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Enlightenment**

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# ST. ANTHIM THE IBERIAN: THE ETHOS AND POETICS OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT<sup>1</sup>

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## *Abstract*

The ethos of the Enlightenment implies the recognition of the primacy of an autonomous *Cogito*. It also implies the recognition of the primacy of so-called “genius” – the power of proper imagination of unconditional free game. The study shows that St. Anthim the Iberian’s poetics, in his artistic creativity, requires an understanding of “post-byzantine” theological landmarks, perspectives, and codes of conduct for early modern European culture. St. Anthim’s poetical discourse is an image of the pathos of distance, differing from the mainstream aesthetics of his epoch.

*Keywords:* St. Anthim the Iberian, poetic legacy, the cathartic effect of textuality.

## **1. The Poetics of the Typographer**

“My will to the printers is to hand down this trade from generation to generation.”  
St. Anthim the Iberian

The contribution made by St. Anthim the Iberian – a great theologian, orator, master of printing and translation, a church-builder,

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and educator – to Romanian Christian culture is well known amongst Romanians, and his heritage and deeds are studied and evaluated in numerous academic works by Romanian authors<sup>4</sup>. As is well known, although St. Anthim was Georgian by his origin, he addressed his flock in Romanian. His sermons and speeches were always warm and elevated, poetic and eloquent. The stylistic comparisons he used and metaphors, plastic expressions, and epithets he favored make him an outstanding figure in the literature of his period. St. Anthim's figurativeness is characterized by constant care for words, loyalty to preserving the purity of language, and the beauty of the world revealed in language. Accordingly, theologians and academics consider him one of the founders of the Romanian ecclesiastical language and the Romanian literary language.

A translation of part of St. Anthim's heritage into Georgian made his works available lately also to Georgian scholars. Despite the multiplication of valuable studies dedicated to him, we believe that one aspect of his legacy requires further analysis and evaluation by scholars, be they Romanian, Georgian, or elsewhere.

St. Anthim's heritage is conventionally divided into various categories: sermons, treatises, translations, letters and correspondence, prayers, and poetry. It is the last aspect of St. Anthim's heritage that has been less well known and studied. This can be attributed to the fact that the principal direction of St. Anthim's intellectual heritage is first and foremost marked by a strong emphasis on his theological and educational activities. Therefore, it should not be surprising that St. Anthim's artistic imagination, his aesthetic spirit, found a broad application in architectural decoration and the adornment of printed productions rather than in poetry itself.

A study reveals that the language of St. Anthim the Iberian's religious discourse is an outstanding example of figurative imagery.

St. Anthim's motto was "education and freedom." His legacy chronologically and by its subject matter belongs to the early modern epoch in Europe when language brought new attitudes to existence. Contemporary studies of the intellectual history of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Ştrempel 1997 (fundamental research on St. Anthim); Picioruş 2010.

Europe demonstrate that the spread and continuous propagation of “education” dominated the discourse of contemporary Europe, not least that of St. Anthim (and others), who worked on the outskirts of Europe in the Balkans.

After the Reformation, Catholicism, in competing with Protestantism, founded its modernization on the aesthetic aspirations of man – “artistic substance” realized in architecture and works of fine art, opening new horizons within the parameters of which a foretaste of man’s future infinite freedom is understood and expressed.

Changes occurred even in the understanding of sacredness itself. The emphasis shifted from the taboo system to the Biblical narrative, thus establishing new possibilities of catharsis in European culture and society. St. Anthim’s works also prove these major changes in the Eastern Christian (post-Byzantine) world.

The taboo system directed towards food and sexuality moves to the background of St. Anthim’s *Didache*, thus marking a shift from the law of the Old Testament to the Evangelical field. It means that the barter system of taboos and sacrifices moved into moral codes and to the *poiesis* of the free self-creation of the individual from his/her own self. A person’s irreplaceable absolute responsibility is expressed by St. Anthim as follows: “Jeremiah sheds more tears for you than he once shed for the ruined walls of Jerusalem.” (Anthim the Iberian 2016, 258)

The medium through which the divine should proceed is given in human culture only. St. Anthim is not lost in the labyrinth of his own phantasies like Don Quixote, who moves within the realm of likeness – windmills resemble giants, pubs, castles, etc., but he becomes a “typographer.” For him, it represents a whole ensemble of activities. Among these activities, *poiesis* (ποίησις) holds an important role.

St. Anthim organized the printing industry in the whole Eastern Christian world.<sup>5</sup> He founded Anthim’s Monastery, a particular analogue

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<sup>5</sup> St. Anthim the Iberian’s wide-ranging reformatory projects and activities were directly coordinated with and related to contemporary Georgia’s reformatory and educational movement initiated by King Vakhtang VI and his tutor and principal advisor Sul Khan-Saba Orbeliani, and with Saba’s work *Journey to Europe*. There is hard evidence for such an association: St. Anthim sent one of his pupils and printing equipment to Tbilisi and brought about the establishment of the first printing house in Tbilisi, where

of a monastic republic.<sup>6</sup> In the Balkans with a self-governing typicon, a public library, a free school for children from low-income families, and a printing house – all based on principles of housekeeping and communitarian law and having a polyphonic artistic design.

According to him, the post-Diluvian man is a citizen of a civil-political body, although the idea of justice is part of Biblical Revelation. Hierocracy and politeia are nourished from their own sources. St. Anthim stresses this everywhere, i.e., in sermons, verses, and correspondence. According to him, the political rule is necessary to deal with evil. Unlike Plato's political philosophy, which implies copying an eternal idea in order to set up the supreme good as an example (Plato 2006, 223), St. Anthim never says that *politeia* is the shadow of an eternal idea on the earth. Earthly and heavenly "policies" are sharply differentiated so that dramatic discord between philosophy and poetry is resolved and also resolved Plato's thesis that art is the imitation of appearance (See Book 10, 317). St. Anthim's "poetics" falls within the parameters of *praxis*. Like a Biblical narrator, he achieves the cathartic effect of textuality through rhetorical *poesis*. He begins his "Images of the Old and New Testament" with a verse prayer, a ritual prelude<sup>7</sup>.

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such milestone texts of Georgian religion and culture as the Gospels, Psalms, and *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* were published.

<sup>6</sup> According to St. Anthim's typicon, secular persons also participated in ruling and governing his monastery. The monastery's Father Superior was to have a board of advisors, members of which were honorable and trustworthy citizens. St. Anthim himself named the first five members. Among the functions they fulfilled was overseeing financial affairs – in case of any violations, the board was authorized, with the consent of the Metropolitan, to replace the Father Superior. i.e., a check and balance system of mutually responsible organs of government was established. See Kshutashvili, 1973, 114-123 (in Georgian).

<sup>7</sup> Here we can see a trace of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Georgian poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* by Shota Rustaveli: its ritual Introduction, a poetic equivalent of Genesis, interprets poetry as a "branch" of wisdom. It is notable that 12-13<sup>th</sup> century Georgian literature, in the main, imitates Rustaveli's poem. Korneli Kekelidze discusses this issue in *A History of Ancient Georgian Literature*, v. II (1981, 551-617) (in Georgian). Additions to "The Knight in the Panther's Skin" and versions created by folk storytellers, copyists, and epigones were also widespread. In the same work, the same author builds a robust argumentative basis for this idea (365-369). To our mind, the peak of Georgian aesthetic thought, "The Knight in the Panther's Skin," to use Jung's

The Biblical narrator versifies the Introduction. At the same time, the Bible as a textual unity, as a complete phenomenon, is given in a versified form, presenting Jesus's prayer in context, i.e., a paradigmatic code of "Our Father." In the Aramaic original, it had a rhythmic-singing form. St. Anthim's poetics differs essentially from forbidding the artistic representation of God as in Judaism or Islam and also from the worshiping and deifying works of art to be found in Hellenistic aesthetic religion. St. Anthim's conception can be characterized by words from the Introduction to Hegel's *Aesthetics* "besides, no natural being is able, as art is, to present the divine Ideal." (Hegel 1975, 29)

## 2. Byzantine Legacy

Before discussing St. Anthim's figurativeness in particular, it should be briefly observed that poetic writing is not the main form of expression of Christian discourse in general. Poetic language is not the primary tool for putting across religious teaching or texts of theological content. After the Edict of Milan, which is associated with the complete legalization of Christianity and the freedom to create corresponding artifacts, it became possible to speak properly about Christian poetry<sup>8</sup>.

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terminology, played the role of an archetypal structure of the collective unconscious in St. Anthim's life and works. In the first Georgian printing house established in 1709 by St. Anthim's pupil Mikhail Ishtvanovich, sent to Georgia according to his project, and with his funding, the Gospels and *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* were printed, revealing his particular interest in this poem. This fact is acknowledged by many scholars, among whom are the Romanian Gabriel Ștrempel and Georgian Otar Gvinchadze (see the latter's *Anthim the Iberian*, 1973, 155-205, in Georgian). In addition, special studies reveal the impact of Georgian architecture, frescos, and carving on St. Anthim's works (e.g., Ioan Nanu's "A History of Georgian and Romanian Art," *Sabtchota Sakartvelo*, 1963/ # 84, 19-38, in Georgian). The influence is also quite strong in the sphere of heraldry. See Gaiparashvili 1973, 102-109 (in Georgian). Such influence is evident in the whole poetic legacy of St. Anthim: traces of Georgian hymnography, translations as well as original works (VI-XIII cc.), ecclesiastical chants, poetry, rules of versification, and symbolic thinking are clearly seen. See also Nestan Sulava's works on Georgian hymnography, available at <http://kartvelologi.tsu.ge/public/ge/arqive/13/10>, retrieved 2020, September 10.

<sup>8</sup> In earlier epochs, figurativeness was no stranger to expressing theological thought in texts. One of the major books of the Old Testament, Solomon's "Song of Songs"

However, the fountainhead of Christian poetry is Holy Writ itself which presents the continuum of all genres of literature. Christian culture, the core of which is man, his spiritual world, strivings, passions, emotions, the experience of personal self-knowledge, and self-study, enhances the creation of poetic texts of spiritual content.

Poetic forms are met within the New Testament: Luke's Gospel, chants, hymns. St. Paul, in his epistles, preserves the rhythm of the first Christian hymns (see, e.g., "The Epistle to the Philippians").

During the apologetic epoch, the Christian spirit was clearly opposed to Greek and Latin poetry traditions with their pagan world outlook. However, antique poetry was known. St. Paul, addressing an audience gathered in Athens on the Areopagus, refers to their poets in negative terms: "For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your poets have said, for we are also his offspring" (Acts, 17:28)<sup>9</sup>. Scholars explain that here the pagan poets Aratus and Epimenides are meant. Later such explanations disappeared, although classic forms characteristic of antique poetry were preserved.

It is certain, and many scholars have observed the fact, that antique aesthetics and poetic genres and forms of this epoch influenced the form of classic Christian poetry. As to content, it is essentially a re-interpreted picture of man's inner world, a personal portrait; Christian poetry stresses and reveals man's ontological essence and moves it to the foreground.

An example of this type of poetic thinking is found in the works of St. Ambrose of Milan (340-397), the founder of Latin hymnography and the syllabic-tonic poetic system. He introduced antiphonal chanting into ecclesiastical practice when two groups of singers sing in alternation. The hymn was a celebratory, glorifying chanting. It was a poetic musical insertion used to decorate a liturgical service. Hymns are divided into rhythm, meters, and sequences according to poetic form. To Ambrose's rhythms belong hymns composed of short lines of syllabo-tonic iambs and trochees. The invention of hymns constructed from classic antique

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(approximately 1020 BC), is a vivid example of Biblical figurativeness, its motifs, and topics.

<sup>9</sup> All citations from The Bible are taken from <https://kartvelo.me/book/Habak/3> (last time accessed on August 12, 2021).

strophes – sapphic, asclepiadic, and dactylic hexameters – is associated with the name of the Spanish Christian poet of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Prudentius.

The Cappadocian fathers and Gregory of Nazianzen, in particular, are known by the name of theologian-poets. It seems that the immediate source of St. Anthim's poetics was St. Dionysius the Areopagite's mystical (apophatic) theology, which was sung only, and as well as the tradition of Cappadocian Patristics; the main pattern of his poetic discourse is associated with the poetry of St. Gregory the Theologian.

The Christian metaphorical system acknowledges various genres. Important examples of Medieval Christian poetry are the so-called *narrative spiritual poems*. Juvenius, a poet of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, renders Biblical events poetically in his works, which are distinguished for laconism and lively and dynamic drama. It is the first attempt to create a versified epos.

The experience of the early Christian Fathers is essential as well. Liturgical chants created by the St. Romanos the Melodist (called the 'Sweet-Singer') or St. Andrew of Crete are brilliant examples of Christian poetry. Also relevant are *Confessions* by St. Augustine or *On Famous Men* by St. Jerome, in which, on the one hand, the Latinized character of the sources which influenced them is evident, but which, on the other hand, carry significant innovative findings.

### 3. Prayers, Rhetoric, Lyrics

St. Anthim expresses the linguo-religious or linguo-prayerful existence of man through the visual language of art – in architecture, mural painting, engraving, fretwork, heraldry, and verbal forms of art: rhetoric, lyrics, prose.

The categorial logic of ancient rhetoric is replaced in his works by a special form of public address – sermons. Their primary purpose was to bring education to the community. St. Anthim, together with different genres of literature, also uses prose. It was the period when the modern novel<sup>10</sup> was being born. An interesting parallel could be drawn between

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<sup>10</sup> The novel's origins and its discursive frame are discussed in detail in Bakhtin 2009.



the intellectual interpretation of the “fishers of men” [Math., 4:19] by St. Anthim and Dostoevsky. *The Brothers Karamazov* and St. Anthim’s sermon “On the Sunday of Forgiveness” (2016, 109-115) demonstrate how those “pulled out” from the whirlpool of sin “by means of a teaching knitted with God’s words ... prepare for God a big feast pleasing to Him.”<sup>11</sup>

Important innovations characterize St. Anthim’s figurativeness. Interestingly, he rejects Latin versification. He mainly composes Christian verses in Greek and translates them into Romanian.

Among the material surviving today, there are only eight poems composed by St. Anthim. Four are dedications, one is a song of praise to God, and three are dedicated to the great holy martyr Prince of Romania Constantine Brâncoveanu.

In the artistic world of St. Anthim, man created by God is the most important and highest stage of the hierarchy in the visible world, and the object of his poetic inspiration is Prince Constantine. His aesthetic image appears in every metaphor and symbol.

One is a version in verse of the “Genesis” story, which precedes St. Anthim’s work “Images of the Old and New Testament.” (2022, 11-16)

Among other lyrical genres of Christian poetry, prayer – given in various poetic forms – *acathistus, troparion and kontakion, ipakon, icos, akolatia, bedtime prayers* – was particularly developed. Christ’s passions, the Virgin Mary, the saints, and the crucifixion are sources of poetic inspiration in them.

Prayers have special importance for St. Anthim, for whom the duties of a tutor, religious practice, and prayer are especially significant. The latter is a special means of communication; it is an essential part of man’s spiritual life. Prayer, first of all, implies intention – a spiritual and

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<sup>11</sup> In order to track the parallels, we suggest a comparison of a passage in “Odour of Decay,” ch. 9 of *The Brothers Karamazov*, in which the novice Alyosha Karamazov’s return to the monastery after a severe crisis is described. Alyosha is kneeling in prayer by the corpse of his “spiritual fisher,” Zosima. In the midst of fervent prayer, he has a vision of Zosima and Christ sitting at Cana of Galilee’s wedding feast. Entering the garden of the secluded monastery, Alyosha sees the Milky Way in a sky full of bright stars. It is a metaphor for apophatic *theosis*.

bodily movement aimed at establishing immediate contact with God and readiness to receive His answer. The Christian addresses the saints and pleads with them for assistance, help, or mercy. Jesus Christ's appeal: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" [Math. 26:41] is one of the principal regulators of behaviour for Christians. Jesus Christ Himself taught the Apostles the first prayer. It is not rare in religion that the verbal part of prayers is connected with music and hymns.

St. Theophan the Recluse says that prayer is the dedication of the heart and mind to God, a plea uttered to soothe both spirit and body. As a rule, a prayer is given in a verbal form that can be internal or external. Jesus's prayer is particularly important in Christian practice; holy Fathers attach great significance to it. Jesus's name is stronger than steel and firmer than granite. There is no shield or weapon more powerful in battle than Jesus's prayer. St. Theophan says that it is necessary to keep attention in the heart and stand in front of God without leaving because at such moments you will notice even the slightest change<sup>12</sup>.

For St. John Climacus, prayer is the mother and daughter of tears; it is by nature a dialog and a union of man with God. Its effect is to hold the world together; it achieves a reconciliation with God. In the 28<sup>th</sup> step of his work, he says it is an expiation of sin, a bridge across temptation, and a bulwark against affliction. It wipes out conflict, is the work of angels, and is the nourishment of everything spiritual (Cimacus 1982, 274).

St. Anthim's contemporaries bear witness to his being always deep in Jesus's prayer. He believed that in this way the apostles' appeal to "Pray without ceasing" [1Thes. 5:17] is fulfilled.

Enumerating the necessary actions to reach spiritual strength, St. Anthim assigns a unique role to prayer:

"Therefore, in preparing to wrestle against the enemies of our souls, we should have with us five things a certain spiritual supply of which is necessary when

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<sup>12</sup> St. Theophan the Recluse, *On Prayer*. From the *Letters of Bishop Theophan the Recluse*, available at [http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/theoph\\_prayer.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/praxis/theoph_prayer.aspx) (last time accessed on June 29, 2021).

we are in misfortune. These are confession, prayer, fasting, mercy, and love.” (2016, 50)

In one of his sermons, he calls upon his congregation to pray: “Let us pray and beseech our Lord to save our souls, and He will assuredly grant it to us for Jesus Christ Himself said: ‘Ask, and it shall be given to thee.’ Remember that fervent prayer from the depth of your heart opens Heaven and reaches God’s hearing. As Saint John Chrysostom says, where prayers are uttered with gratitude, the grace of the Holy Spirit is granted there, the devils are driven away, and the whole power of the devil departs from man. He also says that praying protects chastity, seals virginity, tames wrath, reins in arrogance, defeats envy, arranges difficulties, and establishes peace; in short, he who prays, talks to God” (50).

There is no work of St. Anthim either in the form of a special volume or a monograph, or even a manuscript dedicated exclusively to prayers. This fact is also admitted by those researchers who thoroughly studied his works (Ştrempel, Stanchevich, Stanciu, etc.).

Nevertheless, we meet plenty of his appeals to pray in various works. Prayers to Holy Trinity, Saviour Jesus Christ, Virgin Mary, and other saints are often met in his *Didache*, *Teaching on the Mystery of Repentance*, *Christian-Political Advices to the Governor*, etc. His prayers are distinguished by a high level of figurativeness and musicality.

Depending on the content, prayers are traditionally divided into Prayers of Praise, Prayers of Thanksgiving, Prayers of Supplication, and Prayers of Repentance.

Prayers of Praise are, in general, considered the most important genre of psalms. Among them, Psalm 103, which is acknowledged as a sample of praise prayer, stands out. The holy Fathers created many praise prayers glorifying God, Jesus, and the Virgin Mary. St. Anthim preserved this tradition and, in the main, composed prayers of this genre.

Prayers of Repentance are akin to prayers of supplication. Psalm 50, Jesus’s prayer, and St. Andrew of Crete’s extensive canon of repentance occupy a special place among them. In his *Didache* and in “The Teaching on the Mystery of Repentance,” St. Anthim dedicated several prayers to repentance.

In the Prayers of Supplication, the person praying addresses God, the Holy Trinity, the Saviour, the Virgin Mary, or the Saints and asks for help in spiritual and material trouble. Prayers of this genre, as well as prayers of thanksgiving, are given in St. Anthim's sermons.

Is it possible to speak of a trace of gnomic poetry? We believe that it is quite possible. To illustrate this point, let us address the *Didache* in particular; many of the sermons are written in blank verse and, at the same time, are vivid examples of didactic teaching.

In his study "Poetry and Style in the *Didache* – Linguistic Ornaments and Embellishments of St Anthim's Sermons," which introduces St. Anthim the Iberian's *Didache* published in 2014 in Romanian, Mihail Stanciu asserts that "there are works whose style is individual because they are outside the limits of literature (...). Their strength is not nourished only by unique themes of artistic-aesthetic techniques. Employing the everyday language, they render the mysteries and beauties of God. It is as though language takes off the burden of this world and becomes a bright image of the realized word." (2016, 34)

It can be argued that St. Anthim's works carry all these signs. They are distinguished by elevated spirituality, intensity, expressiveness, and elaborate configurations of form in such a manner that the discursive construction of the text is directed towards fulfilling the main objective of Christian ethics – the use of figurativeness to save man's soul. The theological design of texts is intertwined in a masterly fashion with the core issues of Christian morality. Every word used in the sermons is selected thoughtfully, with the utmost self-consciousness and responsibility; you will never encounter phrases emptied of content, the obscurity of expression, excessive pomposity, foreign words, or unfamiliar terms. He does not attempt to make us good Christians like him because of the especially rich theological knowledge that he had. The type of figurativeness that St. Anthim employs is straightforward and easy to comprehend. He believes that the main thing is to allow other communication participants to easily grasp the essence of the text, open and remember it, transcend to the metaphysical sphere, partake of the transcendental, and eventually merge with it.

In sum, St. Anthim exploits two traditional ways of literary-historical and allegoric-mystical interpretation often used by the holy Fathers and unites them in a masterly fashion.

#### 4. The Spectrum of Artistic Means

St. Anthim's figurativeness is based on a multi-colour palette of artistic means. Epithets are among them. There are numerous simple epithets, among which we especially single out four that may seem unusual to present-day taste: "good meekness", "true faith", "kind hope", "humble silence", and "warm prayers". These combinations are not arrived at casually but are a means through which he tells us that not every meekness is good, not every faith is true, not every hope is good for man, not every silence is the fruit of humility, and not every prayer comes from a heart full of love.

Frequently used tools of his artistic discourse are comparisons. Due to this style's thought-provoking and flexible features, the compared object acquires a clear, dynamic expression; abstract issues are presented through concrete elements familiar to everyone.

St. Anthim often resorts to comparisons because he aims to enrich the spiritual perception of believers. Creating lyrical pictures in verbal form ("the world will blow up like a wound", "these miracles shine like sunlight", "drunk with the love of this beauty", "galloping like wild horses"), he notes not only sensibility but thought which is provoked by means of setting an unexpected association between the object of comparison and the thing.

Generally speaking, using metaphors and allegories in aesthetic texts is considered a sign of artistic taste. In metaphor, we use words, utterances, or phrases not in their dictionary meanings but indirectly, i.e., in their figurative meanings. In allegories, it is possible to use words and phrases in their dictionary meanings though the entire content is understood indirectly. St Anthim is a virtuoso of metaphor, and his talent for the word multiplied by the love of God is revealed in abundance in this sphere. We will not discuss in detail his many metaphors, like "a stick of words", "a net of teaching", "ears of divine mercy", "sieve of thinking", "flowers of goodness", "flowers of God's

desires”, “time of the beautiful” etc. We want to single out only his attempts to switch words of the Romanian language to a higher lexical-liturgical trajectory to render the comeliness of the heavenly life through homiletic language.

Allegory is defined as a rhetorical symbol used to render a certain reality through which a man can indicate a reality quite different from it. It strengthens the message and moves it to an even more clear exposition. For instance, we have an allegorical interpretation of the Bible. According to Saint Ambrose, allegory is something through which something other is expressed and formed: *Allegoria est, cum aliud geritur et aliud figuratur*. The theocratization of the Biblical allegory by Origen is given not in his exegetical works but in his philosophical masterpiece *On First Principles*, especially in book 4<sup>13</sup>.

St Anthim’s *Didachai* are distinguished for their use of allegories. Among them, the sermon “On the Earthquake of October 26, on the Feast Day of the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius the Myrobyte” is outstanding:

“Life’s calamities do not grant man either tranquility or rest. Boats floating among the waves of the sea are kingdoms, regions, provinces, towns, multitudes of people, states, minions, the rich and the poor, the young and the old, who are traveling on the sea and are in danger. A great tempest that creates stormy waves on the sea represents those calamities and dangers that happen to us every day. Clouds that darken the sky, lightning that blinds our eyes, thunderstorms that scare even bold hearts represent various occasions: unexpected danger, calamities planned by enemies, much grief caused by others; robberies, slavery, heavy and unexpected taxes, all of which are sent by the Lord to test our faith and patience.” (2016, 147)

In the second homily dedicated to the Holy Great Martyr Demetrius, the hierarch asks the Saint to intercede before the Lord: “Help us Worthy, as we are unworthy, help us Beloved by God, for our disobedience and transgression of commandments, for our not loving God.” (168) St. Anthim binds the opposite structures and thus synthesizes the Old with the News, the heavenly with the earthly. This method is often used in homilies. Furthermore, through the association

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<sup>13</sup> See on this issue McKim, 1998.

of opposing elements, such an apparently paradoxical synthesis stresses various situations and spiritual states.

For instance, his sermon "On the Birth of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, December 25" is wholly constructed according to this principle. St. Anthim says:

"What can be greater and more wonderful than this birth? Man's mind is blurred with astonishment, and it cannot understand how a virgin gave birth to a boy. In this great gift which was bestowed on this world, two donations were hidden: the first implies that the Creator of the world originates from His creation, the virgin who has not known a man is herself surprised at the fruit of her womb; the second is that a woman becomes the origin of her own origin. I do not know what I should be surprised at first - at conception without semen or delivery during which virginity was glorified? It is not surprising that she remained a holy virgin even after delivery, for she gave birth to Him who is the origin of virginity and holiness." (188)

Sarcasm is considered one of the stylistic forms of obscurity. Socrates used this method. His obstinate irony directed at men or situations, as the main means, serves to state the truth. St. Anthim, who had a profound and fundamental knowledge of Antiquity, believes that it is fruitful to use this method. The hue of his linguistic pallet is to awaken moral consciousness. He hopes to develop self-consciousness in man, to form the ability to protect one's own self from evil habits, and to liberate himself from humiliating behaviour:

"And we who call ourselves Christians through what good deeds can we demonstrate our Christianity and righteousness, and at the same time demonstrate our difference from the tribes whom we call gentiles? We can say that we deceive ourselves, and in fact, we do not have faith: for if we had faith, we would love God and observe his words and commandments as well as we could. For it is said in chapter 14 of the Gospel of John: 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' [John, 14:15], but instead of loving Him and observing His commandments, we curse Him, laugh at Him and make a fool of Him. As if His word were a fairy tale. And if you ask how we curse Him, I will answer that when we curse someone's faith, and we curse God. I have already told you that faith is only of one kind, and every man believes in God that God is faith and the creator of faith; therefore, when we curse faith, we curse God, and that is why we say that we do not have faith. (...) Vain and mundane matters blind us, and nothing pleases us more than doing shady business; like a wheel rolling down the slope of

a mountain, we all are hurrying towards evil and are unable to stop. And like swine, we sink in the filthy pleasures of this world." (34-6)<sup>14</sup>

In the same sermon, St. Anthim states the causes of man's immoral thinking and life and continues to use sarcastic phrases:

"like a Pharaoh of the Old Testament our hearts turned to stone, and we walk around boldly as do unbridled and unbroken horses until we fall into an abyss and die. Do we boast of such deeds saying that we are Christians? Alas, woe to us! What do we have in common with Christianity if we think we can be saved only because we call ourselves Christians! It will not happen! Just the opposite, we will be punished more severely." (36)

The use of fables, or parables, is a favourite mode of poetical discourse for St. Anthim. The characteristic feature of fables is to render truth by symbolic, allegorical means. It is not difficult to decode the text, and it is easy to understand and remember the idea. Jesus Christ often uses parables in which profound truths are presented. Parables retain their style throughout the discourse, thus gaining the believers' trust and encouraging their self-reflection.

In the sermon "On the Feast of Revelation of God," he tells a parable about a hedgehog and evokes spiritual nobility:

"do as a hedgehog does when it creeps into the vineyard, and at first eats plenty and then shakes the vine and gathers the grapes that fall and carries them home to feed its children. So, let us take home to our children and others who could not come to church the words from the Holy Gospel and other books which we hear here, so that we give them spiritual food as well. After it, let us protect our minds from evil thoughts and our bodies from any filthiness. Let us love everybody, give alms to those in need, be hospitable, and visit the sick and prisoners. Be kind to our enemies, as our Saviour Christ teaches us." (93)

As another example, in "On the Day of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, June 29," St. Anthim resorts again to an allegorical style of narration:

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<sup>14</sup> Sermon "On Pharisee and the Publican Sunday".



“The warmth of the sun has a natural feature, and it gives trees, grass, precious stones and fruit of the earth the power to live, grow and bear fruit. Likewise, the same features characterize Peter the Apostle’s life-giving warmth of the secret Sun; for even the smallest ray that he sent to the man who was crippled from birth and sat at the famous gate of the Jerusalem Temple known as ‘Beautiful,’ cured him immediately, the moment he said the words ‘look on us’ his feet and calves gained strength.” (67)

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Summing up the above, we can state that St. Anthim the Iberian’s poetics reflects “post-byzantine” theological landmarks, perspectives, and codes of actions for early modern European culture. St. Anthim’s poetical discourse represents the pathos of distance, different from the current mainstream aesthetics.

According to him, the word is “part of Heaven”. Thus, his works are characterized by the constant care for texts, the purity of everyday language, the desire to adequately express the beauty of the world revealed in writing, and the comeliness and holiness of man. The figurativeness of St. Anthim’s poetical texts is not a self-sufficient one. These texts are free of aesthetic formalism. The elements of artistic composition and the artistic-aesthetic methods used here are not selected according to a pre-calculated, pre-selected design or pattern. He freely created his texts thanks to his poetic inspiration and divine talent.

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