and difficult to enclose in an abstract conception. The author also points out that this idea cannot be contemplated with the eyes of modern man, and that it is necessary to think of the Greeks in their own concepts. On the other hand, Henri-Irénée Marrou (1971), in an attempt to get closer to this concept, stated that the word "culture," as we use it nowadays, presents the best format for an attempt to define Paideia. Regarding our understanding of "culture," Jaeger (2013) goes so far as to say that it only began with the Greeks. In any case, both in the Hellenic Paideia and in the Christian Paideia, it is necessary to emphasize the domain of the formative dimensions of Man in the following terms: "Man's nature, in its dual corporeal and spiritual structure, creates special conditions for the maintenance and transmission of his particular form and requires physical and spiritual organizations, the whole of which we call education" (Jaeger, 2013, p. 1).

8 "What could be more corrupt in your eyes than me? I even displeased these men by deceiving the pedagogue, teachers and parents with countless lies, for the sake of gambling, a taste for frivolous spectacles and a restless desire to imitate them!" (Augustine, 2000, p. 59).

Authors such as Jaeger (1991; 2013), Cambi (1999) and Nunes (2018a) write about a move away from the morality of city life, characteristic of a historical construction built over centuries of Greek influence. This metaphorical city, within men and, at the same time, real, in everyday life,⁹ full of the values considered ungodly and transmitted by the liberal school, should be abandoned in favor of a new realization: the construction of the City of God, carried out in the human mentality, with effects on being and thinking within this world.

The very idea that God was also present and active in this world was close to Plato's philosophy, reconstituted and adapted from the second century onwards as Neoplatonism.¹⁰ Contrary to the idea of a transcendent God, existing only in the immaterial afterlife, the Platonic thought adopted by Augustine and other Neoplatonists pointed to the possibility of an immanent God, that is, one that is present in earthly life and active in human daily life.

Influenced by these currents of thought, that is, with good and evil being represented in the clash between Christian and Greek culture, and adapting Plato's philosophy to his own work, the Bishop of Hippo, ambitious within the structure of a religion that was still historically defining its foundations, wrote, among other works, the *De Magistro*. Written on the model of a Platonic dialogue with his deceased son Adeodatus (at the age of 16), Augustine (2015) presents a version of himself as a father and educator, as well as a formulator of Christian doctrine.

In this context, Augustine developed the Doctrine of Divine Illumination, according to which man would only receive knowledge of eternal things from God through illumination. Knowledge or truth, so to speak, would not come from outside, but from within, where God would already dwell. As can be inferred, Augustine's Theory of Divine Illumination is similar to Plato's theory of *reminiscence* (Platão, 2001), according to which man is born with knowledge imprinted on his soul, and it is possible, through stimuli, to achieve knowledge about things. Augustine, however, just as with the format of the writing of the work, attributes all recalled knowledge to God, calling him the "Inner Master" and dismissing any possibility of this knowledge coming from a human teacher.

Men are mistaken in calling those who are not masters, usually because there is no interval between the time of speaking and that of knowing; such disciples teach themselves from within, and after the mention of the one who speaks, they think they have learned from the outside. But all the usefulness of words, which we do not consider to be of much use, we shall seek in due course, God permitting. Therefore, I recommend that you do not attach greater importance than is just, and that you not only believe in it, but also begin to understand how much truth it describes, since it is written that we should call no one else Master on earth, for the only one is in heaven (Augustine, 2015, p. 141-142).

9 The Bishop of Hippo's interpretation that the body is the true *locus* for building the City of God is also related to the experiences of the invasion of barbarian peoples into Roman territory, especially the city of Rome. In 410, the Vandals led by Alaric ruthlessly sacked Rome, as we see in the "*De excidio urbis Romae sermo*" (Sermon on the devastation of Rome) (Augustine. Translated by Lauand, 2013). From the way in which the material losses and the loss of life are revealed in the text, it is understood that condemnation and divine wrath have befallen Rome, because supposedly there were not enough righteous people there. Augustine, however, when referring to the passage in Genesis (Gen. 18:24), when Abraham allegedly asked God if he would spare the city if he found enough righteous men, shows that the city was not destroyed like Sodom. Thus, through a play on ideas, Augustine affirms that God was putting them to the test, just as he did with another biblical character: Job. This sanctified man is cited in the sermon as an example of moral rectitude, dignified by the suffering of having lost his family, his wealth and everything else identified with the materiality of the world of men, but still remaining faithful to God. With this, we can also see that Augustine's reasoning considers at least two distinct worlds; a division that reveals another influence, Neoplatonism.

10 In order to adapt Plato's philosophy to nascent Christianity in the second century, Numenius of Apamea dedicated himself to the study of Hebrew and Greek. According to Ruy Nunes (2018a), in his efforts to bring Hellenic thought closer to the Christian faith, Numenius went so far as to describe Plato as a Moses who spoke Greek. When Augustine began his studies, this way of interpreting Hellenic thought was widespread among the Church Fathers and became dominant between the fourth and fifth centuries. The priests' choice of this way of thinking among the various Greek philosophies was relatively natural, given the characteristic of God as a participant in human existence.

But how might this enlightenment be possible? Ultimately, it would always take place through a unilateral action by God, and therefore be determined by the Divine who has access to knowledge about true things. This process would take place through the proper use of an instrument placed in man by God himself, the human intellect, which can be activated through remembrance (*anamnesis*). Therefore, if all knowledge comes from remembrance, we understand that knowledge is already in man, just as the omniscient and omnipresent God is. It would only be up to the priest/teacher to dispose/advertise/admonish the student through words and signs so that God could effectively enlighten him.

It is interesting to note that, in this perspective, the teacher would also be guided by the Divine (the One Teacher), as just another instrument of God's action on the student. Augustine (2015, p. 140) also warned about teachers who think they transmit knowledge and parents who believe this when he spoke about the choice of type of study to be offered to young people: "*Nam quis tam stulte curiosus est, qui filium suum mittat in scholam, ut, quid magister cogitet, discat?*" (Augustine, 2015, p. 140).¹¹

The parents or the young person themselves, although dependent on divine enlightenment within their own being, within the limits of their free will,¹² could choose to live in the *Civitas Dei* (City of God) or in the *Civitas Terrena* (City of the Wicked) (Augustine, 2006). Therefore, in terms of Augustine's educational model, there is a choice similar to that proposed by St. Basil: save the soul or condemn it through a pagan education. When deciding on this education, the parents had the following objective conditions before them: to accept or not accept the argument constructed by the Church Fathers; to discern between lay/pagan teachers or a priest; and to consider that they were immersed in a historical context of hegemony of the Catholic faith that would last for centuries in Europe.

Given these circumstances, the parents' educational choice does not really seem like a decision to be made. After all, according to the character Adeodato, in the book *De Magistro* (2015), it would only really be possible to learn from the One who inhabits one internally.

When I was warned by your words, I learned that they serve no other purpose than to warn man to learn, and that the word reflected in the thought of the other who speaks would be of very little knowledge; I am only instructed by the One who dwells within me, and who already warns me much in my favor; whom I ardently esteem and from whom I want to take advantage to learn (Augustine, 2015, p. 143-144).

It is also important to stress that Augustine's censure of Greco-Roman knowledge, as well as the proposal to create a new mentality, had an initial and insurmountable barrier: the need to study the Greek language in order to read the New Testament in its original text. In *The Christian Doctrine* (2002), the Bishop of Hippo goes so far as to recommend learning those letters for the convenience of biblical studies, but with due care for superfluous, lustful institutions that might have in mind any "commerce with demons".¹³ The saint justified this by saying that the undertaking was

11 "Indeed, who would be so diligently foolish as to send their child to school to learn what the teacher thinks?" The word "*stulte*" can also be translated as "stupid", "stupidly" or "foolishly."

12 Augustine presents three different ideas of free will in his work, following three phases of his life. In the first phase, described in the first two books of *On Free Will*, man would have total freedom of choice over his paths in earthly life, being led or not to eternal life by the effect of such choices. In a second moment, described in the third book of the same work, he points to the loss of this full free will as of Adam's mistakes in paradise. From this moment on, man should "wish for", and demonstrate this through his choices, the path that leads to divine grace. In the third moment, in the final years of his life, by relating free will to his theory of predestination, Augustine completely removes any chance of man ascending to God on his own (Costa, 2018).

13 "*Quorum ea quae ad societatem, ut dictum est, daemonum*" (St. Augustine, 2010a).

necessary for the disputes against the skeptics, for the conversion of the pagans, for the education of young people and for the formation of their mentalities. After all, in quoting the Roman poet, politician and thinker Cicero, Augustine states that the orator had three main objectives in the process of forming a new social being:

A certain orator said — and he told the truth — that you have to speak “in a way that instructs, pleases and convinces”. Then he added: To instruct is a necessity; to please, a pleasure; to convince, a victory”.

The first objective, that is, the need to instruct, is related to the ideas to be expounded; the other two, to delight and convince, to the way in which we expound them. Consequently, when aiming to instruct, the speaker, as long as he is not understood, must believe that he has not yet said what he intended to say to the audience he wishes to see instructed (Augustine, 2002, p. 233).

Oratory, rhetoric and eloquence were not the only pieces of knowledge of Hellenic origin that Augustine defended. With the due care already mentioned and the understanding that everything good the pagans had thought and written belonged to the Christians, Augustine appropriated and converted Plato's thought, making use of the Greek liberal arts taught by the Romans from the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium*¹⁴ as a school curriculum (Le Goff, 2011; Nunes, 2018a).

Those who are called philosophers, especially the Platonic ones, when they have sometimes been able to enunciate theses that are true and compatible with our faith, must not only not be feared or avoided, but rather we must reclaim these truths for our own use, like someone who takes back his possessions from unjust possessors (Sic). [...] The same is true of all pagan doctrines. They certainly possess lying and superstitious fictions, a heavy burden of superfluous work, which each of us, under the guidance of Christ, on leaving the society of the pagans, must reject and avoid with horror. But they also have the liberal arts, which are very suitable for the use of truth, and some very useful moral precepts. And as for the worship of the one God, we find in the pagans some true things that are like their gold and silver. It was not the pagans who made them, but they extracted them, so to speak, from certain mines provided by divine Providence, which are spread everywhere and which they sometimes used in the service of the devil (Augustine, 2002, p. 144-145).

Regarding the use of force against young students, unlike Basil or Chrysostom, Augustine gives a bitter account of the aggressions, humiliations and threats he suffered at school while learning Greek. At one point, the Bishop of Hippo compares the knowledge he received to wine that breeds turpitude, pointing to his teachers as drunken masters who, by force, made him also drink (Augustine, 2000, p. 56). For this reason, in *Confessions* (2000), he describes the violence he suffered as a child in the process of learning the Greek language.

As a child, but with fervor, I asked you not to flog me at school. When you did not listen to me — which was “to my advantage” — the older people and even my own parents, who, after all, wished me no harm, laughed at the floggings — my greatest and most painful ordeal (Augustine, 2000, p. 47).

14 The *Trivium* covered rhetoric, logic and grammar. In the *Quadrivium*, the arts taught were arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy. All these teachings characterized the seven liberal arts.

"I did not know a word of that language, and to make me learn, they threatened me with terrible punishments and cruelty" (Augustine, 2000, p. 53).

Augustine, therefore, despised the use of physical force in the education of young people, unlike Chrysostom. However, like Basil and the Golden Mouth, the bishop of Hippo was strongly concerned with chastity as an idea in the minds of his students, forbidding them to lust after women in the street (Lyra, 1594). Finally, more than learning the Hellenic language, studying oratory, rhetoric and eloquence, true institutions of the Greco-Roman world, became essential to the learning process. After all, as Augustine himself (2002, p. 210) said: "If it is true that children only begin to speak by listening to the words of people who speak, why should anyone become eloquent without receiving any notion of the art of oratory, contenting themselves with reading, listening and, as far as possible, imitating good orators?"¹⁵

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Following the uncompromising desire to break with the pagan world, as Marrou (1971) wrote, the Church Fathers, highlighted here by the bishop of Caesarea, St. Basil the Great, the archbishop of Constantinople, St. Chrysostom and the bishop of Hippo, St. Augustine, proposed a new mentality based on the growth of the Christian faith and the conquest of religious and political hegemony in the Roman Empire. This movement, which is the focus of our study, took place between the fourth and fifth centuries, having originated in the second century AD, and being known as Patristics. According to some authors, the theological and philosophical foundations reached their peak of influence in the following centuries, known as the High Middle Ages or Late Antiquity (Le Goff, 2011). Thus, we understand from our research that the change in mentality from Antiquity to the Middle Ages had as one of its main elements the education of young people.

Understanding the importance of the formation of young people, we also sought to understand who the teacher was in this period. We understand that St. Basil emphasized his concern not to give just anyone the helm of the thought of the young person being educated, while St. Chrysostom pointed out directly that shows considered pagan, sometimes promoted by the aristocracy that financed culture within Roman society, harmed the souls of young people. Augustine, for his part, affirmed that the only teacher was God, and that the human intellect and the teacher were also instruments for divine enlightenment. Still on this subject, we understand that, given the scarcity of public and private schools, the figure responsible for administering studies in a classroom often became the priest/monk.

It is important to note that, from the Patristic period onwards, the whole formation of man converged towards the goal of moral growth that would lead him to God. This was so because, for example, the bishop of Hippo modeled pedagogy as an exercise of faith for the salvation of the soul upon arrival in the City of God, as we read in *De Magistro* (2015), as well as using pagan resources that, in his argument, would originally belong to the One God/Master. The defining part of this pedagogy was the establishment of rules so that the faithful who sought to elevate their souls could meet and help each other in an appropriate place. At the request of a group of religious figures who were also seeking salvation within the Christian faith, Augustine wrote letters with the first rules of a monastic life, following the same purposes already highlighted with regard to reading, poverty, prayer, fasting, clothing, relations with the brothers, obedience and chastity (Nunes, 2018a; 2018b).

15 *"Quapropter, cum ex infantibus loquentes non fiant, nisi locutiones discendo loquentium, cur eloquentes fieri non possunt, nulla eloquendi arte tradita, sed elocutiones eloquentium legendo et audiendo et, quantum assequi conceditur, imitando?"* (St. Augustine, 2010a).

A study of the formulation of monastic rules in Augustine and other religious authorities such as St. Benedict (480–547 AD), however, is beyond the scope of this article. Thus, considering the objectives of the study that have been achieved, we believe it is possible to understand how the religious influence of three of the Fathers of the Church, St. Basil, St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, had a decisive effect on the formation of young people for the following generations of Christians.

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