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“SERMO EORUM SICUT CANCER SERPIT”. CHROMATIUS OF AQUILEIA AGAINST HERESIES

St. Chromatius of Aquileia, Church Father of the 4th century, is a recent academic interest after the rediscovery and the reconstruction of his *corpus* in the previous century by Joseph Lemarié and Raymond Etaix¹. This paper, as indicated in the title, dedicates to studying his activities against heretics. We will firstly offer a brief overview on the situation of the Aquileian Church and the biography of the saint, then follow with an examination on the extracts from both his *Tratatus* and *Sermones*, in order to arrive at considerations regarding to the theme of the paper.

I. THE GOLDEN ERA OF THE CHRISTIANITY IN AQUILEIA

This paper does not aim at presenting every detail of the extensive history of the Aquileian community, instead our interests lie in one significant period, which Cuscito referred as “the golden period of the early Christianity in Aquileia”². This period of time lasts for four decades, which is under the episcopate of two eminent Aquileian bishops, Valerian (between 368-388) and Chromatius (between 388-408); as their guidance is board in culture, rich in spirituality and efficient in episcopacy, the local catholic community has reached its *culmen*. We can find other notable names who are in one way or another connected with the Aquileian episcopal see of the history of Christianity in this period of time, to name a few: Ambrose of Milan, Rufinus, Jerome, Athanasius and forth.

In the mentioned decades, there was a decisive blow against the Arian movement in the West, numerous religious architectures which are dedicated to the veneration of different saints are being built, for example the basilica of St. John and of St. Felix. From the writings of Rufinus, Jerome and Chromatius,

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¹ Cf. J. Lemarié, *Indagini su San Cromazio d'Aquileia*, “Aquileia nostra” 38 (1967) 151-176; Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Opera*, ed. R. Etaix – J. Lemarié, CCL 9A, Turnholti 1974.

² AA.VV., *San Cromazio. Pastore e maestro da sedici secoli (408-2008). La testimonianza dell'antica chiesa di Aquileia e del suo piu grande vescovo*, Udine 2007, 11-12.

we learn that in Aquileia there was a school of theology and a *chorus beatorum*, the latter is better illustrated as “an ascetic circle”, serving as the cradle for many masters of the Christian life, not to mention the often case of bishops.

The blossom of the Christian community of Catholic faith in Aquileia during the Theodosian and the following period has also sparked opposition of other religious and intellectual groups; they united together, so to speak, and formed into an “anti-Catholicism” alliance. This so-called alliance composed with the Jews, the heretics and the pagans. Chromatius, when he was commenting the verses of St. Paul on racing in the stadium, what he said in the beginning of his *Sermo* 28 is significant in which the Aquileian bishop, having referred the abovementioned “anti-Catholicism alliance” indirectly with an emphasis on *rectus fidei cursus*:

“Currunt Iudaei per legem, currunt philosophi per inanem sapientiam, currunt et haeretici per falsam annuntiationem, currunt catholici per ueram fidei praedicationem: sed de his omnibus unus coronam accipit, id est populus catholicus qui recto fidei cursu tendit ad Christum, ut ad palmam immortalitatis coronamque perueniat”³.

This *rectus fidei* was exactly one of the concerns of Chromatius, which was proposed to the *populus catholicus* and is the theme to be presented in this article.

In this connection, it is necessary to note another event in year 381 of which Aquileia was being counted as one of the cities against Arianism. In that year a synod was being called; some recent scholars refer it as a council, while some others regard it as proceedings instead. It is because in that occasion, two bishops, Palladius of Ratiaria and Secundianus of Singidunum, together with Attalus the priest (or deacon), which all three of them were from eastern Aquileia, were being accused⁴. Although it was presided by Valerian the bishop, the person who organized and initiated the event was indeed Ambrose of Milan. In the council there was a representation of about thirty bishops, mainly coming from southern Italy while the others were from Illyrian, from Gaul, even from Africa. Chromatius also attended the event; he was then still a presbyter and perhaps also the theological advisor of Bishop Valerian. Two his interventions concerning the Christology and ecclesiastical discipline were documented⁵. The participated bishops shared one characteristic in common, which all of them were catholic (i.e. anti-arians). Therefore, as hinted above, we can confirm that very likely this synod/ council was indeed a trial that lasted for only one day, and all three being accused were condemned. This event not only

³ Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Sermo* 28, 1, CCL 9A, 129.

⁴ Cf. M. Simonetti, *La crisi ariana nel IV secolo*, SEA 11, Roma 1975, 542-548.

⁵ Cf. G. Trettel, *I due interventi di Cromazio al Concilio di Aquileia del 381*, in: *Studi Forogiuliesi in onore di Carlo Guido Mor*, ed. G. Fornasir, Pubblicazioni della deputazione di Storia patria per il Friuli 13, Udine 1983, 93-108; AA.VV., *Il Concilio di Aquileia del 381 nel XVI centenario*, Udine 1980.

marked the definite defeat of Arianism in the west, but also Aquileia to be one of the citadels in the anti-Arianism campaign.

To conclude the reflection of this section, we can confirm that the Christianity in Aquileia after different internal conflicts showed a very high awareness of which Chromatius referred as *rectus fidei cursus*. It is an intense awareness for the correct faith (orthodox) and as a result, there was a conclusive confrontation against all the other forms of faith which were different from the orthodox one.

II. CHROMATIUS, PASTOR OF THE CHURCH IN AQUILEIA

On the biography of Chromatius, as only scarce documentation and mere assumptions passed to our age, there is only limited information. The scholars dated his birthdate to be in the first half of the 4th century, between year 335 to year 350. His family is being regarded highly by Jerome, who was his contemporary and acquaintance. Jerome, in his letter 7, which was sent from the desert of Chalcis in year 375, described Chromatius' family with the following words:

“Your mother, same as you in holiness, yet is superior because she has had the merit to give birth such a son; one can say that her breast is really of gold [...] every one of us admires your sisters, as they had triumphed over the morbidity of sexuality and over the vanity of the world; they await for the coming of the Bridegroom with abundant oil prepared. Oh a fortunate household, where Anna the widow lived, prophetesses the virgins, and there is one which is like Samuel and is bred in the temple! Oh what a happy dwelling, where we honor this mother the martyr with the crowns of the Maccabean martyrs”⁶.

With certainty one can assure that Chromatius came from a Christian family. From his *Sermones* and *Tractatus* one can learn that he was rich in culture, which has to be obtained in rhetoric school. He was present in the Synod of Aquileia in year 381, from which there were two of his interventions being documented. Another occasion that we can date back is the year 388 (yet according to some other it would be year 387), where Chromatius was consecrated bishop by Ambrose of Milan. The subsequent years were marked with his pastoral activities, among which there was his preaching which is conserved

⁶ Hieronymus, *Epistula* 7, 6, ed. I. Hilberg, CSEL 54, Vindobonae – Lipsiae 1910, 30-31: “Matrem communem, quae, cum uobis sanctitate societur, in eo uos praeuenit, quia tales genuit, cuius uere uenter aureus potest dici, eo salutamus honore, quo nostis; una quoque suspiciendas cunctis sorores, quae sexum uicere cum saeculo, quae oleo ad lampadas largiter praeparato sponsi opperiantur aduentum. O beata domus, in qua morantur Anna uidua, uirgines prophetissae, geminus Samuhel nutritus in templo! O tecta felicia, in quibus cernimus Macchabaeorum martyrum coronis cinctam martyrem matrem! Nam licet cotidie Christum confiteamini, dum eius praecepta seruatis, tamen ad priuatam gloriam publica haec accessit uobis et aperta confessio, quod per uos ab urbe uestra Arriani quondam dogmatis uirus exclusum est”.

in his *Sermones* and *Tractatus*. As a preacher he was praised by the great John Chrysostom in his letter, saying:

“Also we, though far away, perceive as if you were close to us with your candid saying and unimpeachable sternness”⁷.

There is a third documented date, which is the date of his deathbed, is fixed between year 407 to year 408. According to the liturgical calendar of the local Church, the date should be 2 December; on that date his *dies natalis* is being celebrated.

III. CHROMATIUS AGAINST HERESIES

1. How the heretics were named. Going through both *Sermones* and *Tractatus* with attention, the striking creativity of Chromatius in designating the heretics is salient:

a) The ravens. In the preaching of Chromatius, the raven that Noah sent from the ark was associated with uncleanness, i.e. the pagans and the heretics⁸. It is especially evident for the heretics, as they have a false faith which contradicts the true one. They are summoned to become pigeons, i.e. to become Catholics⁹.

b) The (evil) eyes of the body. Chromatius sees those who guide the flock of the Church as the eyes of human body. Those who have an indisputable faith and luminous conduct of life, brighten up the body of the Church. On the contrary if the chaperone is faithless, his body would be blended with darkness and among the people he “cannot shine with the light of truth and of faith”¹⁰.

c) The athletes. The heretics are being compared with the Pauline image of the athletes in the stadium, which represents the life at hand. Their mistake is “running in the opposite direction toward an erroneous doctrine”, that is being outside of the right track of the true faith; this explains why they will never arrive at the palm and crown of immortality¹¹.

d) The dogs. The imagery of dogs does not only being desinagted with the blasphemers, but also with the heretics. This imagery is being chosen because their blasphemous discussion, the blasphemers and the heretics resemble

⁷ Joannes Chrysostomus, *Epistula* 155, PG 52, 703: “Καὶ τῶν παρόντων οὐκ ἔλαττον ἴσμεν ἡμεῖς, οἱ τοσοῦτον ἀπωκισμένοι μήκος ὁδοῦ, τὴν σφοδροτάτην σου καὶ πυρὸς γέμουσαν ἀγάπην, τὴν εἰλικρινῆ καὶ ἐλευθερίας πολλῆς καὶ παρ’ ῥησίας ἐμπελησμένην γλώτταν, τὴν ἔνστασιν τὴν ἀδάμαντα μμουμένην (Nec nos, licet alioqui tam longe disjuncti, minus quam ii qui adsunt, vehementissimam atque igne plenam caritatem, sinceramque et ingenti libertate ac fiducia perfusam linguam, atque adamantinam contentionem exploratam habemus)”.

⁸ Cf. Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Sermo* 2, 5.

⁹ Cf. *ibidem*.

¹⁰ *Ibidem* 6, 2, CCL 9A, 27, transl. by Author.

¹¹ Cf. *ibidem* 28, 1.

to the barking dogs. Their unceasing “small talk” is discordant within flock of Christ¹².

e) The wolves. The imagery is famous in the Gospel of Mathew (7:15). The Treatise 35 dedicates donwright to the refutation against the heretics and their works. According to Chromatius, all the heretics are false prophets wearing the outlook of a sheep, “qui inimici sunt fidei et aduersarii ueritatis”¹³. This harsh definition of Chromatius on the heretics is better illustrated in the following paragraph, “qui ad occultandam perfidiae impietatem, sub specie nominis Christi pietatis uelamenta praetendunt, et per simulatam fidem auferunt fidei ueritatem”¹⁴. The false prophets were already being compared with the wolves in the Old Testament (cf. Ez 22:17), and here Chromatius reintroduces and applies to the heretics, since the latter preach a false faith¹⁵. Like the wolves, Chromatius explicitly mentions Photinus, Arius, Sabellius¹⁶ and all the other heretics in general, “Lupi sunt etiam omnes haeretici qui praua doctrina sua innocuum corpus ecclesiae ferali ore delacerant”¹⁷.

f) The spiders. Chromatius refers the heretics as spiders since, as spiders weave their trapping net with the finest wits of their artistry in order to seize the flies that end up in the mesh; in the same way the heretics “aranearum modo, quasi quaedam retia fraudulentae doctrinae praetendunt, ut instabiles homines et mente vagantes fallaci fraude decipiant”¹⁸.

g) The thorns. While Chromatius coins the Jews with spines, he coins the heretics with thorns; with their incessant discussions, the sweetness of faith, which is referred as that of the fig, is being taken away¹⁹.

h) The foxes. In the Holy Scripture foxes signify the false prophets (cf. Ez 13:4); Chromatius, however, sees the term as an allusion of all the heretics. It is because, just like the foxes in the vineyards, the heretics by all means attempt to ruin the vineyard of the Lord.

“Huiusmodi ergo uulpes foueas habent, id est collectiones impias et tenebrosas in profundo terrenae infidelitatis demersas, in quorum cordibus per doctrinam suam uelut in quibusdam foueis habitant”²⁰.

The foxes are also known as animals that rapture their preys with their inborn slyness. Similarly, the heretics also plot their deceits to lead the good Christians astray away from the true doctrine of the Church:

¹² Cf. idem, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 33, 3.

¹³ Ibidem 35, 1, CCL 9A, 368.

¹⁴ Ibidem 35, 2, CCL 9A, 369.

¹⁵ Cf. ibidem 35, 4.

¹⁶ Cf. ibidem 35, 3-4.

¹⁷ Ibidem 35, 4, CCL 9A, 370.

¹⁸ Ibidem 35, 5, CCL 9A, 371.

¹⁹ Cf. ibidem 35, 7.

²⁰ Ibidem 41, 2, CCL 9A, 391.

“Ita et haeretici insidiantur domesticis auibus Christi, in quibus pennae uirtutum sunt et plumae operum bonorum, ut eas aliqua fraude doctrinae ab ecclesia Domini rapiant et ad perfidiae suae foueas attrahant deuorandas”²¹.

i) The broken vessels. Boat is a common imagery to indicate the Christian community, in both the New Testament and other patristic writings. Chromatius too talks about the boat, or the vessel, that it is belonged to God, not only in the present century, which must across the sea among the trials of time. He mentions also “*alia nauis*”, which is however belonged to the world not to God: “*est collectio haeticorum*” – it is a church of the heretics, which is broken has lost the helm of the true faith and is swept away in the vortexes of the eternal death²².

j) The pigs. This is the final striking imagery in reading the *opus* of Chromatius. “*In porcos uero haeticos accipiamus*”²³. The heretics are being compared with pigs since, according to the narration in the New Testament (cf. Mt 8:28-34), the demons are being driven into the swines. But the difference between the demons and the heretics (also the Jews) rests in the recognition of the divinity of the Son of God: while the demons recognize Him, the heretics (and the Jews) do not²⁴.

Going through different appeals imposed to the heretics, it reveals that Chromatius degrades and shows no respect to the heretics. These expressions associate with the realm of the animals (pigs, dogs, wolves, foxes, spiders), of plants (thorns), or of things which are rather negative (evil eye, athlete who runs outside the racing field, broken vessel, false prophets). He applies them on purpose in engraving a clear message in ears of his audience: the heretics have to be avoided, nor to be listened, neither to be followed.

2. The errors of the heretics. According to Chromatius, the common characteristic of the said “anti-Catholicism alliance” is that their mind concurs with the “*perfidia*”²⁵. The term “*perfidia*” indicates precisely a false and deformed faith. Same as his contemporaries, Chromatius also uses this term when he mentions the Jews, or the heretics, or the pagans. Lemarié points out that Chromatius does not use this term univocally. When Chromatius refers to the Jews, he intends for the absence of their faith; the heretics, for the false faith that contradicts to the true one; and the pagans, for their impiety²⁶.

Another term that Chromatius uses for indicating the good, is the adjective “*catholicus*”. In the chromatian *corpus* this adjective is being employed less

²¹ Ibidem.

²² Ibidem 42, 6, CCL 9A, 404.

²³ Ibidem 43, 6, CCL 9A, 409.

²⁴ Cf. ibidem 43, 2.

²⁵ Cf. idem, *Sermo* 2, 5.

²⁶ Cf. J. Lemarié, *Notes*, in: Chromace d’Aquilée, *Sermons*, vol. 1, Introduction, texte critique, notes par J. Lemarié, SCh 154, Paris 1969, 161, nota 2.

than 15 times, meaning that it is not used often, yet its meaning is nothing of today’s sense. Chromatius employs the term to contrast with “haereticus”, “perfidus” or “infidelis”. Therefore we have to understand the word “catholicus” as “of right doctrine”, or “faithful” or “believing”²⁷. The heretics share one thing in common, as being affirmed by Chromatius, that they, by all means with all the effort, try to cover such a shining light as that of the divine preaching:

“They distort the Holy Scripture with distorted interpretation: for passages on faith they preach perfidy instead, to veil the light of truth with the darkness of error”²⁸.

After having presented the terms which Chromatius applies to refer to the heretics, and what he is in mind with words “perfidia” and “catholicus”, the following sections will present the contents of the heresies against fighting bishop of Aquileia. From the reading of *Sermones* and *Tractatus* of Chromatius, we fathom out that the heretics or the heresies are seldom explicitly named. He preferred to mention the heretics generically. In his *corpus*, only four of the heretics of his times are named: Ebion²⁹, Photinus³⁰, Arius³¹ and Sabellius³². Now let us examine the works of the heretics (avoiding places where the heretics are mentioned generically) to answer the question.

Chromatius dedicates almost the entire *Tractatus* 35 to refute the heretics. He makes use of the passages on the warning of the Lord about the false prophets (cf. Mt 7:15) and the prophecy about the savage wolves preying the Apostles (Acts 20:29-30) to articulate his explanation. In this treatise,

²⁷ Cf. M. Todde – G. Pelizzari, *Cromazio di Aquileia, Sermoni liturgici*, Introduzione e testo a cura di M. Todde, Revisione critica e commento a cura di G. Pelizzari, Milano 2013, 79, nota 1.

²⁸ Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 19, 4, 2, CCL 9A, 287.

²⁹ Cf. *ibidem* 50, 3. As it is known the Ebionites are members of a Jewish-Christian sect; besides asceticism, they regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the son of Joseph and Mary (but not of God), and refuted St. Paul (and his letters), accepting the Gospel of Mathew as it is closer to the Jews. Some Church Fathers recognize the existence of the *Ebionite Gospel* (Epiphany of Salamina), or the *Gospel of the Hebrews* (cf. Eusebius of Caesarea, Jerome).

³⁰ Cf. *idem*, *Sermo* 11, 4 e 21, 3; *idem*, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 4, 3; 35, 3-4; 50, 3. Photinus was the bishop of Sirmium (nowadays Balcani), a supporter of the sabellian theology. He was condemned in the First Constantinople Council and therefore he has lost his episcopal office. Photinus, when he was still a bishop, taught that Christ was first a man who was born in a miraculous way and was gifted with the divine power; later he was adopted as the Son of God for the miracles he performed and his virtues. From the Synod of Sirmium in the year 351 he was condemned and exiled.

³¹ Cf. *idem*, *Sermo* 21, 3; *idem*, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 35, 3-4. Arius (ca. year 260-336) was a priest in Alexandria, famous for his preaching and his life as a ascetic. He was the initiator of the idea which today refers with the term “Arianism”; together with some of his contemporary thinkings, they supported that the incarnated Logos, even though is a perfect creation, is still only a creation.

³² Cf. *idem*, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 35, 4. Sabellius was a Roman theologian, *akmé* around the year 200, coming from region which today refers as Lybia, advocator of a kind of modalistic monarchianist theology.

Photinus, Arius and Sabellius are named explicitly, as all three of them are compared with the wolves in disguise as a sheep. With their erroneous ideologies, they have “devastated the flock of Christ”: Photinus in Sirmium, Arius in the flock of Christ of many Churches in the East³³. Photinus, according to Chromatius, supports

“that Christ, our Lord and our Savior, is only a man. Arius also, from his part, reckons that Christ is nothing more than a creature [...] but the wolf is Sabellius too, as he, from his part, ends up with supporting that the Father and the Son are the same person, claiming that the Father is the same person of the Son, therefore he presumes that the Virgin would give birth to the same Father, which, to a certain moment, would be transformed into the Son”³⁴.

Ebion together with Photinus, according to Chromatius, supports that “the Son of God begins to exist from the moment he is incarnated in the bosom of Mary”³⁵. Reading these passages, in which the heretics are being named explicitly, we can tell that Chromatius was nevertheless very attentive to the Christological and Trinitarian questions. In *Sermo* 4, there is a direct accusation, which says “the heretics have done every possible thing to defile this faith, but instead they have defiled themselves”³⁶. In the mind of Chromatius, the Catholic faith on the Holy Trinity, that in his era which is after the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381), the truths of the faith were to a certain extent evidently defined.

One would note that when Chromatius talks about Jesus Christ, two expressions always come together: true God and true man. He firmly assures that one cannot be saved “if we do not believe this duplex truth concerning Christ. As a result, a handful of heretics, for example Photinus, retain that Christ is only a man and reject his divinity, they have only the feet but not the head, because they have lost the crown of faith”³⁷.

According to Chromatius, the heretics provoke bitterness in the place of sweetness for John the Evangelist, as they do not believe in the truth that was written in his Gospel,

“Photinus, who did not want to believe Christ as God, upsets John as the latter has revealed clearly that Christ is God with the following passage, «In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God» (Jn 1, 1). Arius has also embittered him as the former did not believe that the Son proceeds from the Father; he does not believe that the Word of the Father

³³ Cf. *ibidem* 35, 3.

³⁴ *Ibidem* 35, 4, CCL 9A, 370, transl. by Author.

³⁵ *Ibidem* 50, 3, CCL 9A, 448, transl. by Author.

³⁶ *Idem*, *Sermo* 4, 1, CCL 9A, 19, transl. by Author.

³⁷ *Ibidem* 11, 4, CCL 9A, 50, transl. by Author. Cf. anche *idem*, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 52, 2.

is the Son for no other reason except that in this way the Son is proceeded from a male bosom”³⁸.

3. The orthodoxy of Chromatius. Without doubt the Aquileian bishop is nominated as one of the defenders for the true faith, who is the supporter of the Catholic movement, and is regarded by some scholars as one of the protagonists of orthodoxy at his era. His two involvements at the Synod of Aquileia in 381 are documented with the help of both the Latin and Greek “masters” such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Hilarius of Poitiers and Ambrose of Milan on one hand, and the other such as Origen, Didymus the Blind and Eusebius of Caesarea³⁹.

Above all, we have to highlight his profound knowledge of the Holy Scripture and his relentless meditation of the biblical texts. In the *Tractatus*, which is preserved to us together with the *Sermones*, there are plentiful biblical quotes which are accompanied with some literal but more often allegorical explanations, which the latter is more preferred by Chromatius.

We would like to point out a passage from the Prologue of the *Tractatus*, in which Chromatius presents all the four evangelists and their characteristics, and the anti-heretic nature of the Gospels. With the following quote we can learn that Chromatius knows very well every single heresy. Although he does not like to mention one single heresy nor heretic distinctly, he probably alludes the heresies as adoptionists, monarchianists and Arians:

“Nam quia multae et diuersae haereses futurae erant, ita singulorum stilum Sanctus Spiritus temperauit, ut per omnes plenum ac perfectum sacramentum fidei celestis exponeret, per quod uniuersos ueritatis aduersarios confutaret. Denique qui negant Filium Dei salutis nostrae causa ex Virgine natum, quasi indignum hoc Deo, miseri, iudicantes, statim illis per Mathaeum et Lucam Spiritus Sanctus occurrit, per quos et natiuitatem Domini secundum carnem et conceptum ac partum Virginis euidenter ostendit, qui autem Filii Dei ueram diuinitatem atque indefinitam aeternitatis eius naturam ausi sunt blasphemare, negantes illum proprie de Patre natum et Deum uerum esse, semperque cum Patre fuisse, nihilominus sanctus Iohannes et Marcus damnantes infidelitatem blasphemiae eorum occurrunt statim, in euangelii sui principio unigenitum Dei Filium Deum esse testantes”⁴⁰.

The medicine against the errors of the heretics, according to Chromatius, is the four evangelists: Mathew and Luke assert the human nature of Jesus Christ; Mark and John on the other hand testify His divinity. It seems to be appropriate to recall the conclusions proposed by Giulio Trettel: Chromatius bears in mind the concerns of different local Churches when he presents the wholesome Christology, for example the divinity of Christ for the Church of

³⁸ Idem, *Sermo* 21, 3, CCL 9A, 98, transl. by Author.

³⁹ Cf. G. Trettel, *Cromazio di Aquileia, Commento al Vangelo di Matteo*, vol. 2, Roma 1987, 9.

⁴⁰ Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Tractatus in Mathaeum, Prologus* 6, CCL 9A, 188.

Alexandria, the true humanity of Christ for the Church of Antiochus, affirming that both the divine and human natures are to be found in the one single person of the Incarnated Word. The essence of such Christology of Chromatius, is presented as a fact of soteriological reality of the incarnation: true God and true man are for the salvation of the whole human being. The divinity does not absorb the humanity (which is the great lesson that Tertullian distinguished), neither the intact humanity of Christ compromises the unity of the subject with the divinity (which was different from voiding the meaning of redemption); Christ is true God and true man, the perfect God and the perfect man⁴¹.

The heretics also offer their reading on the Holy Scriptures but in a mistaken way; they are discord with Scripture with erroneous interpretations, for passages of faith “perfidia is being preached”, or else they either reject the divinity of Jesus or the true humanity of Him⁴².

Chromatius is mostly concerned with his struggle against the heresies, refuting every doubts regarding on the human and divine nature of Jesus; from here one can find his famous insistence on this argument. For example, in *Sermo* 11 which is about woman perfuming the feet of Jesus, Chromatius prefers to employ biblical instead of the technical language of the speculative theology (*natura, persona, consubstantialis*), for assuring or teaching his listeners of the Catholic faith: the feet of Christ indicate his human nature, while his head the divine nature⁴³.

“Non statim caput Domini unxit, sed pedes. In pedibus christi sacramentum incarnationis eius ostenditur, qua nouissimo tempore ex Virgine nasci dignatus est. In capite uero diuinitatis eius gloria demonstratur, in qua ante omnia tempora de Patre processit. Ante ergo Ecclesia ad pedes Domini uenit, et sic ad caput, quia nisi incarnationem Christi ex uirgine didicisset, numquam diuinitatis eius gloriam, quae de Patre est, cognoscere potuisset. Et ideo scriptum legimus de agno qui in mysterio Christi offerebatur in lege: «caput cum pedibus simul edetis» (Ex 12, 9), id est utrumque de Christo credamus, quia Deus et homo est. Deus de Patre, homo ex Virgine”⁴⁴.

The *Tractatus* 13 is dedicated to explain what the Father said after the baptism of Jesus, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (Mt 3:17). Chromatius emphasizes heavily that through this event, which is the baptism, the “sacramentum perfectae Trinitatis” is being demonstrated⁴⁵. Yet not only this but also the orthodox faith (*fides perfecta*) is being revealed:

⁴¹ Cf. G. Trettel, *Cromazio di Aquileia, Commento al Vangelo di Matteo*, vol. 1, Roma 1984, 24.

⁴² Cf. Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 19, 4.

⁴³ A similar interpretation could be find in Hippolytus the Roman. Cf. A. Hamman – F. Quéré-Jaulmes, *I padri della Chiesa: il mistero Pasquale*, Brescia 1969, 79.

⁴⁴ Chromatius Aquileiensis, *Sermo* 11, 4, CCL 9A, 50.

⁴⁵ Cf. idem, *Tractatus in Mathaeum* 13, 2.

“Perfecta ergo fides et Trinitatis ostensa, cum et Pater Christum Dominum ac Deum nostrum Filium suum esse testatur, et Spiritus Sanctus, id est Paracletus, in tanto fidei sacramento Patri Filioque coniungitur, ut uerum Patrem, uerum Filium, uerum etiam Spiritum Sanctum crederemus: tres personas, sed unam diuinitatem Trinitatis unamque substantiam”⁴⁶.

Supporting himself with the confirmation from the Holy Scriptures, Chromatius considers every single heresy as an attack against the (true) faith (*contra fidem*). For this reason, the Aquileian bishop feels the urge to clarify, to defend and to fight for the *perfecta fides*.

In this study, we tried to present Chromatius of Aquileia as the defender of the orthodox faith against the effective heresies of his time. We have gone through the explicitly mentioned heresies, such as the thinking of Ebionites, of Arianism, of Photinus and of Sabellius. But the Aquileian bishop prefers to refer the heresies generically. In his struggle against the heretics, it appears that he has a fierce spirit, makes no compromise, and is often rather offensive; yet these are the qualities of his times, where through these characteristics he was affirming the orthodoxy which was being provoked by the heterodoxies and heresies. From the attentive reading of his *Sermones* and *Tractatus*, a particular Chromatian attention emerges in his definite and clear affirmation, of which no doubt is being left behind, on the divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.

(Summary)

Bishop Chromatius (in office from 388 to 407), whose episcopal see was a cosmopolitan trade-center at the north end of the Adriatic Sea with the name of Aquileia, was one of the most prominent bishops in the period. He is acquainted with notable figures such as Ambrosius, Hieronymus, Rufinus, and Ioannes Chrysostomus and forth. Before being created a bishop, he was the secretary of bishop Valerianus and in the occasion of Council of Aquileia in 381, he had spoken against Arians. This Council was presided by Ambrosius and with its scale it could almost be considered as an ecumenical one. As shown in some of the Chromatius' sermons, which are unearthed in the 20th century, he opposed not only to the ideas of Arians but also to the teaching of Fotinus, bishop of Sirmium. Chromatius was a very zealous fighter and he practically succeeded to uproot all heretical ideas in his diocese. The academia usually sees him as an anti-Arian theologian. After the Council of Constantinople (381), the Arian heresy seemed to be abated, but Chromatius said in one of his *Tractatus*, “Cuius (sc. Arii) discipuli hodieque oues Dei fallere ac decipere conantur per aliquantas ecclesias, sed iamdudum, magistro

⁴⁶ Ibidem, CCL 9A, 249.

perfidiae prodito, discipuli latere non possunt”; it is evident that, the followers of Arius could still be found (with the mentioning of “hodie”, i.e. today) in the area of Aquileia, meanwhile one must not neglect the presence of the followers of Fotinus of Sirmium. The first part of my conference paper would be a general presentation of the religious situation in Aquileia at the time where Chromatius served as the local bishop; thus I will proceed with an in-depth reading on several passages of the Aquileian bishop’s sermons (Sermones and Tractatus), in order to show the impact of the those heresies on his works and to identify his theological arguments against them. Among those teachings, there is the “unconquerable faith (invicta fide)”, which led to the surmounting (suppression) of heresies.

“SERMO EORUM SICUT CANCER SERPIT”.
CHROMACJUSZ Z AKWILEI PRZECIW HEREZJOM

(Streszczenie)

Biskup Chromacjusz (sprawujący urząd w latach 388-407), którego stolicą biskupią była Akwileja – wielonarodowy ośrodek handlu na północnym krańcu Morza Adriatyckiego, należał do najwybitniejszych hierarchów tego okresu. Znał tak wybitne postacie jak Ambroży, Hieronim, Rufin, Jan Chryzostom i wielu innych. Zanim sam został biskupem, był sekretarzem biskupa Waleriana, a na synodzie w Akwilei (381), któremu przewodniczył Ambroży z Mediolanu, występował przeciw arianom. Znaczenie i waga tego zgromadzenia biskupów, może go stawiać niemal w rzędzie ekumenicznych. Jak pokazują niektóre kazania Chromacjusza, odnalezione w XX wieku, był przeciwny nie tylko wobec doktryny arian, ale również wobec nauczania Fotyna – biskupa Sirmium. Chromacjusz był gorliwym obrońcą ortodoksji, i praktycznie udało mu się wykorzenić wszystkie herezje w swej diecezji. Postrzegany jest zwykle jako antyariański teolog. Po soborze w Konstantynopolu (381) herezja ariańska zdawała się znacznie zawęzić swe kręgi, jednak w jednym ze swoich traktatów Chromacjusz stwierdza: „Cuius (sc. Arii) discipuli hodieque oues Dei fallere ac decipere conantur per aliquantas ecclesias, sed iam dudum, magistro perfidiae prodito, discipuli latere non possunt”; zdanie to wyraźnie wskazuje, że zwolenników Ariusza można było jeszcze znaleźć (świadczy o tym przysłówek „hodie”, czyli dzisiaj) w regionie wokół Akwilei, pamiętać też trzeba o obecności zwolenników Fotyna z Sirmium.

Pierwsza część artykułu przedstawia ogólną sytuację religijną w Akwilei w momencie, gdy miejscowym biskupem był Chromacjusz; następnie przeprowadzona została dogłębna analiza kilku fragmentów dzieł (kazań i traktatów) Biskupa Akwilei, by wykazać, że istnienie herezji spotkało się z oddźwiękiem w jego pismach, oraz zidentyfikować jego teologiczne argumenty przeciwko hereetyckim doktrynom. Wśród różnych zaleceń Chromacjusza, znajduje się przede wszystkim „niezwyciężona wiara” (invicta fide), która doprowadziła do pokonania (stłumienia) herezji.

Key words: Chromatius of Aquileia, Arianism, heresies.

Słowa kluczowe: Chromacjusz z Akwilei, arianizm, herezje.

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