„Ars bene dicendi" in the service of the word test analysis on the eight Baptismal Catechesis of the saint John Chrysostomos

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Résumé : À l'époque moderne, l'herméneutique du texte sacré connaît une approche différenciée, définie par l'appartenance à une certaine école ou groupe exégétique, les chercheurs étant de plus en plus intéressés d'un point de vue analytique dans le lien fort entre histoire et théologie, sa phénoménologie. Pour la recherche spécialisée, l'approche interdisciplinaire introduit des perspectives nouvelles et surprenantes aux résultats, car la thématique de la Catéchèse souligne non seulement l'intérêt suscité par la poétique fascinante du Saint Père Jean Chrysostome, mais aussi l'intérêt analytique pour leur complexité, et la plupart de tous dans le message divin, le contexte historique, social et ecclésial dans lequel ils ont été écrits. Le sujet du présent article est pertinent car il tente de mettre en évidence la réponse de l'Église aux nombreux défis postmodernistes de plus en plus insidieux, complexes et tragiques par son effort désespéré pour limiter sa propre désintégration, mais aussi comme une étape métaphorique, redéfinition qui dépasse la portée de la connaissance humaine.

Mots-clés : *connaissance, philosophie, foi, baptême, catéchèse.*

Seated in the place of the hierophanic of the encounter with the Creator, beyond his gnoseological rebellion punished with the loss of Eden, man can only find himself by word (λόγος ἀποφαντικός) in a dialogic relationship revealed to God calling himself the believer[1] נֶאֱמָן [ne'eman] because from the Eden Adam (Logan, 1996: 25) "the existence of God is accepted as true through an act of faith in His Word." (Gilson, 2006: 11)

The mystery of right belief is nothing but the *Word Himself* that comes from God the Father. Few people, however, knew how to make this gift divine, the word, to become a worker in the souls of the faithful, to understand and share the sacred charge, as did Saint John Chrysostom in his work (354-407).

[1] Nifal form of the Aramic verb אָמַן ['aman] – *to believe* (Baker, Carpenter, 2003: 70)

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Exceptional personality of the fourth century Christian era—which, although called "*of gold*", carries in itself the mute tension of the confrontation between the Greek Parson and the Christian Tabor - for the Holy Father the spiritual struggle took place in the arena of the Christian ethos where the culture, civilization and faith met face to face.

Ever since the Pastoral years of Antioch (386-398), the one surnamed for his outstanding oratory talent, John Chrysostom (Ioannis Christostomos), he carried out a prodigious missionary, social and liturgical activity, struggling to combat the heresies of the time, and the reluctance of the Christians came from the Jews to Baptism. The Holy Father, who especially stood for the moral formation of his faithful, would put into the work "*ars bene dicendi*" the art of which, in the classical period—after the highlight of Tacitus (Publius Cornelius, 2004: 59) and Quintilian (Marcus Fabius, 1974: 180-191), the gift of "eloquence" was born-the talent of the perfect orator (called *magister dicendi*) to convince "through an excellent cultural preparation, through a philosophical excellence."

Through it, the work of Saint John Chrysostom remained not only a peak of wisdom, an unmistakable page in universal literature, not so much of intellectual ambitions, but from the overwhelming need of confession of faith.

Historically, the place and time of the *baptismal catechesis* are very important, for which several chronological references have been advanced. It was considered that the great hierarch would have spoken in his Constantinopolitan era, that is, somewhere between 398-400 or 402-403 (the Tillemont and Montfaucon editions took the year 395 and Antioch, and Gerhard Rauschen 388, once accepted by Otto Bardenhewer and Christian Baur as reference). But *Sources Chrétienne* shows us that "in the capital, in 401, Saint John was certainly absent during Easter holidays, the catechumens regretting that they could not receive Baptism from the hand of their Bishop."

Similarly, in 404, the Archpriest was missing from his diocese, the Paschal ceremonies being marked by bloody disturbances, known from the Palladius's chronicle (PG XLVII, 5). Therefore, they can only be placed between 398-400 or 402-403, also taking into consideration the thanks the Holy Father addresses in *The Eighth Catechism*, the antiohiens coming from afar to listen to him.

The discovery of the *Baptismal Catechesis* manuscript is due to Antoine Wenger, who on Mount Athos in September 1955, accompanied by R.P. Darouzès, began studying the Library of the Stavronikita Monastery. On October 5th, they discovered and numbered since then the Codex 6, the manuscript containing 453 pages in the *folio* with the chrisostomic writings; it contained: from 1-51, the catechesis 1-8, the tabs 52-146, the catechesis from 9 to 23 and the last part in the 146-339 tabs, the catechesis 24 to 41, the rest up to 453 being damaged. This manuscript found at Stavronikita is valuable because it covers the gaps of three of the 11 Homilies of the Montfauçon edition of 1738. The largest stretch is the *First catechesis*, titled *Towards those to be illuminated*, for the catechumens who were baptized in great numbers (from the information provided by Palladius [PG XLVII, 33-34] we find that "in Constantinople at about 404, about 3,000 catechumens were baptized on Easter.) With the incomprehensible sweetness of the metaphor, starting from the Second Epistle to Corinthians 11:2, "*I have betrothed you to one man, to show you of Christ's righteous virgin*, "considers Baptism synonymous with the Mystery of the Wedding, saying:

> "The present moment is of the happiness and spiritual joy, for here are the days of the spiritual weddings." (2003: 21)

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But this step was only possible after the denial of idolatry, the choice of everyone, however, is "free from arbitrariness, and not from yarns" (*ibidem*: 25), but from "integral will" ὅλος (here he uses the adjective form ("*the part*"), the will being decisive, the baptized being compared to a virgin who voluntarily moves from the parental home to that of the groom. But a stylistic nuance must be highlighted: the term used—υπεροψια formulated with the accusative added to the preposition "ὑπερ" to look over, "describes an attitude that expresses not contempt, but the conscious reporting of the sins of the world to the eternal. The Catechesis also contains tips for cultivating inward beauty rather than the outside, "at least when I come to the Church." (*Idem*: 39)

The conclusion of St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the place conferred by the quality of the Christian "wearing the Christ Himself" (*ibidem*: 42) above the dignitaries bearing the royal insignia, the temporal masters of the earthly ones. *The second catechesis*, in a parenetic formula, continues "the clear clarification of what has been symbolically done and imagined in divine baptism." By acquiring Christianity, "you are already in front of the royal doors, that's why you show a lot of nobility in your demands: nothing from outside, nothing human." (*Ibidem*: 56)

Only this way the path to deification becomes a scale whose first step is Baptism. In the *Third Catechism*, addressed to Neophytes, St. John uses high-power comparisons, which almost three centuries ago (170 AD), Meliton, the Bishop of the Sardines in the work Ἡ κλεις—The key. (Eusebiu, 1987: IV, 26, 1-13, 175-177) called them *biblical tropes* (trop = term given to the rhetorical figures in which the words acquire figurative meanings, plus their explanation), the option to Baptism identifying Jesus Christ with the Sun covering the brilliance of the stars. The great orator continues his argument through an insight into the history of the Jewish people to allow for a correct understanding of the symbolism of blood and water, ideologically moving from the plagues of Egypt through the Sacrifice of the Savior on Golgotha to the Holy Eucharist. St. John showed that the Church "came out of the water and the blood... that is, through Baptism and Communion" which affirms the place of the Christian in the horizon of salvation: "Those who came out of Egypt were waited by the wilderness, the heaven. They had him... Moses, we have another Moses - God going before us." (*Ibidem*: 67)

The fourth Catechism deepens the symbolism by interpreting the verse from 2 Cor. 5.17:

> "*If anyone is in Christ, it is a new building. The old have passed, here they are all new.* The explanation of the baptismal function of the baptism is accompanied by the necessity of an episode of the life of Christians, because, says Saint John, "we have chosen a new life, and it is proper to follow this life with the deed, so that we do not become unworthy of it"." [St. John H., 2003: 77]

The fifth Catechism continues to perpetuate the Christian model of life. By focusing on a resignificance of the fast, St. John Chrysostom places for comparison, as in a mirror, not only vices (drunkenness, idolatry, fornication) but, anticipating the behaviorism of the American Abraham H. Maslow (2012:304) and explanations of a high psychological bill, the prince that modernity would define in a psychological sense by the term *self-control*:

> "Often, by revealing the mysteries of their minds, they do not realize, and thus lose all the grip of their minds, and naked for all godliness and understanding." (*ibidem*: 85)

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Sixth Catechesis: *To those who depart from the service and go to the hippodrome and performances*, shows that every work of man reflects upon the whole Creation, therefore our responsibility before God is immense. The penultimate Catechesis, seventh, refers to

> "the fact that the relics of the Saints are of great benefit to us... that great prayer and mercy is good," so St. John wishes to emphasize that the experience of spiritual things can transform us inwardly. In fact, here is the necessity and importance of the inner mood we are referring to the holy ones, the vanity of this world being balanced with the overflowing fruits of prayer. *The eighth Catechesis* is the rhetorically structured model of the Pauline Epistles, which we know to respect the fundamental motto: *docere, piacere, movere* (*to learn, to love, to move - to determine action*)" (Ţiclea, 2003: 116)

Generally speaking, the Greco-Roman generic Epistle had three major parts: (**1**) *præscriptio* opening formula, containing the name of the author (*superscriptio*) and the recipient (*adscriptio*), followed by a short salute (*salutatio*); then (**2**) the actual message of the letter, and (**3**) the closing of the *postscriptum* with final greetings, vale, errosso-adio. In many letters, a fourth part appears, the final thankfulness (*eucharisto*), in which prayers of thanksgiving to the Divinity (doxology) were given. The central part, the message itself, contained as subdivisions: (**2.1**) an introduction, exordium, capturing the audience's attention, presenting or defending the character of the author (an *ethos* argument); sometimes it is also called *proemium* - the presentation of the main ideas. (**2.2**) *narratio*, brief description of the situation on which the plea is based, the affirmation of the subject. The following were followed: (**2.3**) *propositio*, the part of affirmation of the basic theme which will be presented in the letter (also known as *partitio* - affirmation of the main directions of the theme), (**2.4**) *probatio* (conducting the argument, patos and logos, type confirmation - supported by the theme and refutatio type - (with arguments to reject adverse positions), (**2.5**) *peroratio* (conclusion), (**2.6**) *exhortatio* (advices, exhortations) In some cases, the main body of the epistle is divided into three parts: a conciliatory part (recognition of the merits and accomplishments of the recipient), a part of doctrine and a part of exhortations (parenza).

St. John takes care to place at his core an appeal that passes through the ages:

> "And especially ye, the new ones in Christ, having received the descent of the Spirit, please every day diligently inquire of the brightness of your coat, that it may not receive not a spot or a wrinkle: neither by inappropriate words, nor by the hearing of the vain, nor by evil thoughts ... Let us guard ourselves from all sides, through the incessant remembrance of that dreadful day that, remaining in the light of now, and keeping the coat to be worthy of those unspoiled gifts." (*ibidem*: 130)

His entire work—18 volumes in the edition of Migne Abbey—civilizations, by the land mismatch between the work of the Holy Spirit and the obsession with the pragmatism of those who today would only mimic membership in Christianity and the Church.

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