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## JOHN CHRYSOSTOM'S ASSESSMENT OF DRUNKENNESS

The works of Church Fathers contain not only theological values, but also social. Certainly one of the greatest representatives of the ancient social thought was John Chrysostom. His sermons – full of expression and directed to Churches of both Antioch and Constantinople – are extraordinary in terms of their saturation with texts of social character. We find in them the recording of everyday social life of ancient Antioch and Constantinople in the second half of the fourth and the beginning of the fifth century. The images depicted in sermons and homilies comprise a proof of unusual acuteness of the observer, who takes a stance on most important phenomena of the ancient society.

The analysis of John Chrysostom's homilies leads to the conclusion that the essential social problem facing Christians (especially men) was drunkenness (μέθη<sup>1</sup>). For this reason the preacher of Antioch very often stood up against abuse of alcohol. He considered drunkenness as a serious transgression. Hence he cried out: „For what is a more wretched thing than drunkenness”<sup>2</sup>. Preaching against drunkenness and trying to demonstrate its evil forced Chrysostom to undertake the attempt to define it. Considering several of his remarks on this topic it is useful to direct our attention to the following statements:

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<sup>1</sup> To denote drunkenness Chrysostom usually uses the term ἡ μέθη, which has the following meanings: „A. drunkenness; B. *met.* inebriation, spiritual intoxication” (Lampe, p. 838); „I. strong drink, *to be pretty well drunk, fragrant old wine*; II. drunkenness; *pl.* carousals” (Liddell – Scott, p. 1090); cf. Abramowiczówna III 88; or ἡ παρονία, which takes the following meanings: „1. intoxication; 2. drunken and disorderly conduct; 3. insulting behaviour” (Lampe, p. 1043); „drunken behaviour” (Liddell – Scott, p. 1342); cf. Abramowiczówna III 447. His works also contain the noun ἡ οἶνοφλυγία (*In Genesim hom.* 29, 5, PG 53, 268; *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 10, PG 60, 522), which also denotes drunkenness, cf. Lampe, p. 946: „bout of drunkenness”; Liddell – Scott, p. 1207: „drunkenness”; Abramowiczówna III 255.

<sup>2</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22, ed. P. Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (= NPNF), Series I, vol. 9, New York 1889, 335.

„Drunkenness is a demon self-chosen, a disease without excuse, an overthrow that admits of no apology; a common shame to our kind”<sup>3</sup>.

„Drunkenness is nothing else than a betrayal of ideal, an affliction made fun of, a disease being played upon. Drunkenness is a consciously chosen demonic possession, drunkenness is an obfuscation of mind, drunkenness is a deprivation of reason and an ember of lust”<sup>4</sup>.

If the abovementioned remarks are treated in their totality it is evident that abuse of alcohol is defined by John Chrysostom as: 1) a deliberate surrender to the action of evil spirit; 2) a disease; 3) a moral downfall; 4) a disgrace of human kind; 5) a betrayal of personal ideals; 6) an affliction; 7) an obscurity of mind; 8) a loss of reason; 9) an ember of lust. It is possible to group these expressions around a few main ideas. The first is a conviction that a drunkard voluntarily surrenders to the action of evil spirit (ad. 1)<sup>5</sup>; through the fact of being drunk he brings himself to moral downfall (ad. 3) and being under an influence of alcohol very easily commits other sins, especially the ones related to impurity (ad. 9)<sup>6</sup>. The second idea points to a departure from intellectual values (ad. 5, 7, 8)<sup>7</sup>, while the third directs attention to the pathological state of a drunkard by stating that drunkenness is a disease, which a drunkard brings onto himself (ad. 2)<sup>8</sup> and an affliction which does not bring out compassion in other people, but only laughter and scorn (ad. 6)<sup>9</sup>. The most important idea, however, is contained in the statement (ad. 4) about a disgrace of human kind, by which Chrysostom seems to point out that the problem touched a considerable portion of society and involved not only the ones who abused alcohol, but also those, who did not do anything to stop drunkards from their affliction.

The words of criticism Chrysostom quite naturally directed toward those who were in the church and generally did not abuse alcohol. Hence in his

<sup>3</sup> Ibidem 1, 5, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335.

<sup>4</sup> Idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 9, ed. A. Wenger, SCh 50bis, Paris 1970, 205, own translation.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434, where Chrysostom states that drunkenness is a freely chosen demon and is worse than demonic possession.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus Judaeos or.* 8, 1, PG 48, 928.

<sup>7</sup> On the topic of abandoning intellectual values, Chrysostom clearly speaks in another take on drunkenness included in the homily preached during Easter: „Drunkenness is nothing else than departure from natural reason, perversion of logical thinking, desolation of thought, impoverishing of intelligence” (*Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 433, own translation), and a little further he adds: „Drunkenness is a freely chosen madness, desertion of reason” (ibidem, PG 50, 434, own translation).

<sup>8</sup> According to Chrysostom drunkenness is a disease which is very difficult to cure, because those who are ill are not conscious of their illness. Hence the „golden mouthed” preacher compares this disease to madness, which afflicts people, who are unconscious of their state, cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *Adversus Judaeos or.* 8, 1, PG 48, 928.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *In Genesim hom.* 29, 6, PG 53, 269; idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434.

sermon *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione domini nostri Iesu Christi*, after giving sharp reprimend to drunkards, Chrysostom excuses himself before his listeners, who could rightfully be offended, and explains that his words were not directed toward them. At the same time he states his conviction that all who are present in the church and listen to fervently proclaimed teachings are free of the „disease” of drunkenness, because no drunkard can be thirsty for the word of God<sup>10</sup>.

Although Chrysostom knew how difficult it is to find a drunkard in the liturgical assembly, he reprimended his listeners not because of their abuse of alcohol, but because „they who do not drink take no thought of the drunken-ness”<sup>11</sup>. He appealed to the conduct of a physician, who often „leaves the sick, and addresses his discourse to those that are sitting by them”<sup>12</sup>. Therefore on one hand he warned against the „disease” of drunkenness, while on the other he called for special care extended toward drunkards, so that they will be able to break their habit<sup>13</sup>. He explained that often people who are immersed in drunkenness are not aware of how great of a slavery they descended into. For this reason they need outside help from people who do not abuse wine and have good understanding of the situation in which drunkards have found themselves in<sup>14</sup>.

**1. The effects of drunkenness.** The „golden mouthed” preacher clearly explains that drunkenness wreaks havoc in a moral and spiritual live. Through the abuse of wine a man loses virtues acquired with great difficulty. Chrysostom compares the effects of drunkenness to actions taken by sailors during a storm. Just as sailors cast their merchandise into the sea thereby loosing many goods, so does drunkenness cast from human soul all kinds of virtues into the sea of depravity. Actions taken by a ship’s crew aim at saving life and saving the vessel, since the weight decreases and the ship has a greater chance of staying afloat. The effects of drunkenness, however, which deprive a man of all virtues are quite opposite, since the place of „thrown out” virtues is taken by all kinds of repulsiveness and eventually lead to a tragedy<sup>15</sup>.

The preacher of Antioch also emphasizes that the effects of getting drunk are longlasting and multifaceted<sup>16</sup>. He compares the state of a drunkard after

<sup>10</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 435.

<sup>11</sup> Idem, *In Matthaem hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 565, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF I/10, New York 1888, 341.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. ibidem: „Therefore I direct my speech to you, entreating you never to be at any time overtaken by this passion, and to draw up as by cords those who have been overtaken, that they be not found worse than the brutes”.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 11, 5, PG 60, 490.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaem, hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 566.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 10, PG 60, 521, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF I/11, New York 1889, 437-438: „For even if at daylight he were to get up, and seems to be sober from that revelling of his, still even then it is not the clear brightness of temperance which he enjoys, since the

drinking session to a man in fever. Although the fever may break, the debilitation caused by the fever still persists. Yet the situation of a man in fever is much better, since he loses only his physical health, while a drunkard loses both physical and spiritual health<sup>17</sup>.

Chrysostom stresses that a life of a drunkard is full of various sufferings<sup>18</sup>. Describing these afflictions he compares them with anguish of a man possessed by an evil spirit, although he is convinced that they are much worse, since possession compels others to compassion, while drunkenness triggers outrage and anger<sup>19</sup>.

The sufferings of drunkards are not limited only to physical ailments. Chrysostom widens the catalog of their afflictions to include psychological ones<sup>20</sup>. He observes that a drunkard arouses general mockery or pity<sup>21</sup> and that nobody in his vicinity has any benefit from spending time with him. For people surrounding him, he is unpleasant and disagreeable<sup>22</sup>.

The teaching of John Chrysostom treats drunkenness as a disease<sup>23</sup>, which has its root in the mind. Lack of concrete occupation causes people to fall into alcohol abuse. Hence the preacher of Antioch encourages his listeners, who can be potential drunkards, to occupy their minds with various things, which will not let them think about getting drunk<sup>24</sup>. By presenting mindless decisions of a drunkard, Chrysostom wants to make his listeners aware that drunkenness takes control of the mind of a drinking person and makes him fit for nothing<sup>25</sup>.

Drinking wine is considered by some to be a bliss. Chrysostom leads them out of their false conviction and explains that not only it is not a bliss, but a cer-

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cloud from the storm of drunkenness still is hanging before his eyes. And even if we were to grant him the clearness of sobriety, what is the benefit for him? For this soberness would be of no service to him, except to let him see his accusers. For when he is in the midst of his unseemly deeds, he is so far a gainer in not perceiving those that laugh at him. But when it is day he loses even this comfort, and while his servants are murmuring, and his wife is ashamed, and his friends accuse him, and his enemies make sport of him, he knows it too. What can be more miserable than a life like this, to be laughed at all day by everybody, and when it is evening to do the same unseemly things afresh”.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 565-566.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. ibidem, PG 58, 566.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434; *In Genesim hom.* 29, 6, PG 53, 269; *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 9, ed. A. Wenger, SCh 50bis, Paris 1970, 205.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 566.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 9-10, PG 60, 521-522.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 434.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22; *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 9, SCh 50bis, 205; *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1-2, PG 50, 434-435. Drunkenness is a disease which always weakens the man afflicted by it. Chrysostom writes that „the force of the human frame is enfeebled, relaxed, and reduced to a state of exhaustion, by the continual swilling of wine” (*Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 4, PG 49, 22, NPNF 1/9, 335).

<sup>24</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 435.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 8, SCh 50bis, 204; idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434.

tain kind of torture which drunkards bring on themselves<sup>26</sup>. He also points out that such bliss is illusory and not real. Although drinking wine in itself could cause a certain kind of „bliss”, it is difficult to consider blissful the effects of alcoholic intoxication, when a drunkard loses control over what happens around him and experiences various pains. Our author clarifies this issue:

„So it is with all sin. Before it is committed it has something of pleasure, but after its commission, the pleasure ceases and fades away, and pain and shame succeed. [...] And what is the pleasure of drunkenness? The poor gratification of drinking, and hardly that. For when insensibility follows, and the man sees nothing that is before him, and is in a worse state than a madman, what enjoyment remains? [...] I should call that true pleasure, when the soul is not affected by passion, not agitated nor overpowered by the body. For what pleasure can it be to grind the teeth, to distort the eyes, to be irritated and inflamed beyond decency? But it is so far from being pleasant, that men hasten to escape from it, and when it is over they are in pain. But if it were pleasure, they would wish not to escape from it, but to continue it. It has therefore only the name of pleasure”<sup>27</sup>.

It is evident from the text above that true pleasure cannot be the same as enslavement. Moreover, a man who experiences true pleasure should desire this bliss to last as long as possible, but those who are drunk want to free themselves of their intoxication and after returning to being sober they are ashamed of their behavior. In this context John Chrysostom points out that true bliss, joy and peace is brought by prayer and reflection on the word of God, but not drunkenness<sup>28</sup>.

Chrysostom considers drunkenness to be the root of fornication and other sins related to impurity<sup>29</sup>. In one of the homilies on the Letter of Saint Paul to Romans, he asks his listeners to avoid drunkenness, which is the mother of fornication: „Wherefore I beseech you flee fornication (τὴν πορνείαν), and the mother of it, drunkenness”<sup>30</sup>. The truth about drunkenness as a source of sins of impurity, the preacher of Antioch presents even more emphatically in the 57<sup>th</sup> homily on the Gospel of Saint Matthew. Referring to the words of Saint Paul, who recommends Timothy to use „a little” wine as a medicine for his ailing stomach (see 1Ti 5, 23), Chrysostom utters words, which he believes the Apostle of Nations would utter to the inhabitants of Antioch and recommends

<sup>26</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 9, 4, PG 60, 472, NPNF I/11, 399: „For those that love with an unchastened love ought to be more pitied than those who have a violent fever, and those that are drunken, than those that are undergoing torture”.

<sup>27</sup> Idem, *In epistulam I ad Timotheum hom.* 2, 3, PG 62, 514, ed. P. Schaff, NPNF I/13, New York 1889, 415.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. idem, *In Kalendas* 2, PG 48, 955.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 7, SCh 50bis, 204; ibidem 5, 9, SCh 50bis, 205; *De Anna ser.* 1, 1, PG 54, 633.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 24, 3, PG 60, 626, NPNF I/11, 520.

that they too use only „a little” wine considering sins such as: fornication, obscene language and lust, which have their root in the abuse of wine<sup>31</sup>.

The most important, however, and the most serious damage to people abusing alcohol is their surrender to the tyranny of evil spirit<sup>32</sup> and exclusion from the heavenly kingdom (see 1Co 6, 9-10) as well as the „grievous punishment” that awaits them<sup>33</sup>. Referring to the text from the First Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians, Chrysostom warns against drunkenness by pointing out that drunkards cannot enter the kingdom of God<sup>34</sup>. Referring to the same text in *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione domini nostri Iesu Christi*, Chrysostom elaborates on this idea saying that Saint Paul put drunkards on the same line with fornicators, idolaters and adulterers, and clearly stated that they will not enter the kingdom of God. Summing up his arguments Chrysostom writes: „Ὅντως, ἀγαπητοί, δεινὸν ἢ μέθη καὶ χαλεπὸν πᾶν”<sup>35</sup>, underscoring how terrible a vice drunkenness is.

At the conclusion of his reflections about drunkenness, which Chrysostom included in the 57<sup>th</sup> homily on the Gospel of Matthew, he asks whether drunkards sinking into such terrible abyss may count on forgiveness? His answer is negative – there is no forgiveness for them<sup>36</sup>. Hence in the final exhortation he appeals to his listeners to avoid the disease of drunkenness and through it acquire earthly and eternal goods<sup>37</sup>.

In his call to abstinence from alcohol and from the sin of gluttony, the „golden mouthed” preacher alludes to the life of monks. He writes about a spiritual warfare which the monks fight in the erems near Antioch. Every day they grapple with their passions and achieve victory over them. Our author mentions two sins which the monks conquer without much trouble: drunkenness and gluttony. He adds that drunkenness is a Hydra<sup>38</sup>, while her heads are other vices. This implies that Chrysostom considers drunkenness as a source of many sins<sup>39</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 340-341: „But to each of you who are drunken, He will say, «Use little wine, for the reason of fornications, frequent filthy talking and other wicked desires to which drunkenness usually gives birth». But if you are not willing, for these reasons, to abstain; at least abstain on account of the despondencies and the vexations which come of it”.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. idem, *In Genesim hom.* 29, 6, PG 53, 269.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335: „and the crown of these evils is, that this disease makes heaven inaccessible to drunkards, and does not suffer them to win eternal blessedness: for besides the shame attending those who labour under this disease here, a grievous punishment is also awaiting them there!”; *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 11, SCh 50bis, 206.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 566; idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 435.

<sup>35</sup> Idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 435.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaeum*, hom. 57, 5, PG 58, 566.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. ibidem; idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 8, 24, SCh 50bis, 259-260.

<sup>38</sup> A monster to be found in Greek mythology. It had many heads and the place of one cut off was taken by two or three new ones. It was killed by Hercules.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *In Matthaeum hom.* 70, 3, PG 58, 659, NPNF I/10, 411: „The-

**2. Depiction of a drunkard.** The „golden mouthed” preacher in his sermons on the topic of drunkenness and drunkards (μέθυσος; οἰνοπότης<sup>40</sup>) makes an effort to clearly define who can be declared a drunken man. In a concise but blunt language he explains:

„Drunkard is the one, who having drunk too much wine staggers like a lusty slave not recognizing anything around. Full of uncontrolled desire like pure wine he talks with no sense uttering shameful, crude and silly words; he confuses one thing with another and remains blind to everything around him. He babbles and roams around seeing everywhere [a woman] he lusts for. During gatherings and feasts, in every time and in every place, no matter what is said to him, he does not hear anything; overpowered by lustful thoughts he dreams only about sin. Similar to a captured animal he does not believe in anything and is afraid of everything”<sup>41</sup>.

It can be deduced from the above text that Chrysostom considers drunkard to be a person, who drank too much wine and in effect: 1) staggers and roams around; 2) does not recognize the surrounding reality and has no contact with people around him; 3) talks with no sense and babbles; 4) is overpowered by lust; 5) is mistrustful and does not believe anyone. A drunkard, then, loses the most basic values arising from his human nature. Sometimes our author compares a drunkard to a corpse and points out that a drunken man is much more miserable than a dead man, since the dead can no longer do anything wrong, while the drunkard is always ready to do evil<sup>42</sup>.

Chrysostom even uses invectives<sup>43</sup> to describe drunkards. He states that a drunkard is „more miserable than a madman [...], is the object of hatred, [...] suffers punishment for his madness, [...] drips with tainted saliva and stinks of bad wine”<sup>44</sup>; he also points out that because of an overdose of wine a drunkard loses clarity of mind, foams at the mouth, often vomits and lies like a corpse<sup>45</sup>. For this reason the preacher from Antioch speaks about drunkards as being

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refore in that place there is no drunkenness nor gluttony. [...] For drunkenness and gluttony are multiform and many-headed monsters which lie dead. For as in the fabled Scylla and Hydra, so in drunkenness may one see many heads, on one side fornication growing up, on another wrath; on one hand sloth, on another lawless lusts; but all these things are taken away”.

<sup>40</sup> To denote a drunkard Chrysostome usually uses a noun ὁ μέθυσος, which takes the following meanings: „drunk with wine; drunken, intemperate” (Liddell – Scott, p. 1091); cf. Abramowiczówna III 91; at other times a noun ὁ οἰνοπότης, which means „wine-bibber” (Liddell – Scott, p. 1207); cf. Abramowiczówna III 254.

<sup>41</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *Adversus Judaeos or.* 8, 1, PG 48, 928, own translation.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 435.

<sup>43</sup> More on the topic of invective see S. Longosz, *Zarys historii inwektyw wczesnochrześcijańskich*, RTK 43 (1996) z. 2, 363-390; idem, *Inwektywa*, w: EK VII 413-417 (bibliography).

<sup>44</sup> Joannes Chrysostomus, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 9, PG 60, 521, NPNF I/11, 437.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 10, Sch 50bis, 205.

pitiful. Referring to their mindlessness<sup>46</sup> and social uselessness<sup>47</sup>, Chrysostom maintains that „the drunken man is a living corpse”<sup>48</sup>. By painting before his listeners a vivid picture of a drunkard, the „golden mouthed” preacher presents him as a mindless man<sup>49</sup>, who does not know when to speak and when to be silent, and when he speaks, he does not know what to say<sup>50</sup>, since he cannot direct his thoughts properly<sup>51</sup>. A drunkard is also depicted as a wasteful man, who throws away his possessions without thinking<sup>52</sup>. He is disagreeable to people around him and stirs up in others contempt, disgust and ridicule<sup>53</sup>. Such life of a drunkard Chrysostom considers to be pitiful and worse than death, since „death gives the body rest, and sets it free from ridicule, as well as disgrace and sins: but these drunken fits plunge him into all these, stopping up the ears, dulling the eyesight, keeping down the understanding in great darkness”<sup>54</sup>. A man who drinks too much wine is comparable, according to Chrysostom, to an overloaded ship. Just as the vessel is in danger of sinking, so is a drunkard in danger of losing his mind and human dignity<sup>55</sup>.

There appears a conviction in the works of Chrysostom that drunkenness is a vice generally found in the wealthy circles. The poor are considered to be engrossed in prayer and keep away from the abuse of wine. Comparing the poor and the wealthy, the preacher of Antioch proposes: „Let us come into the house of one and the other”:

„Shall we not find the one among his books, or in prayer and fasting, or some other necessary duty, awake and sober, and conversing with God? But the other we shall see stupid in drunkenness, and in no better condition than a dead man. And if we wait till the evening, we shall see this death coming upon him more and more, and then sleep overwhelms him. But the other we shall see even in the night keeping sober and alert. Which

<sup>46</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 10, PG 60, 522, NPNF I/11, 438: „We shall see then the man who dotes with his wine at eventide with his eyes open, seeing no one, but moving about at mere hap-hazard, and stumbling against such as fall in his way, and spewing, and convulsed, and exposing his nakedness in an unseemly manner (See Habak. 2, 16). And if his wife be there, or his daughter, or his maid-servant, or anybody else, they will laugh at him heartily”.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335: „The drunken man is not only useless in our assemblies; not only in public and private affairs; but the bare sight of him is the most disgusting of all things, his breath being stench. The belchings, and gapings, and speech of the intoxicated, are at once unpleasant and offensive, and are utterly abhorrent to those who see and converse with them”.

<sup>48</sup> Idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 5, SCh 50bis, 203.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. ibidem 5, 9, SCh 50bis 204-205.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434.

<sup>52</sup> Cf. ibidem.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 10, SCh 50bis, 205.

<sup>54</sup> Idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 11, PG 60, 522, NPNF I/11, 438.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 13, SCh 50bis, 207.



then shall we pronounce to be most alive, the man that lies in a state of insensibility, and is an open laughing-stock to everybody? or the man that is active, and conversing with God?"<sup>56</sup>

The analysis of the Letter of Saint Paul to Titus inspired Chrysostom to direct his attention to the abuse of wine by people in advanced age. This was also – according to our author – a social problem which affected Christians. In his sermons on this topic the „golden mouthed” preacher focuses on men, although he points out that this vice can appear in the advanced age also in women<sup>57</sup> and its causes can be attributed to the ailments of old age<sup>58</sup>.

Chrysostom laments that many drunkards establish special associations, which aim at organizing people in common gatherings during which – in the name of alleged friendship – they were getting drunk. Outraged by this practice, the preacher of Antioch calls for organizations, which aim to free people from the alcohol addiction<sup>59</sup>. He bemoans that people are able to work together toward evil, but cannot undertake common action in good things, for example in giving alms<sup>60</sup>. The preacher of Antioch also points out that during banquets organized by the wealthy, there was often unhealthy rivalry in drinking wine<sup>61</sup>.

By depicting before his listeners such a colorful view of drunkards, Chrysostom aims to sensitize them to the problem of drunkenness. Therefore he demands from them not to pass by indifferently the alcoholic problem of their fellow brothers in faith. Referring to the words of Saint Paul, who calls to show solidarity with other people by rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep (see Rom 12, 15) or to help bear each other burdens (see Gal 6, 2), Chrysostom summons his listeners to help drunkards. Keeping silence in the face of the fellow brother's sin, he calls „cooperation” in evil, thereby pointing out that such stance is not neutral, but helps others in sinning<sup>62</sup>. The preacher of Antioch encourages also those who are free from

<sup>56</sup> Idem, *In epistulam ad Romanos hom.* 13, 9, PG 60, 520-521, NPNF I/11, 437.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Titum hom.* 4, 1, PG 62, 683.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. ibidem, PG 62, 682, NPNF I/13, 531: „For there are many things which at this period make men other than vigilant, especially what I mentioned: their general insensibility, and the difficulty in stirring or exciting them. [...] For there are indeed among the old some who rave and are beside themselves, some from wine, and some from sorrow. For old age makes them narrowminded”.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam II ad Timotheum hom.* 1, 4, PG 62, 606, NPNF I/13, 478: „Many form associations for the purposes of drunkenness. But do you, O man, form associations to restrain the madness of inebriety. Such friendly doings are beneficial to those who are in bonds or in affliction”.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. ibidem, NPNF I/13, 478-479: „But now everything is done with a view to luxury, reveling, and pleasure. We have a common seat, a common table, we have wine in common, and common expenses, but we have no community of alms”.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 2, PG 50, 435.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam II ad Timotheum hom.* 1, 4, PG 62, 605-606, NPNF I/13, 478: „For as in the case of a heavy load, he that bears part of the weight relieves the one who was bearing it alone, so it is in all other things. But now, when any one of our relatives dies, there are many who sit by and console us. Nay, we often raise up even an ass that has fallen; but when the souls of our brethren

alcoholism to use all available means to influence the life of drunkards in order to help them break free from the slavery of alcohol abuse<sup>63</sup>. This good deed will be a ticket to a great award in the future<sup>64</sup>.

**3. The need to maintain moderation.** Wine in the Bible is a symbol of joy of life<sup>65</sup> and therefore Chrysostom considers wine not only as not evil, but as God's gift, which is in itself something good<sup>66</sup>. He explains that it is God's creation and everything that God created is good (see Gen 1)<sup>67</sup> „for wine was given for gladness”<sup>68</sup>. Evil is the abuse of wine<sup>69</sup>. A man, by drinking too much wine, changes the character of this gift, which should after all serve as an agent of man's joy and not sadness<sup>70</sup>. For this reason Chrysostom writes: „God honored you with the gift. Why disgrace yourself with the excess of it?”<sup>71</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the preacher of Antioch criticizes those, who by looking at drunkards and their sins accuse the wine for evil that comes from abusing it<sup>72</sup>. He appeals to them: „But do not do it; for this is of satanical mind. Do not find fault with the wine, but with the drunkenness”<sup>73</sup>. He recommends that his listeners correct those who think this way when they meet them because of their improper way of thinking<sup>74</sup> and encourages them to talk with

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are falling, we overlook them and pass by, as if they were of less value than an ass. And if we see any one entering into a tavern indecently; nay, if we see him drunk, or guilty of any other unseemly action, we do not restrain him, we rather join him in it”.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 14, SCh 50bis, 207.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. ibidem.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. M. Luker, *Słownik obrazów i symboli biblijnych*, tłum. K. Romaniuk, Poznań 1989, 267.

<sup>66</sup> Cf. Joannes Chrysostomus, *In principium Actorum hom.* 1, 2, PG 51, 69; idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564.

<sup>67</sup> Idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434.

<sup>68</sup> Idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 341.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 2, 5, PG 49, 40; idem, *In principium Actorum hom.* 1, 2, PG 51, 69.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 4, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335: „For wine was given to us by God, not that we might be drunken, but that we might be sober; that we might be glad, not that we might be sad. «Wine,» it says, «makes the heart of man glad,» (Ps 104, 15) but you make of it a source of sadness; since those who are inebriated are sullen beyond measure, and great darkness spreads over their thoughts. The medicine is best, when it has the best moderation to direct it”.

<sup>71</sup> Idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 340.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 4, PG 49, 22; idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 340: „For instance, I hear many say, when these excesses happen, «If only there were no wine». O folly! O madness! When other men sin, do you find fault with God's gifts? And what great madness is this? What? Did the wine, O man, produce this evil? Not the wine, but the intemperance of those that take an evil delight in it. Say then, «If only there were no drunkenness, no luxury»”.

<sup>73</sup> Idem, *In Matthaeum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 340.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 5, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335: „When, therefore, we hear men saying such things, we should stop their mouths; for it is not the use of wine, but the lack of moderation which produces drunkenness. Drunkenness! that root of all evils. Wine was

people who abuse alcohol (when they are sober) expecting them to explain that it is not wine that is evil, but its abuse<sup>75</sup>.

Commenting on the words of Saint Paul from the First Letter to Timothy (5, 23) in which the Apostle of Nations recommends Timothy to use „a little” wine, Chrysostom states that wine is a gift from God and is not evil. Taking this opportunity he also speaks against some of the heterodox groups, which prohibited the use of wine<sup>76</sup> and very clearly explains that wine itself is not something banned or evil. As a gift of God wine is good and this is confirmed by Saint Paul, who recommends it to Timothy as medicine. It is the lack of restraint in its use that drunkenness flourishes, which – according to Chrysostom – is the „work” of the devil. Therefore he admonishes his listeners to look for the cause of drunkenness not in wine – a good gift from God, but in „madness” and lack of restraint in those, who abuse it.

Referring to the teachings of Aristotle about the need to remain temperate in all ways of life, Chrysostom points out that generally even those things that potentially can lead to sin are allowable if they are under control and used with prudence. Only sin itself is forbidden<sup>77</sup>. Justifying his stance the preacher of Antioch refers to the text of Psalm 104, 15: „Wine which makes man’s heart glad” and explains that through the abuse of wine drunkards desecrated this quality. Giving an example from everyday life, Chrysostom says that a man may use a bath and eat meat and drink wine with temperance, but should refrain from sin<sup>78</sup>. In his summary he points out that through the simple act of drinking wine a man does not become bad, because it is possible to drink wine without getting drunk<sup>79</sup>. Not maintaining the appropriate moderation in regard to

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given to restore the body’s weakness, not to overturn the soul’s strength; to remove the sickness of the flesh, not to destroy the health of the spirit. Do not then, by using the gift of God immoderately, afford a handle to the foolish and the impudent”.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaëum hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 564, NPNF I/10, 340: „and when you have found such a man sober, sketch out all his unseemliness, and say to him: «Wine was given, that we might be cheerful, not that we might behave unseemly; that we might laugh, not that we might be a laughingstock; that we might be healthful, not that we might be diseased; that we might correct the weakness of our body, not cast down the might of our soul”.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom.* 1, 4, PG 49, 22, NPNF I/9, 335: „The passage before us is useful also against heretics, who speak evil of God’s creatures; for if wine had been among the number of things forbidden, Paul would not have permitted it, nor would have said it was to be used. And not only against the heretics, but against the simple ones among our brethren, who when they see any persons disgracing themselves from drunkenness, instead of reproving them, blame the fruit given to them by God, and say, «Let there be no wine». We should say then in answer to such, «Let there be no drunkenness; for wine is the work of God, but drunkenness is the work of the devil. Wine does not make drunkenness; but intemperance produces it. Do not accuse that which is the workmanship of God, but accuse the madness of a fellow mortal. But you, while omitting to reprove and correct the sinner, treat your Benefactor with contempt!»”.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 2, Sch 50bis, 201.

<sup>78</sup> Idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 433.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. ibidem.

drinking wine results in sour consequences or afflictions that arise from the state of alcoholic intoxication: „For what kind of gladness is it to be beside one’s self, and to have innumerable vexations, and to see all things whirling round, and to be oppressed with giddiness, and like those that have a fever, to require some who may drench their heads with oil?”<sup>80</sup>

Chrysostom, however, knowing well the human weakness and the strength of the addiction, advises not to drink wine at all. He knows the aristotelean distinction between acts classified as good, neutral or evil by nature and recommends to avoid neutral (considering drinking wine as such) and then one will never commit an act of evil<sup>81</sup>. He says that luxury, although it seems to be something neutral, in reality is evil because it is the source of drunkenness, which gives rise to many other sins<sup>82</sup>.

Another way of looking at the matter of drinking wine is put forward in one of his homilies *Ad populum Antiochenum*. Referring to the text of the First Letter of Saint Paul to Timothy: „use a little wine” (5, 23), Chrysostom observes that saint Paul prescribed Timothy moderate use of wine only because of his ailment. In the further part of his statement our author maintains that if Timothy was not ill, saint Paul would not prescribe him wine, even in low quantities<sup>83</sup>.

The preacher of Antioch refers also to the life of animals. He writes that drunkards are more animal-like than the animals themselves<sup>84</sup>. Animals have more sense than drunkards; for when an animal satisfies his hunger or quenches his thirst, he does not allow itself to be fed or watered any more<sup>85</sup>. A drunkard, however, mindlessly oversteps his limits in drinking alcohol:

„For they [brutes] indeed seek nothing more than what is needful, but these have become even more brutish than they, overpassing the boundaries of moderation. For how much better is the ass than these men? How much better the dog! For indeed each of these animals, and of all others, whether it needs to eat, or to drink, acknowledges sufficiency for a limit, and goes not on beyond what it needs; and though there are innumerable persons to constrain it, it will not endure to go on to excess”<sup>86</sup>.

<sup>80</sup> Idem, *In Matthaem hom. 57, 5*, PG 58, 565, NPNF I/10, 341.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi 5*, PG 50, 440.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. ibidem.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad populum Antiochenum hom. 1, 5*, PG 49, 22-23, NPNF I/9, 335-336: „Let us cut off then this evil habit, and let us hear Paul saying, «Use a little wine». For even this little he permits on account of his infirmity; so that if infirmity had not troubled him, he would not have forced his disciple to allow himself even a small quantity, since it is fitting that we should always mete out even the needful meat and drink, which are given us, by occasions and necessities; and by no means go beyond our need, nor do anything unmeaningly and to no purpose”.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat. 5, 13*, SCh 50bis, 207.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. ibidem.

<sup>86</sup> Idem, *In Matthaem hom. 57, 5*, PG 58, 565, NPNF I/10, 341; see also idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi 2*, PG 50, 434. These statements are rhetorical.

Chrysostom also wonders how in spite of such mindless way of life drunkards do not change their behavior. Moreover they sometimes act wiser in relation to animals than toward themselves<sup>87</sup>.

The „golden mouthed” preacher in many of his sermons appeals to his listeners to refrain from abusing wine<sup>88</sup> and from its immoderate consumption<sup>89</sup>. At the same time he points out that it is not wine which is responsible for drunkenness, but man's bad will which pushes him to foolishness in this regard<sup>90</sup>. For example, in the sermon *De sancta Pelagia virgine et martyre*, Chrysostom admonishes his listeners to imitate the virtues of the holy virgin and martyr. He is aware, however, that many participants of the solemn gathering will go into taverns right after festivities finish and surrender themselves to drunkenness and gluttony. For this reason our author admonishes his listeners with special zeal, so that they will drink wine in moderation and avoid getting drunk<sup>91</sup>.

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In summary it is necessary to highlight that Chrysostom regards drunkenness as a vice that concerns the whole of contemporary society, including Christians. Referring to the essence of consuming meals, he points out that a man does not live for eating and drinking, but eats and drinks to stay alive<sup>92</sup>. It is our author's conviction that drunkenness is a serious transgression because it is a cause and root of many sins and all kinds of evil in society. He explained that nothing is as pleasant for the devil than gluttony and drunkenness, which are the cause of all kinds of evil<sup>93</sup>. Drunkenness and gluttony also devastate the spiritual life and are an obstacle in obtaining the fruits of fasting; moreover they can destroy everything that was obtained by its practice. For this reason Chrysostom often calls his listeners to give up drunkenness and gluttony<sup>94</sup>.

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Chrysostom knows fully well that a man is able to induce animals to overstep their boundaries. He mentions it in the work *In Matthaem hom.* 44, 5 (PG 58, 470), when he writes about fattening poultry and other animals.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaem hom.* 57, 5, PG 58, 565.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. idem, *Ad illuminandos cat.* 5, 4, SCh 50bis, 202-203; ibidem 5, 28, SCh 50bis, 214.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. idem, *In epistulam ad Romaos hom.* 24, 4, PG 60, 628, NPNF I/11, 521: „But if you are content with what is necessary, you will never come to experience this fear, but all those things will go away – both drunkenness and wontonness”.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. idem, *Adversus ebriosos et de resurrectione Domini nostri Iesu Christi* 1, PG 50, 434.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. idem, *De sancta Pelagia virgine et martyre* 3, PG 50, 582.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. idem, *De Lazaro con.* 1, 9, PG 48, 975.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. idem, *In Matthaem hom.* 57, 4, PG 58, 563.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. idem, *De paenitentia hom.* 5, 4, PG 49, 312.

## PIJAŃSTWO W OCENIE ŚW. JANA CHRYZOSTOMA

(Streszczenie)

Z całą pewnością można stwierdzić, że jednym z najznakomitszych wyrażycieli starożytnej myśli społecznej był Jan Chryzostom. Jego pełne ekspresji kazania kierowane do wiernych są niezwykle pod względem nasycenia treściami o charakterze społecznym. Odnajdujemy w nich zarejestrowany obraz codziennego życia społecznego starożytnej Antiochii i Konstantynopola w 2. poł. IV i na początku V wieku. Przedstawione w kazaniach i homiliach obrazy stanowią dowód niezwyklej wnikliwości obserwatora ustosunkowującego się do zjawisk zachodzących w ówczesnym społeczeństwie.

W niniejszym opracowaniu postanowiono poddać analizie niektóre homilie Jana Chryzostoma, w których Antiocheńczyk odnosi się do pijaństwa (μέθη), które było istotnym problemem społecznym dotyczącym chrześcijan (zwłaszcza mężczyzn). Chryzostom bardzo często występował przeciw nadużywaniu alkoholu, a samo pijaństwo uważał za poważne wykroczenie. Odnosząc się do istoty spożywania posiłków podkreślał, że człowiek nie żyje po to, aby jeść i pić, lecz je po to, aby żyć. W przekonaniu naszego autora pijaństwo jest też przyczyną i źródłem wielu innych wad, grzechów oraz wszelkiego zła pojawiającego się w społeczeństwie. Pijaństwo i obżarstwo rujnują też życie duchowe i są przeszkodą w zdobywaniu owoców postu, a nawet mogą zniweczyć to, co zostało już zdobyte przez jego praktykowanie. Z tego względu Chryzostom często kreśli w kazaniach negatywny obraz pijaka oraz wzywa swych wiernych do porzucenia pijaństwa i obżarstwa.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Jan Chryzostom, pijak, pijaństwo, problematyka społeczna.

**Key words:** John Chrysostom, drunkard, drunkenness, social problem.