The Priest and the Teacher according to Simion Mehedinți's Perspective

Carmen Maria BOLOCAN

La complexité des phénomènes éducatifs dépasse toute possibilité d'être étudié par une seule science. Dans le même temps, l'éducation est l'élément essentiel à travers lequel la société humaine ne peut exister. L'homme a toujours été intéressé à établir son statut précis dans l'ordre des êtres et de toute la création. En dehors de l'éducation scientifique bien compris qu'il s'agisse de la lecture ou de l'intuition directe de la nature, Simion Mehedinţi savait qu'un éducateur a également la grande responsabilité d'être un guide spirituel pour les jeunes, ayant la mission de «façonner la pensée morale des élèves et l'équilibre vers des objectifs élevés».
À cet égard, nous allons voir comment le savant Simion Mehedinţi présente, dans ses didactique, des interprétations de l'Evangile de notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ sous la forme de manuels scolaires.
Sur le plan thématique, les paraboles et les enseignements présentent de nombreux types de vertus. La patience, la foi, l'amour, la bonté, la justice, etc seront progressivement révélés à nous à travers des paraboles du Sauveur, mais aussi à travers de leur interprétation par Simion Mehedinţi.

Mots clés: éducation, spiritualité chrétienne, pédagogie, Simion Mehedinți.

The complexity of the educational phenomena surpasses every possibility to be studied only by a single science. In the same time, education is the essential element through which human society may exist. Man has always been interested in establishing his precise status within the order of beings and of the whole creation. Simion MehenințI (1868-1962) stands proudly among those who are known to be the "founders" of the Christian pedagogy in the Romanian space, of which we mention Dimitrie Cantemir, Teodor M. Popescu, Vasile Băncilă, Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu and many others. All these men propose a type of pedagogy initiated, in fact, by our Lord Jesus Christ and continued by His Saint Disciples.

Apart from the scientific education adequatly built whether from reading or from the direct intuition of nature, Simion Mehedinţi knew that an educator has the great responsibility of being the spiritual guide for the youth, having the mission of

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"shaping the students' moral thinking and balance towards high goals"[1]. Through a well structured manner of thinking, transposed to the research method in the contemporary science, the scholar Mehedinţi remains, in the memory of the Romanian nation, as the founder of geography as an idependent science. First of all, this supposes *moral balance*. The young geography teacher sees the indestructible relationship between the education in the field of science and the moral education of the youth in general and of the students in particular.

Simion Medeninţi stands out especially as a geographer, ethnographer, "theologian" and, above all, as a vocational pedagogue. He brought to the Romanian spirituality not only science, but also methods and means for which his thinking and activity are considered within the Romanian pedagogy as a true light that spreads over other fields of life. Under Mehedinţi's guidance, the science, culture and the education of his time received development and meaning. The profoundly nationalistic thinking of the scholar transpares in all domains in which he was involved: geography, ethnography, pedagogy, literature, philosophy.

The social, political, cultural and religious environment in which Simion Mehedinţi activates is marked by the two World Wars. Like other contemporaries, he was under the social and cultural influences of the time as he shaped his vision before World War I. A new and powerful pedagogical movement found in this period proper conditions for development. Many pedagogical works were written during pre- and interwar years, and they were influenced by the views of the experimental pedagogy on one hand, and by those of the social pedagogy on the other. Above all was the influence of the powerful pedagogical ideas which dominated the first half of the 20th century in almost every country, the new education, materialized in "the active school"[2].

It is under these circumstances that Simion Mehedinţi wrote his work *Another Upbringing. The School of Work*, which revolutionized the Romanian pedagogical thinking, a reason to be banned later on, between 1949-1989[3]. The book comprises the theoretical *conception* of active education. "Education has love as its basis – the Gospel of love – and its protagonists are the woman and the child. Education starts from the mother, from home. What the mother didn't succeed to do will be perfected

[1] Victor Tufescu, *Simion Mehedinţi, Life and Work*, The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1994, p. 45.

[2] *Education, Teaching and Pedagogy in the Period between the Two World Wars*, in Ion Gh. Stanciu, *The History of Pedagogy*, The Didactic and Pedagogic Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 147.

[3] Simion Mehedinţi, *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, seven editions published during the author's life and two posthumous: 1st edition – 1919; 2nd edition, "Literary Conversations" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1919; 3rd edition 1921, 4th edition "Socec" Book Sore Publishing House, Bucharest, 1922; 5th edition, 1930; 6th edition, 1939; 7th edition "Thinking" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1941s; 8th revised edition, "The Romanian Life" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, with an afterword by Prof. PhD. Ion Gh. Stanciu and "Necessary Additions to Simion Mehedinţi's Bio-bibliography" by Şerban Dragomirescu; 9th edition, "Axia" Publishing House, Craiova, 2003, Forward by Prof. PhD. Vasile Gordon and Afterword by Prof. PhD. I. Gh. Stanciu.

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by the school and the church, the priest and the teacher. The school's highest goal is to shape the character - «a series of deeply rooted habits». The man of character is shaped through work. The school of work will help the nation to move past the waves of history"[4].

Another Upbringing. The School of Work is the writing which defines its author as *theorist of education and promoter* of Christian pedagogy.

Regarding the methodology and the technique of instruction in *Another Upbringing. The School of Work*, one may observe the manner in which *the instructive-educative activity is developed*, by giving a certain sense and a certain efficiency to the education of the youth. Consequently, the educational ideals materialize in behaviours and mentalities only when the teaching-learning activities are based on a coherent system of means and ways of accomplishment. Through the concept of "school of work", Mehedinţi develops within the theory of education new strategic forms and means to accomplish the didactic duties. In the view of Simion Mehedinţi, the concept of "didactic technology" is a synonym of the concept of "work". Work is the interaction factor between the educator and the educated. The child is in direct contact with his mother, who, by integrating the child in simple activities, also transmits a certain amount of information. The simple activities in which the child is engaged become forms of accomplishing the education and in the same time means of evaluation. It is well known the fact that in the pedagogy of scholar Mehedinţi, the power of example occupies the first place in the process of education. He also states that *the influence of the educator's deed upon the educated is maximum*, whether the educators are the parents or the the teachers.

The didactic method proposed by "the school of work"[5] is efficient through actual "things and deeds"[6], which in the process of teaching-learning enter in corelation with other elements of instruction. In Mehedinţi's theory, "another upbringing"[7] means in fact "the school of love"[8], from which better generations may evolve. This is why *love* and *kindness* stand out as methods in the pedagogy of deed and moreover, in the Christian pedagogy. It is through love and kindness that any woman, "the educator of the human kind"[9], succeeded in participating simultaneously in the achievment of several instructive-educative objectives. In his

[4] Costică Neagu, *Simion Mehedinţi, Bio-Bibliography*, Terra Publishing House, Focşani, 2003, p. 71-72.

[5] "Our nation will only fulfil its fate by knowingly entering the *School of work*". Simion Mehedinţi, *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, 8th edition, revised, afterword by Prof. PhD. Ion Gh. Stanciu and "Necessary Additions to Simion Mehedinţi's Bio-bibliography" by Şerban Dragomirescu, "The Romanian Life" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1997, p. 9.

[6] Simion Mehedinţi, *Another Upbringing – the School of Work*, 8th edition, p. 139.

[7] "Giving our nation *Another upbringing* is not only a matter of pedagogy". Simion Mehedinţi, *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, 8th edition, p. 9.

[8] According to Simion Mehedinţi, *The Gospel of Love: the child and the woman*, in *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, 8th edition, p. 42-114.

[9] According to Simion Mehedinţi, *The Woman – the educator of the human kind*, in *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, 8th edition, p. 74-81.

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work Mehedinţi underlines the responsibility that women assume in front of the Church, through their mission of creating both physically and spiritually a new world driven by love and kindness.

As a means of the Christian pedagogy promoted by Mehedinți, love does not leave out the finality of education, the content of the instruction process or the individual peculiarities of the students. Through "the school of work", kindness and love – pedagogical methods proposed by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself – will endow the Christian pedagogy with all the particular functions. Thus, the *cognitive function* transforms the method of love and kindness into a way of access for the student to the knowledge of the truths from Christ's teachings and of His strategies of action. Concerning *the formative-educational function*, love, as a method, stimulates action. The *instrumental function* is the one which in "the school of work" becomes the execution technique; it's the operational function, with contributions for the fulfilment of the instructive-educative objectives. "The school of work", as a means of showing Christian love, also has a *normative function* in perfecting the human spirit and action.

As far as the didactic approach is concerned, through "the school of work" Mehedinţi appeals to a series of actual actions, called *proceedings*. He supports the idea of completing the laws with schools of direct work for the guidance of the youth, in order for them to be familiar with work, and for the adults to be familiar with the balanced work.

His entire encyclopaedic activity proves a permanent unique vocation, *the pedagogical vocation*, from which anyone can see that, above all, *Simion Mehedinţi wanted to be* professor and *educator*[10]. His pedagogy is more than a conception on education and teaching, it is an *expression of a pedagogical vocation supported by a vast encyclopaedic knowledge*. Mehedinţi's pedagogy is lived constantly with an unchanged perseverance from the beginning of his work until the end of his life. To this respect one mai speak, in fact, of an *original pedagogy*.

His theoretical works *Another Upbringing* and *The Trilogy of School* have an obvious pedagogical character, and were written in order to emphasize some changes in the practice of education. This is why S. Mehedinţi's pedagogy is active and, through "another upbringing" of the youth, but of other generations too, it aims at rising the level of civilisation and culture of the Romanian people.

According to Mehedinţi, of all the social categories the educator has the highest social power[11]. Following the same reasoning, another one of his conclusions is the idea that "the professor is the basis of all the school reforms". The reform must start from within the school. The school is just like the professor.

[10] S. Mehedinţi started his writing career with a pedagogical work named *J. J. Rousseau's Ideas on Education* (1892), his thesis for a licentiate's degree.

[11] According to Mehedinţi, the magistrate may also be an educator, the same as the soldier, the missionary doctor and the statesman (…). Simion Mehedinţi, *Another Upbringing – The School of Work*, 8th edition, p. 38.

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For example, in his work *Trilogies (Science, School, Life with application to the Romanian People)*, we see Mehedinţi arguing for the idea that "science is not for school, but for life, and life – for the improvement of the individual and of the human race"[12]. For him the relationship *science – education – life* has an organic unity. Thus, when he speaks of *a science trilogy* he brings into discussion the three categories of researchers: the scientific explorer, the learned, the scholars. Each category is presented on the level of eficiency within science: "from scientific explorers and learned men the science inherits *material*; from scholars we have *ideas*, and sometimes new *systems* and *methods*, which enhance the understanding of a great deal of deeds"[13].

In the *school trilogy* three categories of teachers are presented: "the pedant", whom he calls *bailiff of the children*; "the professor", *employee of the school* and "the educator", *parent of the youth*.

School is as old as humankind. Children and adolescents learn from the old men "what they must and must not do"[14]. The author observes that animals do not have schools, for them the instinct is enough, whereas man added something special, *the tool*. Working with tools increases man's *attention*, which in turn helps him develop his *memory*. By joining several images in the memory, *notions* appear, then *reasoning*. By means of *words*, man manages to keep the knowledge achieved empirically and to transmit it to his descendants; this is how *tradition* begins. In order for the elements of tradition to be preserved from one generation to another, school appeared. But, along the years, instead of an elementary school of the crowd, people felt the need to be more attentive with the gifted ones of each generation. Through the action of several outstanding personalities who are able to give to the gifted youth everything that is essential in the tradition of their community, schools succeed in *taking one step further over the level of the society in which they appeared*. Such a guidance necessitates a series of features that cannot be found in every professional in school, but only in those who have a powerful vocation for the education of the youth. Thus, the pedant can only provide a stereotype continuation of the tradition; the professor or the teacher achieves a critical guidance of the child and a sensible sorting of the tradition, whilst perfecting traditions, as Mehedinţi remarks, through a *creative activity* can only be given by the art of an exceptional personality, *the educato*r[15].

Simion Mehedinţi brings into discussion the terms *education* and *to educate*. What does it mean *to educate* someone ? According to him, many have spoken about this, "pragmatically and using harsh words". For him, to educate is almost like a mystery: "The mystery of every education is this: it does not give you nicely shaped limbs; wax nose, glass eyes and other things like this. Those who offer such gifts are

[12] Simion Mehedinţi, *Trilogies. Science – School – Life with Application to the Romanian People*, Thinking – Georgescu Dalafras Publishing House, Bucharest, 1940, p. 6.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 2.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 131.
[15] According to *ibidem*, p. 213.

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only the caricature of the educator. On the contrary, *the real upbringing* means something else: *liberation*, meaning to remove the weed, the debris and the insects that want to pinch the delicate top of the nursery transplant. *Education* means a source of light and warmth, it means bending after nature and adoring nature, when it proves to be kind and compassionate, like a mother who keeps you safe from terrible events or turns them to your own good, or hides with a vail the evil outbursts of the sad and unwise nature…"[16]. "*The aim of education* is to help you find yourself; to save you from the dizziness which usually surrounds you like a thick cloud; to support you *come to your senses*… And for this I know not a safer road but to be careful when *choosing and preparing the educators*"[17].

The author recommends a pedagogy of the active school, beyond contemplation. *Education* means not only "liberation from all impediment" (of which the hardest is the dull memorization of the words from books). Education must mean "to integrate the individual and *empirical* ego, subjected to every day sins, into the normative ego (characteristic) of the nation, as its psychic individuality formed from the experience gathered for centuries, in happy and unhappy circumstances, which corrected that experience, concentrating it in customs and traditions. – Thus, the model of the education appropriate for the respective ethnic group must be drawn from *the reality of the biological and historical life of each nation*, not from the abstract notions presented in books"[18]. Hence, to educate means above all to integrate the child into his nation's life[19]. Mehedinţi says that well educated children, increase the nation's being, just like the gemmas which every spring add to the end of the branches (if they are not destroyed by severe cold or by drought) increase the crown of the tree in every direction.

All these give birth to a very important question: *who* will supervise and enhance this hard work of integrating the positive values that ar normative in the life of a nation? The answer is equally important: *the educator*. Of course, this generates many other questions such as: how are we to discover him? What are his qualities? Are there institutions that prepare educators? For all these questions Simion Mehedinţi has only one answer: the great teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is why our pedagogue proposes for a real education the theme of the education of the soul, that must precede the education of senses. An education that aims to the unity of the soul. He proposes the school to be a means of preparation for the knowledge of the soul and a source of science for the guidance of the life. From the point of view of the author, this thing can only be achieved by the educator. He considers that the educator's soul must enter directly into action. The educator himself will fulfill the things he urges the others to fulfill, him having his soul untainted, "in order for him to develop in others the seeds of their personality, until fulfillment". Only that who is dominated by a feeling of high moral responsibility

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 133-134.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 134.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 135
[19] *Ibidem*, p. 136.

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(not only intellectual), for those that he takes care of can generate emotion into the souls of the others. The educator's life must be entirely a sincere proof of his beliefs to such extent that it can convince to action.

"The educator can only be a balanced man (in thought, in feeling and in action) who feels an inner eurhythmy and a constant predisposition for an ideal that moves past the border of the small individual life. For the young disciples do not need science and philosophy (which they can find in every library), but real philo-sophers, meaning people who, having established a higher goal in their lives, live according to the way they think. Professors or professionals of the education are more and more easy to fins in civilized countries. But educators, meaning sincere modellers of their own life in order to make it exemplary, transmitting their enthusiasm to others, these are rare – just like the artistic talent. Even more rare than that. Unilateral talents – enough. (…) This is why great educators, just like the statesmen (yet another type of educators) are so rare, that we can count them on the fingers from one hand. The history stands proof of that"[20].

A real educator can only be that *who makes his life a guide for the others*[21]. Here Mehedinţi speaks about the value of that sense of inner harmony, which dominates permanently the mind and the will of the educator. In his opinion, without this transcendent element, a solid education is not possible, and the entire spiritual life tends to disintegration and confusion. On people we do not work only through what we *do*, but especially through what we *are* in our inner self. Hence, the most learned professor, "distributor of lessons", can not be an educator if he is not seriously preoccupied by what may be beyond the horizon of the daily life; if he does not have a complex and refined spiritual structure, capable to inspire not only the appreciation of science, but also the ethic and aesthetic side of life. Without a religious attitude the educator can not be an educator!

In conclusion Simion Mehedinţi states that neither the book or the regulations, nor the inspector or the minister create the school. "But you are the one to create daily the school, you who sit on the professor's chair. The future of education depends on how you thought (or did not think) about the lesson, on the manner you looked (or did not look) at the children, on the method you used to explain (or you did not explain enough) the lessons, on every step, on every word, on every gesture of yours. If you are a real teacher, the entire Universe may be ugly and weak as an old booth, you, in the environment of your school, are a source of light, beauty and harmony, because for the child you are the centre of the Universe".

Christian pedagogy practiced by the scholar Simion Mehedinţi, gives back to the Romanian catechetical space interpretations of the Gospel, made with the knowledge of the scholar and of the ethnographer, but in the light of the Christian tradition. All these interpretations are intended to be accessible to every type of listener, regardless of his age and culture. These interpretations appear in the works of Simion Mehedinţi as textbooks. It is well known the fact that Mehedinţi is the author of several

[20] *Ibidem*, p. 216.
[21] According to *ibidem*, p. 219.

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textbooks of geography, reading etc. In the same manner, studying the information transmitted by our Lord Jesus Christ through His parables, he elaborated outstanding works for the Orthodox catechetical education, in which each parable is "applied to the students' life"[22]. The parables and teachings from the Gospel prove the fact that the didactic tradition started by Jesus can only be changed in the manner of presentation, but they fundamentally remain the same. To this respect we will see how in his didactics the scholar Simion Mehedinţi presents interpretations from the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in the form of textbooks.

Thematically, the parables and teachings present numerous types of virtues. Patience, faith, love, kindness, justice etc. will be gradually revealed to us from the Saviour's parables but also from their interpretation by Simion Mehedinţi.

The parable of the sower (Luke 8, 5-15)

"The seed sowed by the professors in school and by priests in church is the one who fell on good soil and it produces fruit a hundredfold and a thousandfold"[23].

"Sow the good seed and only on good soil"[24]. It is true that the Saviour taught everybody, but, says Mehedinţi, not all of them understood His words. But the good teacher never loses his patience. Hence, the educator will know that "not every seed will produce fruits" because, Mehedinţi explains, "similar to rocky soils, there are rocky hearts"[25]. The seed fallen on the path is the word told to superficial and hasty people, just like you sowed wheat in the middle of the road. The seeds fallen on rocky ground are the words heard by people with a rocky heart, where the root can not penetrate profoundly, while the seeds fallen among thorns are the advices given to a man with many concerns and interests, which choke him. The seed fallen on rich soil is the word received by smart people who have a pure heart, and the fruit is, as Jesus says, "in patience". Through patience we can achieve beautiful fruits. Moreover, the children in the mind and soul of whom the good seed comes to life, will eventually become "all hope of a country"[26].

The author concludes by saying that "in spring when you see the green fields, you say that the sower sowed his seed on rich soil, and the people will have food to eat; in the same way when the children of a country are hardworking and have their heart open foreknowledge, you have faith that that country will not perish"[27].

The parable of the weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13, 24-30)

"Collect the weeds and tie them in bundles for burning"[28]. "A smart man does not wait for the last sift", says the author, but examines his life on time, in order not to be like the weeds and to end up in the fire that burns the bad weeds[29].

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[22] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel*, Sophia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2002.
[23] *Ibidem*, p. 30.
[24] Idem, *Can You be a Complete Man without being a Christian?*, "The Romanian Life" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 42.
[25] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 27.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 30.
[27] *Ibidem*.
[28] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[29] According to *ibidem*, p. 34.

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This parable is appropriate for every age. The students have either the chance to memorize the beautiful teaching of the school and of the Church, or the unfortunate to let themselves influenced by the viles that may cross their path. Since no one can bake bread from weeds, no one will need children or people that resemble "an ugly weed"[30]. This is why the world keeps on sifting. Simion Mehedinţi speaks about a sifting done by the school, throwing the scum at the end of each year; another one done by the army, which eliminates the cowards; and another one done by the court, which eliminates the criminals[31].

The punishment follows the sin as day follow night. The fire comes without a doubt. All mistakes are payed for. Simion Mehedinţi draws the attention upon the fact that through this parable the Saviour communicates to His disciples and to all the educators the reality that they have to work not only with the good seed and that apart from the honest worker, a guide towards the good things, there have always been villains who spread lie, defamation, conflict, the bad seed. Nevertheless, the educators will not be hasty to judge and convict, because, Mehedinţi says, "together with the guilty ones, innocent people could also be convicted"[32]. "Hence, do not be hasty! (…) And do not be afraid that the crime will remain unpunished, as long as there will be a day of harvest. Meaning, says the author, that there will come an illness as a consequence of the sin, prison and handcuffs, the end of this century, death and the final judgment"[33].

In conclusion, one may say that Simion Mehedinţi encouraged Orthodox catechesis. He knew that death is the consequence of sin. He knew that death means the end of life here on earth and the beginning of the eternal life, representing the limit until which man can prepare his redemption. Through this he proves knowledge of the Orthodox Church's doctrine on the individual judgment, and as a Christian educator he teaches that this judgment is done by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed and like yeast (Matthew 13, 31-35).

"If you saw the good seed on rich soil and pull up the weeds, it is enough to work hard and be sure that you will succeed. The power of good is beyond measure. The one that ads good day by day can achieve the greatest accomplishments in life"[34]. The one that works and believes in the power of good and truth gathers a secure treasure. And, similar to the mustard seed, from which a tree grows, on the branches of which the birds of the sky come and dwell, from a weak child, a wise man may grow, whose words support thousands and millions of people. So, work hard, from your childhood, and be sure that you will succeed.

Jesus urged people to prepare their souls for the kingdom of heaven. Everybody looked at Him with doubt. This is why, says the author, to encourage his disciples, the Saviour tries to show them through a parable how great the power of good can be

[30] *Ibidem*.
[31] *Ibidem*.
[32] *Ibidem*, p. 33.
[33] *Ibidem*.
[34] *Ibidem*, p. 35.

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and that His kingdom will soon be founded through a teaching that will prevail without the help of weapons.

In conclusion, the victory, Mehedinţi says, comes only when the teaching of jesus Christ will be preached.

The parable of the treasure buried in the field, the pearl and the net (Matthew 13, 44-50).

"The power of persistence is beyond measure. The one who gathered good deeds, day by day, may be sure of the victory without a doubt"[35]. To apply this to the students' life, the author confesses, the greatest deeds can be prepared even from childhood. The soul can be taken care of from childhood and as the water drops can carve into the stone, or can leave traces even in the most hard marble, so does the good word leave traces in the brain that can not be erased. A child who is told that the pearls of wisdom can be found between the pages of the books, will not spare any effort until he achieves his knowledge.

To throw the net into the sea represents an idea that can lead to the great number of books, of which many are dangerous too, "just like the virus that causes tuberculosis and other illnesses"[36], Mehedinţi will say, but the greatest skill is "not to lose courage, but, avoiding dangerous teachings, to work hard, always choosing the pearl from the unworthy shells, until you will achieve the priceless treasure of wisdom"[37].

Wisdom thus achieved proves the intelligent man that he must not spare any effort, but to sacrifice everything in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, meaning to deliver his soul from sin; this will make him understand the price of happiness towards which the Gospel calls him.

In conclusion, Mehedinţi teaches that the net is the Christian Church which comprises all those who are alive, and that death will be followed by judgment.

The parable of the wedding feast (Matthew 22, 2-14).

"The one who really wants to become a Christian, must dress his soul, meaning to fill his heart with the teaching of the Gospel"[38]. "Many are invited but few are chosen" (Matthew 22, 14).

The interpretation made by Mehedinţi is based on the reality that Christ wanted the people to understand that their redemption depended on them, that all the sins will be forgiven "only if they want this"[39]. We know that the scholar put an emphasis on the education of the crowd, of the mass. Why? The answer is gradually revealed in his work. He explains that the people called to the wedding feast is the Church of Christ. The king is our Lord Jesus Christ, the One that called everybody, all the nations of the world to receive His teachings. The servants were the disciples and

[35] *Ibidem*, p. 43.
[36] *Ibidem*, p. 44.
[37] *Ibidem*, p. 43-44.
[38] *Ibidem*, p. 47.
[39] *Ibidem*, p. 45.

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today they are the priests and the pedagogues all over the world, who call everybody to share the Christian faith.

The parable of the wedding feast, as understood by the Christian Simion Mehedinţi, seems to have served him as an argument based on which he transformed geography, then ethnography and ethnopedagogy into Christian pedagogy. All the people are called to receive the teachings of Christ, but, just like the people who refused to participate to the wedding, there are people nowadays who refuse to receive Christ's teachings. The guilt, says Mehedinţi "is theirs and only theirs"[40].

What is the significance of the fact that in the parable Jesus throws out one of those who wanted to come? Through this Mehedinţi understands that "that one did not really want to come to the wedding. If he wanted he would have looked for more decent clothes"[41]. Meaning that one can not enter the Church of Christ simply by crossing the threshold of a building with a cross above it, or by listening to a reading from the Gospel.

From this parable also we have "application to the students' life". Through His call "let the little children come to me!", Jesus erases all difference between people. He opens access to education for every child. With this principle, Mehedinţi addresses to all the parents and educators with words such as: "bring all the children, with no exception, to Church and school"[42]. Any child can receive light, any child has the way open to rise higher through his work.

In conclusion, through this parable, the scholar Mehedinţi, proves that each of us, pedagogue, parent, young man, student, peasant etc. must "prepare himself through work and with appropriate behaviour for the task which he approaches"[43].

The parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20, 1-16).

"The one who wants to work must not lose faith no matter where he is or who he is"[44].

Both the interpretation of the Gospel and the religious education in itself is continued around the same concept of work. One must prove quality work. Work implies conscience, intelligence and wisdom. Work imposes moral behaviour towards ourselves and our fellows. Work is a proof of faith, optimism and even religiosity. This is why the reward for "the school of work" in the pedagogy of the scholar Mehedinţi reaches unthinkable levels.

The parable of the workers in the vineyard, for a man of science such as Mehedinţi is yet another proof that the Saviour Himself recommends work for all those who will sooner or later hear His word and will follow Him. The parable of the workers, Mehedinţi says, is not easy to understand by everyone. First of all we must know that He addresses not only the Jewish people. Jesus spoke with everyone. He was aware of the fact that the world can not understand at once the new teaching of

[40] *Ibidem*, p. 47.
[41] *Ibidem*.
[42] *Ibidem*, p. 48.
[43] *Ibidem*.
[44] *Ibidem*, p. 49.

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the Gospel. Our ethnopedagogue imagines that through this parable the Saviour addressed with the words: "Pagans near and far! Pagans who live today or will be born after hundreds of years, do not lose faith in your redemption! No matter how late you will hear the Gospel, if you follow it, you will be saved too, as the ones that listen to it now, from My mouth, on the banks of Tiberias, in Jerusalem or elsewhere"[45].

Such a parable may generate, for the finite mind of man, the question whether it is just to pay the same amount to that who comes in the evening, as you pay to that who came in the morning. It is just as long as the worker who came in the morning for one dinar received one dinar, moreover it's the master's business. The landowner had the great joy, our scholar explains, to find people with ardour who waited for hours for someone to hire them. Those workers deserved their money from the very beginning "for their persistence and for their vigil", for their dedicated soul, since they started to work no matter how late it was, Mehedinţi says[46]. Besides this, these people helped the landowner to end his work in the same day he started it, for no one knows if the next day rain, for example, wouldn't have prevented them from working.

For Christian pedagogy and for all the Christians, Mehedinţi sees in this parable the great truth, that the vineyard is the Christian Church, the believers. The landowner is Jesus, the One Who asked everybody to work in His vineyard, through the receiving of the Gospel's teaching. The study of geography, the moving history, as the scholar named it, showed him that until nowadays there are nations that haven't heard about Christ yet[47].

In conclusion, Mehedinţi underlines the fact that the moment when someone becomes closer to Church is not that important, rather the soul and the deed of the one who comes closer: "A persistent child must never lose his faith. If he decides to work, he may also be among those who are chose, even in the eleventh hour"[48].

The parable of the tenants (Matthew 21, 33-41).

"The work decides who is chosen. In the end, the one who works a field with faith and diligence, in time becomes his complete master"[49]. It is well known the fact

[45] *Ibidem*, p. 51.

[46] According to *Ibidem*, p. 52.

[47] Simion Mehedinţi expresses his belief that the one who came in the last hour may be a good Christian. Here's how he, as a geographer and ethnographer, can encourage the catechetic teaching. Very simple and on the subject: "This does not mean that tomorrow a black or an Eskimo will not be worthy to stand besides the best Christian. On the contrary, it may happen that, in time, a black person, a Chinese or another pagan can become a better Christian than those who were born from parents who have bee Christian for centuries. Or, in a family, the youngest of children can not be a good Christian just because he was baptized later than his elder brothers? The Japanese who live without a lock on their doors because nobody steals, are people way more valuable than many of the Christians. The Eskimos who rapidly come to help the fellows whoever they may be, surpass in many aspects those who call themselves Christians but stay indifferent to other peoples' suffering". *Ibidem*, p. 52-53.

[48] *Ibidem*, p. 54.

[49] *Ibidem*, p. 55.

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that Jews considered them to be the only people loved by God. This is why, Mehedinţi says, Jesus Christ draws attention through a parable on the fact that His teaching is destined for the whole world. He tells the parable of the tenants, in which he comprises the entire history of the Jewish people. The landowner of the vineyard, Mehedinţi explains, is God Himself, the vineyard is the Jews' country, enclosed by the hedge of Moses' laws. The tenants of the vineyard were the leaders: kings, archbishops, priests and all the distinguished men. The battered servants remind us of the prophets that were tortured and stoned to death, while the Son sent in the end is Jesus. As the Gospel says, in the interpretation given by Mehedinţi he underlines the fact that the vineyard was taken from the hands of the wretched men and given to other tenants; moreover, today the Gospel is given equally to all the peoples of the world, for all are asked to work in God's vineyard.

For the school's life and for the religious education in general, Simion Mehedinţi shows that here too can happen such falls. Sometimes, he says, it happens that the parents and the teachers put their faith in one child or another who seems to be chosen, who may or may not fulfill the expectations. In other situations, work and perseverance turn a student into a man of great importance; through his work he may end up supporting a whole generation.

Following the same idea from Christ's parable, our geographer teaches that the land of a country, with all the resources that are hidden within, may be considered to be a vineyard given to a people by the world's Lord. The ultimate law for life is "to work with pleasure". The lazy is cast away, and the idle may become slave in his parents' country. "The stranger snatches the earth under his feet", Mehedinţi says, even though many laws could favour him. Hence, the real strength of the boarders is the work of the country's inhabitants[50].

In conclusion, the parable of the tenants entitles Simion Mehedinţi to see work as the supreme condition for redemption. Only work is that which can decide who is chosen, and more than this, "every man is obliged to give his country as much work and care as he can, for the country is like a shelter for everybody"[51].

The parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25, 1-13).

"Those who are reckless have no luck. The development of an entire life may depend on the loss of a moment"[52]. The parable of the tenants shows clearly that the basis of happiness in life is work. We must not lose an instant. Either we talk about the students' life, about the educators' activity, about ploughing, commerce or any other type of work, through the parable of the ten virgins the Saviour teaches us that "if you don't work on time what you have to work, any concern or effort is useless in

[50] "We defend our country with every field, in every garden, in every house, in every store, in every workshop… before we defend it at the borders with weapons in our hands". Idem, *Can you be a Complete Man without being a Christian?*, "The Romanian Life" Publishing House, Bucharest, 1992, p. 103.

[51] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 58.

[52] Idem, *Can you be a Complete Man without being a Christian?*, p. 108, and Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 59.

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the last hour. Hence, stay awake and prepare yourself to face every need that life may bring to you. And especially take care of the last day of your life, purifying your soul. In vain you pretend to be a Christian if you don't have Christian deeds"[53].

In this interpretation, the author replaces the oil with the existence or the absence of the Christian deeds and with the care for the soul. The day of the wedding is also the last day of our lives. The wise virgins are the "caring" people, who prepare themselves "for the difficult hour of the account"[54].

And what happens to a man, Mehedinţi says, may also happen to a people. What is the mission of a people? "To have deeds so just and good that his entire life becomes a jewel"[55].

In conclusion, as the fool virgins, the fool peoples remain in darkness and in suffering.

The parable of the talents (Matthew 25, 14-30).

"And from little, in time, one may produce a lot"[56]. "The will conquers all. And from little the diligent child can do a lot. At the beginning Demosthenes was a stammerer, Mehedinţi says, then he became the greatest orator of all those mentioned in ancient times. When the man works with all his heart, meaning when man is man, one may obtain a lot from very little. Any capital he would have got at birth and no matter how little one may have inherited from his parents, if he is diligent, he may accomplish great deeds. Even the smallest gift, if properly used, may bring a gain beyond any measure. Even the most powerless man can gather his strength and do miracles if he wants to. Gain is not always measured according to the capital with which you started your business, but according to the man's diligence"[57].

This parable is also fundamental in the Christian pedagogy of Simion Mehedinţi for what he calls "the school of work". Through this he sees clearly that Jesus teaches that redemption depends on each person and that those who might complain that they have neither enough strength to work nor enough skills to care for their souls have no excuse. This is why the servant who received one talent and gave it back unchanged is extremely guilty, proving to be a lazy and helpless soul.

In conclusion, Mehedinţi comes to speak about the last judgment and about the responsibility that each of us has during this life[58]. And this time we can underline

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[53] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 62-63.

[54] *Ibidem*, p. 61.

[55] *Ibidem*, p. 62.

[56] Idem, *Parables and Teachings for the Guidance of Life. A Book to read from Youth until the End of the Life*, Socec & Co. Bookstore Publishing House, Bucharest, p. 45.

[57] Mehedinţi speaks about the case of a child in Germany who was born without hands and who could have become a beggar. Instead, that child proved to be so diligent and perseverent that he came to do with his legs what other aren't able to do with their hands. He dressed himself, ate, and even played the violin with his toes. Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 66.

[58] "For example, in war, you, a common soldier, are asked to spy from which way the enemy comes and to annouce… All you have to do is to keep your *eyes open* and hurry to announce, as soon as you see the danger… This is enough, for an army to be saved and a country to be free, only through the fair vigil of your eyes, even if your arms are weak". (Idem, *Parables and Teachings for the Guidance of Life…*, p. 47).

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his contribution to the development of the Christian pedagogy in the Romanian space. Without considering it a dogma, he respects this teaching of the Church about the last judgment, about the man's dealings with eternity, and recognizes its scripturistical basis, such as the present parable.

The parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13, 6-9).

"Don't be hasty to sentence, nor wait to see if the willow turns into a tree"[59]. Even a tree has its own mission on earth, o much the more a man, so much the more a nation. Although they had been rescued from the Egyptian slavery, although they had been fed with manna in the desert, the Jewish people proved to be more and more stubborn. Jesus brought the Gospel for them too, but it was all in vain. They crucified Him. That is why, the punishment of living spread throughout the world is still felt today.

From this parable Mehedinţi extracts two main ideas. The first is that we all have a duty to fulfill in this world, both as an individual and as a nation. The second, requires everybody, especially the educators, not to be hasty to judge, especially when a man's price is decided. When the order to cut the barren fig tree was given, Mehedinţi says, the Wise Man, Jesus, asked for another year, to care for its roots, and for the whole tree. But the fig tree proved to be fruitless. Only than it was sentenced to be cut.

In conclusion, one must not judge a person just from a single situation!

The parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10, 25-37).

"Every man is your brother. Love them all"[60]. The Saviour shows his disciples how they cand become free from the darkness they had been living in to that day. A certain scholar, heard Him speaking about the kingdom of heaven and about redemption and eternal life, and asked Him what was he to do to secure eternal life. It is well known the fact that the Jews were not looking with a friendly eye on the Samaritans, of whom they were different not only through blood, but also through their faith. That is why in the answer to the scholar's question, the Saviour spoke about the Samaritan that took care of the man who fell victim to robbers.

Jesus reminds us that a priest happened to be going down that road, meaning a Jew, who wore on his head and on his left arm some little bags containing the Law's commandments: You shall love the Lord, your God and your neighbor. Yet, Mehdinţi says, the wounded traveler remains lying in the ditch. I prefer a working illiterate to a lazy learned, exclaimed once the author of "another upbringing, the school of work"! Let us not forget that it was him who considered the oil prepared for the candles to be the Christian good deed. This is the Christian pedagogy. Likewise a Levite came to the place. Although the Jews considered the Samaritans to be heretical or strangers to their belief, the Samaritan is the only "sensible and caring man", Mehedinţi says[61]. When Jesus asked the scholar which of those three was

[59] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 68.

[60] *Ibidem*, p. 71.

[61] This one "*a deeply sensible and caring man*, forgot that he was on a very long trip (it takes more than a day's trip to get from Samaria to Jericho); he forgot that the wounded man was a Jew, a

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neighbor to the robbers' victim, he admits that "The one who treated him with mercy".

The beauty of Christ's teaching is that it consists of love, love proven by acts, not by laws tied to the arm, or nailed to the door, says the supporter of the Christian pedagogy. Christian, ethnographer and ethnopedagogue, Mehedinţi recognizes the loving deed of the Samaritan to be an example for our attitude towards everybody, without any national pride, for not only our relatives and our brothers are our neighbors, but "every human being, no matter what country he or she comes from"[62].

In conclusion, love is the first recommendation for the Christians, the first principle of Christian pedagogy that Simion Mehedinţi distinguishes from Christ's teaching. "The love for the neighbour is the first of duties for the man who considers himself to be a man"[63]. It seems that ethnopedagogy in Mehedinţi's works can simply be called "Christian pedagogy", as long as its author teaches how Jesus told the people to be brothers, to love each other, to help one another, without being interested of their origins. The scholar happily admits that this was in fact the biggest novelty. The ancient religions who were powerful only within the borders of a country were hit right on their basis. We can cross from one country to another without being afraid that we might get killed, and even in schools there are children of different languages and religions.

The parable of the Wise Judge (Luke 18, 1-8)

"In life, perseverance is more valuable than vanity"[64]. Mehedinţi says that each time he prays with all his heart the Christian must not lose his faith in justice. No ma lose his temper while persisting with all his strength. Hence, "the first law of life is perseverance or the will to win"[65]. The law of life and also of the pedagogy was started by our Lord Jesus Christ.

In His pedagogy, Jesus wants to show to the descendants, to all those who will be called Christians, the priceless value of perseverance in act. From the parable of the wise judge it is obvious the fact that no matter how strong our persecutors may be, no matter how weak or humble, we may happen to be, we must never lose our temper. We will fight with all our strength, for, as Mehedinţi says, the one who loses courage, may stay forever a loser and, even worse, the loser may end up to be guilty as well.

For teachers and educators, the example of the judge from this parable, may be very conclusive. A judge may be a tyrant not necessarily out of meanness, but also out of recklessness. The same as the judge who has many cases to judge and can not know the exact reasons in full, the educator can not have under full supervision,

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stranger, and stops, approaches the victim and takes care of his wounds…". Idem, *Parables and Teachings for the Guidance of Life…*, p. 54.

[62] Idem, *Parables and Teachings from the Gospel…*, p. 75.

[63] *Ibidem*.

[64] *Ibidem*, p. 88.

[65] *Ibidem*, p. 90.

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evaluation and guidance all his students. But it is enough for him to be aware of this reality, without trying to find an excuse.

Regarding the "application to students' life", Mehedinţi says that no other parable fits better with the teenagers' lives. Usually, they are impatient, and when something bad happens they lose their courage.

In conclusion, perseverance and diligence may be a means of measurement both for the student and for the educator: "Those who are truly wise, are always very diligent too. This is why it is said that genius is an infinite patience. Meaning that the intelligent one can only achieve results works through very hard work"[66].

The parables of the lost sheep and of the lost coin (Luke 15, 4-10).

"Leave no one outside your love, brotherhood and tolerance"[67]. This is yet another teaching revealed to us through parables. The main idea of the parable of the lost sheep and that of the lost coin is very easy to understand. Starting from the example of a shepherd's love for his sheep, or that of a housewife's love for her family, our Lord Jesus Christ speaks, in fact, about an obvious attitude towards the human soul. The shepherd is the Saviour Himself, as Medicine explains, and the one that looks out for the Christian parish is the priest. The lost sheep and the lost coin represent the sinner, which from a Christian point of view must not be left outside the parish.

From this parable we understand that no man can be overseen, no matter how many sins he has done, because "he is a soul too"[68], because "those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do"[69].

In conclusion, Mehedinţi underlines the fact that while the parable of the Samaritan teaches us what "brotherhood"[70] is and the parable of the wise king teaches us to be tolerant, the parable of the lost sheep teaches us to be united.

Simion Mehedinţi's contribution to the development of the Christian pedagogy within the Romanian space consists of the fact that the scholar adopts the universal premise of Christ's teaching, the pedagogy of love, beyond which there is no life; hence, giving up on love means giving up on the authentic life in Jesus Christ, and this also means the loss of the eternal life. Thus, the Christian pedagogy as the pedagogy of love is nothing else but the pedagogy of the person. Through love, the person brings out to light the teaching. And we have the Person of Jesus Christ to serve us as a model. For it is through love, through person that his teaching reached us nowadays.

[66] *Ibidem*.
[67] *Ibidem*, p. 91.
[68] *Ibidem*, p. 93.
[69] *Ibidem*, p. 94.
[70] *Ibidem*, p. 95.

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