

# Clement of Alexandria

## *The Paedagogus (Christ the Educator)*

### Book I

### Chapter 7

(53) We have now shown that not only does Scripture call all of us children, but also it figuratively calls us who follow Christ, little ones, and that the only perfect being is the Father of all (in fact, the Son is in Him, and the Father is in the Son). If we would follow right order, we should now speak of the Educator of little ones and explain who He is.

He is called Jesus. On occasion, He speaks of Himself as a Shepherd, as when He says: 'I am the Good Shepherd.' In keeping with this metaphor of shepherds leading their sheep, He leads His children, the Shepherd with the care of His little ones. The little ones, in their simplicity, are given the figurative name of sheep; 'And there shall be one sheep-fold,' He says, 'and one Shepherd.'<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the Word who leads us His children to salvation is unquestionably an Educator of little ones. In fact, through Osee, the Word says plainly of Himself: 'I am your Educator.' The material He educates us in is fear of God, for this fear instructs us in the service of God, educates to the knowledge of truth, and guides by a path leading straight up to heaven.

(54) Education is a word used in many different senses. There is education in the sense of the one who is being led and instructed; there is that of the one who leads and gives instruction; and thirdly, there is education in the sense of the guidance itself; and finally, the things that are taught, such as precepts. The education that God gives is the imparting of the truth that will guide us correctly to the contemplation of God, and a description of holy deeds that endure forever. Just as the general directs a line of battle with the safety of his soldiers in mind, and as the helmsman pilots his ship conscious of his responsibility for the lives of his passengers, so the Educator, in his concern for us, leads His children along a way of life that ensures salvation. In brief, all that we could reasonably ask God to do for us is within the reach of those who trust in the Educator of little ones. Again, just as the helmsman does not always sail with the wind, but sometimes when there is a squall, sets his prow head on against it, so, too, the Educator never falls in with the winds sweeping through this world, nor does He suffer His children to be driven like a ship into a wild and unregulated course of life. Rather, assisted only by the favorable breeze of the Spirit of truth, He holds steadfastly to the rudder, that is, the

hearing of His children, until He brings them safely to anchor in the port of heaven.

The habits that men speak of as hereditary, for the most part pass away, but the education God gives is a possession that endures forever. (55) It is related how Phenix was the pedagogue of Achilles; Adrastrus, of the sons of Croesus; Leonides, of Alexander; and Nausithoon, of Philip. Yet one of them, Phenix, was mad with lust; another, Adrastrus, was a fugitive; Leonides did not rid his Macedonian pupil of his vanity, and Nausithoon did not cure the Pellean of his drunkenness. Again, the Thracian Zoporus was unable to restrain Alcibiades from immorality, and, besides, he was a bought slave. The pedagogue of the children of Themistocles, Sicinnos, was a spineless menial. The story goes that he used to dance and invented the dance step called the Sicinnis. We must not forget, either, the so-called royal pedagogues of the Persian court, four in number, whom the Persian kings chose from all the Persians according to merit and set over their children; but the children learned only how to use the bow and arrow, and once they come of age begin to have intercourse with sister and mother, with married women and others without number, like wild boars well-practised in sexual indulgence.

But our Educator is the holy God, Jesus, the Word guiding all mankind. God Himself, in His love for men, is our Educator. (56) The Holy Spirit says about Him somewhere in a canticle: 'He founded the people in a desert land, in a drought of burning heat, in a place without water: He encircled him and taught him: and He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle might shelter its brood, and yearn after its young, and having flown about, show them its wings and take them upon its shoulders. The Lord alone was their leader, and there was no strange god with them.' As far as I can see, Scripture is undoubtedly presenting a picture of the Educator of children, and describing the guidance He imparts. When He speaks in His own person, He also confesses Himself to be the Educator: 'I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt.'<sup>5</sup> But who has the authority to lead in or out? Is it not the Educator? It is He who 'appeared to Abraham and said to him: 'I am your God: be pleasing before Me.' He fashioned Moses by a gradual process into a worthy child, truly as an educator would, commanding him: 'Be without blame. And I will establish My covenant between Me and your descendants.'<sup>7</sup> Here is a share, indeed, in friendship that is undying.

He manifests Himself plainly as the Educator of Jacob, too. For example, He said to him: 'I will be with you and protect you wherever you go. I will bring you back to this land; indeed I will not forsake you till I fulfill My promise' to you. He is also said to have wrestled with him: 'Jacob remained behind, all alone. Someone wrestled with him,' that is, the Educator, 'until the break of dawn.'<sup>9</sup> (57) This is the Man who leads and who carries, He who wrestled with

Jacob and anointed him for his toil as an athlete. But because the Word was not only the wrestling Master of Jacob, but also the Educator of all mankind, when 'Jacob asked,' as Scripture says, 'What is your name? He answered: Why do you ask My name?' He was saving His new name for His new people, the little ones. The Lord God still remained without a name, since He had not yet become man. However, 'Jacob named the place Phaul, saying: I have seen a heavenly being face to face, yet my life has been saved.'<sup>11</sup> The face of God is the Word, for God is revealed by Him and made known. Jacob also received the name Israel from the time that he had seen the Lord. It was God the Word, the Educator, who said to him on another occasion: 'Do not fear to go down to Egypt.'<sup>13</sup> See how the Educator follows a just man, anoints the athlete, and teaches him how to overcome his adversary.

It was He who taught Moses also to act the part of educator. For the Lord said: 'He that hath sinned against Me, him will I strike out of My book: but go there, and lead the people whither I have told thee.' (58) In this passage, He teaches him the art of educating. And well He might, for it was through Moses, in fact, that the Lord of the ancient people was the Educator of His children. It is in His own person, however, face to face, that He is the guide of the new people.

He said to Moses: 'Behold, My angel shall go before thee,' to establish the Gospel and the authority of the Word to guide; and then, adhering to His own divine decree, He adds: 'On the day I shall visit, I shall bring down on them their sin,' that is, on the day I shall sit as Judge, I shall mete out the punishments due to sin. He passes sentence on those who disobey Him, both as Educator and as Judge; the Word, with all His love for man, does not pass over their sin in silence, but punishes that they may repent. 'The Lord, indeed, desires the conversion of the sinner more than his death.'<sup>16</sup> Let us little ones, then, attending to the story of the sins of others, refrain from like offenses, from fear of the threat of suffering like punishment. What sin did they commit? 'In their fury, they slew men, and in their willfulness, they hamstrung oxen. Cursed be their fury.'

(59) Who could teach with greater love for men than He? In other times, the older people had an old Covenant: as law, it guided them through fear; as word, it was a messenger. But the new and young people have received a new and young Covenant: the Word has become flesh, fear has been turned into love, and the mystic messenger of old has been born, Jesus. Of old, this same Educator proclaimed: 'Thou shalt fear the Lord, thy God.' But to us He appeals: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.'<sup>20</sup> And so He gives command: 'Cease from thy deeds,' that is, your old sins, 'and learn to do well; turn away from evil and do good. Thou hast loved justice and hated iniquity.' This is My new Covenant, written with the letters of the old.

But the newness of the Word does not at all lessen respect due Him. The Lord says through Jeremias: 'Say not, I am a child. Before I formed thee in the bowel of thy mother, I knew thee: and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee.' In this passage, possibly the inspired Word refers to us who before the foundation of the world have been destined by God for the faith, and now, by the will of God just being fulfilled, are little ones, in that we have become new-born into the calling and into salvation. (60) For that reason, Scripture adds these words: 'I have made thee a prophet unto the nations,' meaning that he must needs begin to prophesy and that the name 'young' ought not to seem a reproach to those who are called little ones.

The Law is the old gift bestowed by the Word through Moses. So Scripture says: 'The law has been given through Moses' (not by Moses, but by the Word through Moses His servant; and at that, given only for a time), 'but everlasting grace and truth was through Jesus Christ.' Notice the wording of Scripture: in speaking of the Law, it says it was only given, but the truth, being the gift of the Father, is the eternal achievement of the Word, and so is no longer said to be given, but rather 'was, through Jesus Christ, without whom was made nothing.'

For his part, Moses made way for the perfect Educator, the Word, prophesying both His name and His method of educating, and placed Him in charge of the people with the command to obey Him. He said: 'God will raise up to thee a prophet of thy brethren like unto me,' meaning Jesus, son of Naim, but implying Jesus, the Son of God. That name, Jesus, already predicted in the law, described the Lord, for Moses, taking thought for the best interests of the people, said: 'Him thou shalt hear: and he that will not hear this prophet, him He threatens.'<sup>27</sup> (61) The name that He has tells us by divine inspiration that the Educator will save. It is for this reason that the Scripture associates Him with a rod that suggests correction, government and sovereignty. Scripture seems to be suggesting that those whom the Word does not heal through persuasion He will heal with threats; and those whom threats do not heal the rod will; and those whom the rod does not heal fire will consume. 'And there shall come forth,' it is said, 'a rod out of the root of Jesse.'

Consider the carefulness and the wisdom and the power of this Educator: 'He shall not judge according to appearance, nor reprove according to gossip, but He shall judge judgment with humility, and shall reprove the sinners of the earth.' And through the lips of David, He says: 'The Lord chastising has chastised me, but He hath not delivered me over to death.'<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the very act of being chastised, and being educated by the Lord as a child, means deliverance from death. Again, He says through the same Psalmist: 'Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron.' Similarly, the Apostle exclaimed when he was aroused by the Corinthians: 'What is your wish? Shall I come to you with a rod,

or in love and in the spirit of meekness?’<sup>32</sup> By another Psalmist, the Lord says again: ‘The Lord will send forth the rod of power out of Sion.’ This ‘rod and staff of Thine,’ bespeaking education, ‘they have comforted me,’<sup>34</sup> another says.

Such, then, is the authority wielded by the Educator of children, awe-inspiring, consoling, leading us to salvation.

Clement of Alexandria. (1954). [Christ the Educator](#). (P. S. Wood, Trans.) (Vol. 23, pp. 49–56). Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

## Chapter 12

(98) From the subjects that we have already discussed it must be concluded that Jesus, our Educator, has outlined for us the true life, and that He educates the man who abides in Christ. His character is not excessively fear-inspiring, yet neither is it overindulgent in its kindness. He imposes commands, but at the same time expresses them in such a way that we can fulfill them.

It seems to me that the reason that He formed man from dust with His own hands, gave him a second birth through water, increase through the Spirit, education by the Word, thereby guiding him surely to the adoption of sons and to salvation with holy precepts, was precisely that He might transform an earth-born man into a holy and heavenly creature by His coming, and accomplish the original divine command: ‘Let us make mankind in our image and likeness.’ It is Christ, in fact, who is, in all its perfection, what God then commanded; other men are so only by a certain image.

As for us, O children of a good Father, flock of a good Educator, let us fulfill the will of the Father, let us obey the Word, and let us be truly molded by the saving life of the Saviour. Then, since we shall already be living the life of heaven which makes us divine, let us anoint ourselves with the never-failing oil of gladness, the incorruptible oil of good odor. We possess an unmistakable model of incorruptibility in the life of the Lord and are following in the footsteps of God.

His main concern is to consider the way and the means by which the life of man might be made more conformable to salvation. He does truly make this His concern. He seeks to train us to the condition of a wayfarer, that is, to make us well girded and unimpeded by provisions, that we might be self-sufficient of life and practise a moderate frugality in our journey toward the good life of eternity, telling us that each one of us is to be his own storehouse: ‘Do not be anxious about tomorrow.’<sup>3</sup> He means to say that he who has dedicated himself

to Christ ought to be self-sufficient and his own servant and, besides, live his life from day to day.

(99) We are educated not for war but for peace. In war, there is need for much equipment, just as self-indulgence craves an abundance. But peace and love, simple and plain blood sisters, do not need arms nor abundant supplies. Their nourishment is the Word, the Word whose leadership enlightens and educates, from whom we learn poverty and humility and all that goes with love of freedom and of mankind and of the good. In a word, through Him we become like God by a likeness of virtue. Labor, then, and do not grow weary; you will become what you dare not hope or cannot imagine.

As there is one sort of training for philosophers, another for orators and another for wrestlers, so, too, there is an excellent disposition imparted by the education of Christ that is proper to the free will loving the good. As for deeds, walking and reclining at table, eating and sleeping, marriage relations and the manner of life, the whole of a man's education all become illustrious as holy deeds under the influence of the Educator. The education He gives is not overstrained, but in harmony [with man's needs]. (100) That is why the Word is called Saviour, because He has left men remedies of reason to effect understanding and salvation, and because, awaiting the favorable opportunity, He corrects evil, diagnoses the cause for passion, extracts the roots of unreasonable lusts, advises what we should avoid, and applies all the remedies of salvation to those who are sick.

This is the greatest and most noble of all God's acts: saving mankind. But those who labor under some sickness are dissatisfied if the physician prescribes no remedy to restore their health; how, then, can we withhold our sincerest gratitude from the divine Educator when He corrects the acts of disobedience that sweep us on to ruin and uproots the desires that drag us into sin, refusing to be silent and connive at them, and even offers counsels on the right way to live? Certainly we owe Him the deepest gratitude.

Do we say, then, that the rational animal, I mean man, ought to do anything besides contemplate the divinity? I maintain that he ought to contemplate human nature, also, and live as the truth leads him, admiring the way in which the Educator and His precepts are worthy of one another and adapted one to the other. In keeping with such a model, we ought also to adapt ourselves to our Educator, conform our deeds to the Word, and then we will truly live.

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