

Rev. Andriy OLIYNYK*

SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S PREACHING "LOGOTHERAPY" IN THE FACE OF HERESY OF ANOMOEANISM

St. John Chrysostom (349-407) made a huge impact on the development of theological doctrine and pastoral practice, acting during the period, which the researchers characterized as the blooming of patristic era preaching in the Christian East. Simultaneously, at the time a major crisis erupted in the Byzantine Church due to the rapid dissemination of various heresies in the East. St. John's priest vocation takes place during the final stage of the Arianism heresy, which has quickly spread to Antioch in the form Anomoeanism, challenging the divine nature of Christ. As a theologian, he battles with this heresy from the church's pulpit. St. John's preaching "logotherapy" was precisely the defence of the orthodoxy of teaching solely through the use of pastoral care: he uses dialogue with the listener to prove the unsoundness of heretical teachings and thus protect the spiritual life or restore it, and hence guard the integrity of faith of the entrusted to his pastoral care people.

I. THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

St. John came from the Syrian capital of Antioch, which was believed to be an important military and administrative centre of the Roman East. Here, Chrysostom was born in the year 349, grew up in a pious family and received a sound education first and foremost from the eminent master of philosophy, rhetoric and literature Libanius (314-395)¹.

The culture, customs and climate of Antioch in Syria had enormous impact on shaping the personality of St. John as a model pastor, theologian-philosopher, exegete, bishop, teacher, speaker, writer, and even a lawyer. John Chrysostom left a huge contribution to the advancing of theological doctrine, patent especially in the development of his own method of biblical exegesis. The saint carried out also an internal reform of the Church, diligently caring for its moral

* Rev. Andriy Oliynyk Ph.D. – lecturer in the Department of Theology at the Faculty of Philosophy and Theology of the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv, email: solonua@yahoo.com.

¹ Cf. J.N.D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth. The Story of John Chrysostom. Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop*, Itaca – New York 1998, 1, 4 and 6.

authority among the society. He was also an apologist, but first and foremost a brilliant preacher, owing to this he received the nickname “Chrysostom”. For that reason St. John is the patron of preachers and evangelizers.

Antioch, in which St. John Chrysostom worked in the years 386-398, was one of the largest cities in the Byzantine Empire (it came third in terms of number of residents, after Constantinople and Alexandria), and had a favourable geopolitical position being close to the sea, what fostered the development of trade and the economy as a whole². The increasing throughout the Empire role and importance of this city, which was called the “gateway” to the East, attracted people of different nationalities and religions who chose to stay here permanently. Therefore, Antioch was a home to Greeks, Jews and Syrians who spoke Greek, and among Antiochians one could find both followers of Christianity and paganism³. Such a “cosmopolitan community” fostered the spread of various heresies on these terrains⁴.

Antioch was a renown city for its advanced culture, freedom and religious pluralism, where there were many pagan temples, Jewish and Christian⁵, however, in John Chrysostom’s times this was the environment in which Christianity dynamically blossomed. From the apostolic times Antioch stays to be the one of the largest centres of Christianity, with the numbers of Christians rapidly swelling from the very beginning⁶. It was in Antioch that St. Paul of Tarsus began his mission among the Gentiles, and Christ’s apprentices were first called Christians (Acts 11, 26). The strength of Christianity in Antioch is also reflected in the fact that when the Emperor Julian the Apostate (361-363) attempted to re-establish and reinforce paganism as the official religion in the Empire, his intentions led to a serious revolt among the inhabitants of Antioch. The significant resistance of Antiochians substantiates that its number of Christ-believers at that time were quite great⁷.

However, the problem lay in the fact that in St. John Chrysostom’s environment emerged a serious crisis sourced by an instant dissemination of heresies: Arianism, Manichaeism, Pneumatomachi (i.e. Macedonians), Apollinarism and other⁸. When Christianity in 313 became the state religion throughout the Roman Empire, his reputation and popularity have contributed to the fact that

² Cf. W. Mayer – P. Allen, *John Chrysostom*, London – New York 2000, 11-12.

³ Cf. A. Oliynyk, *Przepowiadanie Ewangelii w czasach patrystycznych na przykładzie działalności kaznodziejskiej Jana Chryzostoma*, w: *Ewangelia na forum świata. Od apologetyki do marketingu narracyjnego*, ed. R. Hajduk, Kraków 2013, 135-137.

⁴ Cf. Kelly, , *Golden Mouth*, p. 2. See also: Mayer – Allen, *John Chrysostom*, p. 11-16.

⁵ Cf. S. Neill, *Chrysostom and His Message*, Crestwood – New York 1963, 8.

⁶ Cf. C. Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, vol. 2, Westminster 1959, 55-70; R.L. Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews. Rhetoric and Reality in the Late 4th Century*, London 1983, 22.

⁷ Cf. Baur, *John Chrysostom and His Time*, p. 55-70. See also Wilken, *John Chrysostom and the Jews*, p. 22.

⁸ Cf. П. Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст как участник арианских споров*, “Альфа и Омега” 1 (2007) 59.

many people became Christians. But actually, more than one of the baptized remained in heart pagan, easily yielding to the influence of different feasible interpretations of Christianity. Theological issues have been discussed everywhere: at home, on the streets and at the market. It was akin to dabbler's "play with theology", as each new convert pretended to be a "grand" theologian and an authority to adhere to. Theology as such, underwent a sort of desecration, resulting in ease with which different theological currents found supporters. Many of these views were just heresies⁹. John Chrysostom worked actively as a pastor and preacher in the final stage of Arianism heresy, which had originated in Antioch, and widely spread here in the form of Anomoeanism¹⁰.

II. THE PHENOMENON AND NATURE OF ANOMOEANISM HERESY

Arianism was a false interpretation of the most vital foundations of the Christian faith. The spread of this heresy caused a severe crisis in the whole Church at the exact time when Christianity seemingly ceased to be persecuted (313), and later on became the only official religion of the state (381). Sensing the severity of crisis nearly all of the first-centuries Church Fathers commit themselves against the heresy of Arianism. The heresy, challenging the divine nature of Christ and undermining the doctrine of the Trinity, developed in three stages: 1) the activity of Arius from the beginning of the public proclamation of his teachings until his death (318-336); 2) a period of the search for a compromise between the Arians, resulting with modified versions Arianism: Messalians (Euchites) and Homoeans (from ὁμοιος – "similar"); 3) activity of Anomoeans, as the latest version of Arianism, whose representatives were Aetius († 350), and Eunomius. The period of activity of Anomoeans ceases with the death of Eunomius in 398. St. John Chrysostom performing his pastoral ministry at Antioch in the years 386-397 bravely struggled with the heresy. Even though the Anomoeanism doctrine has been condemned at the Council of Constantinople in 381, in Antiochene areas Anomoeans were no small group, still functioning and effectively acting, confusing many Christians¹¹.

The term "Anomoeans" derives from the thesis proclaimed by its supporters that the Son of God is completely diverse to the nature of the Father – ἀνόμοιος, that is completely unlike Him. Their daring to directly content dissimilarity of the Father and the Son, was drawn from logical inference: if one of the attributes of God is His "unbegottenness" (ἀγέννητος), and the Son is

⁹ Cf. Т. Миллер, *Заповеди блаженства в истолковании свт. Иоанна Златоуста*, "Альфа и Омега" 1 (1997) 58-59.

¹⁰ Cf. И. Мейендорф, *Введение в святоотеческое богословие*, Москва 2001, 246-247. See also Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст*, p. 59-60.

¹¹ Cf. Мейендорф, *Введение в святоотеческое богословие*, p. 246-247. See also: Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст*, p. 59-60.

begotten by the Father, therefore He cannot be God by nature, except for by adoption. Anomoeans proclaimed that although Christ is above all creatures, He does not share the same nature as God the Father, and is therefore unequal to God the Father¹². Therefore, the heresy Anomoeanism closely upheld to Arius' stipulations and in gave no way to any compromise with the Orthodox Church.

Additionally, Anomoeans claimed that they had comprehended the nature of God through discernment and deepening their knowledge. Such a manifestation of arrogance, on the part of Anomoeans, to the representatives of the Eastern apophaticism was wholly unacceptable. For the Christian East theology it was always readily to say "who God is not" as an alternative to proving what characteristics one can attribute to Him. God reveals Himself to people as a Mystery, always surpassing the boundaries of what is said about Him. Anomoeans regarded themselves as exclusively privileged, being granted access to the knowledge of God, which was a very hazardous phenomenon leading to sectarianism¹³.

The supporters of Anomoeanism justifying their views employed Aristotle's philosophy, utilizing the dialectics and sophistry. The transparency and seeming logic propounded by them fostered as well the promotion and effortless widespread of the heresy among other Christians¹⁴.

III. "LOGOTHERAPY": THE PASTORAL RESPONSE OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

Although St. John Chrysostom eagerly joins the fight against numerous enemies of the orthodox doctrine, criticizing the views of gnostic, Manichaean, Jewish religion and pagan beliefs¹⁵, he pays particular attention to combating heresy of Anomoeanism as the gravest menace and most dangerous to faith. In fact, he devotes 12 homilies (*Contra Anomoeos*) to the proponents of this heresy, most of which he delivers in Antioch. In those speeches Chrysostom refers to the issue of unknowability of God and proves groundlessness of heretical Anomoeans' views, referring to the eastern apophatic theology¹⁶.

St. John Chrysostom's preaching "logotherapy" is an actual way of determining the Holy Preacher's verbal effort in order to overcome the false views

¹² Cf. Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст*, p. 59.

¹³ Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *De incomprehensibili dei natura* 1, 4. See also: R. Hill, *St. John Chrysostom As Biblical Commentator: Six Homilies On Isaiah 6*, VTQ 3-4 (2003) 307-322.

¹⁴ Cf. А. Карташев, *Вселенские соборы*, Москва 1994, 81.

¹⁵ Cf. И. Попов, *Святой Иоанн Златоуст и его враги*, "Богословский Вестник" 3-4 (1907) 586-587. See also Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, p. 59; *The Preaching of Chrysostom: Homilies on the Sermon on the Mount*, ed. J. Pelikan, Philadelphia 1967, 10.

¹⁶ Cf. А. Олиунык, *Συγκατάβασις τὸ φαινόμενον. Interpretacja reguł kaznodziejskich św. Jana Chryzostoma w pismach Anthony'ego Coniarisa jako przykład współczesnej homiletyki prawosławnej*, Kraków 2013, 104-106.

on the level of faith. "Logotherapy", as Chrysostom's new pastoral strategy, is formed by the combination of two terms, often reoccurring in his sermons: λόγος and θεραπεία. It depicts the preacher's attempt not only to cure the mind of those already seduced by the erroneous heretical views through the use of word (a therapy in the strict sense of the word), but the application of prophylaxis as well, in order to protect the unshakable deposit of faith of the orthodox Christians and to circumvent the appearance of a dangerous disease, namely heresy. In St. John's "logotherapeutic" preaching one can discern the following features:

1. Founded on the Bible. Prior to delivering any of his sermons, St. John Chrysostom selects a specific biblical pericope, on which he develops his speech. The Word of God, coming from the Lord, has an affirmed and utmost healing power. Therefore, the method that St. John uses in his pastoral practice is the biblical-therapy: delivering a homily to a diverse audience in the temple in order to combat heresy, he skilfully combines scriptural exegesis with the art of defence of the Christian faith¹⁷.

2. Springing from Love. The apologetic speech of *Contra Anomoeos* Chrysostom commences with St. Paul Paul's theme of love in (1Cor 13) and the necessity for its realisation in common life. It was precisely his love towards addressees that was the innermost motivation of his apologetic speeches. John Chrysostom repeated that he combats not with heretics, but the phenomenon of heresy as such. The Holy Preacher realized that his harsh words against the Anomoeans could arouse among the faithful aggression towards the former; and thus addresses the issue cautiously in an irenic and constructive spirit, with the hope that through love he will manage to liberate people from the faulty science¹⁸.

3. To Foster Holiness. On the example of Anomoean most elementary anthropological error St. John Chrysostom explicates the roots of all heretical teachings. For Chrysostom faith in God assumes the imperfection of knowledge about Him. God makes Himself knowable through the gift of faith, yet not through means of reason, but heart – since the concept of "knowledge" goes hand in hand with "holiness". One who puts his trust too excessively in his reason, insults God, displaying the contrary to holiness pride. It is specifically the sin of presumptuous thinking, which replaces the true faith, and which Chrysostom perceives as the foundation of all heresy¹⁹. Therefore, he exhorts people to believe with a simplicity of heart, without yielding to the

¹⁷ Cf. Олишук, *Συγκριτική μελέτη τῶν φαινομένων*, p. 113.

¹⁸ Cf. R. Spiazzi, *Verbum salutis, storia e teologia della predicazione*, Roma 1963, 107. See also Kelly, *Golden Mouth*, p. 61.

¹⁹ Cf. Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст*, p. 59-62.

temptation of satisfying undue curiosity. He reiterates that faith's nature of logical reasoning is a maze, where one can easily go astray, and those who profess true faith (dogmas of the faith), and lead Gentile lives, will not attain eternal life²⁰.

4. Comprehensible for Everyone. Unlike his contemporary Fathers of the Church²¹, Saint John Chrysostom addresses his apologetics to common folk present and receiving his homily in the Church. He is entirely aware of the fact that they are the heretics' target²². For that reason St. John has no intention of presenting them with an exhaustive critical analysis of Anomoeanism as a doctrine, but desires to demonstrate groundlessness of some of the most dangerous aspects of the learning and thereby protect the spiritual health and the integrity of the faith of the people entrusted to his pastoral care²³.

5. Forbearance for the "Sick". St. John visibly distinguishes a person in need of a therapy, the "sheep", from the disease itself, which corrupted his **spirit** (with resulting symptoms of moral deviations, materialism and indifference) and **mind** (manifested in one's assimilation of heretical views). Chrysostom was at the same time aware that the mind-affecting disease was more of a challenge to treat than the spiritual condition²⁴. Such "sick" specimen Chrysostom approaches with gentleness and love; he does not stigmatise publicly the heretics, as it often happened in those days, but deals with them accordingly to the so-called "pastoral logic": concluding his every pulpit-speech with a positive appeal towards the heretics to return to communion with the Church²⁵.

6. Reliable and Well Prepared. For St. John Chrysostom the act of preaching denotes incessant and effective combat with the erroneous teachings and defence of the faith deposit. Therefore, the pastor-preacher's ample knowledge and sound groundwork guarantee that Satan – the instigator of the heresy and the spring of all the confusion and lies, who is looking for the fold's blind points, in order to attack the faithful – will not be capable of doing so²⁶.

²⁰ Cf. Попов, *Святой Иоанн Златоуст и его враги*, p. 581-582.

²¹ The homiletic character of Chrysostom's defence of faith can be clearly discerned against the background of Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus' writings, who addressing their treatises to theologians, intellectuals or preparing the conciliar documents, based on philosophical arguments, while Chrysostom proclaims an understandable for simple people and addressed to all practical learning.

²² Cf. J. Daniélou, *Introduction*, in: Jean Chrysostome. *Sur l'incompréhensibilité de Dieu*, vol. 1: *Homilies I-V*, ed. J. Daniélou – A.M. Malingrey – R. Flacelière, SCh 28bis, Paris 2000², 16-17.

²³ Cf. Oliynyk, *Συγκατάβασις τὸ φαινόμενον*, p. 80.

²⁴ Cf. M. Targonsky, *Saint John Chrysostom as Preacher*, Crestwood – New York 1985, 73-76.

²⁵ Cf. Михайлов, *Святитель Иоанн Златоуст*, p. 63.

²⁶ Cf. Oliynyk, *Συγκατάβασις τὸ φαινόμενον*, p. 126.

With regard to Church, Chrysostom employs the image of God's city, in which the preacher's awareness and prudence stand for well protected walls, "all the enemy's devices end in his confusion and ridicule, and they who dwell within the wall abide unmolested"²⁷. Without the proclamation of the word of God, there emerges only chaos, civil war, internal disputes and confusion among the people²⁸.

7. Initiating a Long-Term Treatment. Preaching – in St. John Chrysostom's opinion – is an important instrument at preacher's disposal, assisting in the treatment of the already-lapsed into a heresy soul (θεραπεία). Chrysostom cites the image of caring doctors making every effort to protect our body from a variety of diseases or aiding the sick back to health. The things that contribute to their health comprise not only of "divers medicines have been discovered, and an apparatus of different instruments, and diet suitable for the sick"²⁹ but as well of creating the constructive to a rapid recovery ambience, a change in the air, or adjustment in the sleep schedule. By way of analogy, the word from the pulpit fulfils the same function with regard to the soul:

"This is the one instrument, the only diet, the finest atmosphere. This takes the place of physic, cautery and cutting, and if it be needful to sear and amputate, [...] and perform all manner of other operations which are requisite for the soul's health"³⁰.

"[...] nay there is but one method and way of healing (θεραπεία) appointed, after we have gone wrong, and that is, the powerful application of the Word (δία τοῦ λόγου)"³¹.

Struggling with the heresy of Anomoeanism, Chrysostom stresses the therapeutic dimension of sermonizing. The Golden Mouth's main purpose of preaching is not that of leading dogmatic and polemic debates from the point of pulpit and to triumph, but rather a therapy through the word – the liberation of listeners from erroneous views and heretical teachings. For this reason John Chrysostom treats his sermons as a kind of "show of logotherapy", which is a kind of verbal "pouring the wounds with oil and wine" (Lk 10:34). This sort of apologetic defence of faith is a representative feature of Golden Mouth's

²⁷ Joannes Chrysostomus, *De sacerdotio* IV 4, ed. A.M. Malingrey, SCh 272, Paris 1980, 254, transl. by P. Schaff, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iv.vi.html> [14. 04. 2014].

²⁸ Cf. *ibidem* IV 4.

²⁹ *Ibidem* IV 3, SCh 272, 248, transl. by Schaff, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iv.vi.html> [14. 04. 2014].

³⁰ *Ibidem*, SCh 272, 250, transl. by Schaff, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iv.vi.html> [14. 04. 2014].

³¹ *Ibidem*, transl. by Schaff, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf109.iv.vi.html> [14. 04. 2014].

preaching. Therefore, according to Saint John Chrysostom, the sermon as a “logotherapy” is an essential element of pastoral ministry for the spiritual health of the faithful and the purity of their beliefs; for when Christ’s Mystical Body, i.e. the Church, is ailing – it should be immediately treated through the use of word.

Translated by Michał Matusiak

„LOGOTERAPIA” KAZNODZIEJSKA ŚW. JANA CHRYZOSTOMA
W OBLICZU HEREZJI ANOMEIZMU

(Streszczenie)

Św. Jan Chryzostom (349-407) wywarł olbrzymi wkład w rozwój doktryny teologicznej i praktyki pastoralnej, działając w okresie, który badacze charakteryzują jako „złoty” wiek dla partydyki i kaznodziejstwa na chrześcijańskim Wschodzie. Równocześnie w tym czasie poważny kryzys w Kościele Bizantyjskim powodują błyskawicznie rozpowszechniające się na Wschodzie herezje: arianizm, manicheizm, duchoburstwo, apolinaryzm i inne. Św. Jan jako duszpasterz działa w ostatnim etapie trwania herezji arianizmu, która szeroko rozpowszechniła się w Antiochii w postaci anomeizmu, kwestionującego boską naturę Chrystusa. Jako teolog walczy on z tą herezją tylko i wyłącznie z ambony. „Logoterapia” kaznodziejska św. Jana Chryzostoma polegała na obronie ortodoksyjnej nauki z użyciem metody duszpasterskiej: stosuje on dialog ze słuchaczem, aby udowodnić niesłuszność nauki heretyckiej i w ten sposób uchronić zdrowie duchowe oraz nieskazitelność wiary ludu powierzonego jego pasterskiej trosce. Św. Jan nie ma zamiaru prowadzić dysputy dogmatyczno-polemiczne z ambony z celem ich wygrania, lecz ma zamiar uleczyć (uwolnić) słuchaczy od błędnych poglądów i heretyckiej nauki. Każdego „chorego” Złotousty traktuje w duchu łagodności i miłości; nie wyklina heretyków, lecz zwraca się do nich z apelem, aby powrócili do jedności z Kościołem. Chryzostom traktuje swoje kazania jako swoisty „seans logoterapii”, co przejawia się w werbalnym „zalewaniu ran oliwą i winem” (Łk 10, 34).

Key words: John Chrysostom, anomoeanism, logotherapy, heresy, homily.

Słowa kluczowe: Jan Chryzostom, anomeizm, logoterapia, herezja, homilia.