

ASPECTS OF ECCLESIOLOGY IN THE LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS ACCORDING TO ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

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Abstract. In my short survey I point out some aspects which I consider to be relevant for the understanding of St John's contribution to the development of biblical exegesis, on the one hand, and of the skillful way in which he uses Pauline ecclesiology for edifying his community, on the other hand. In order to acquire this twofold perspective on St John Chrysostom, I focus on some of the most important ecclesiological themes of Ephesians. Commenting them, St John reveals himself as a noteworthy interpreter of the Pauline writings. His understanding of St Paul's ecclesiology is sometimes very close to that which one can see in modern scholarship, whereas his insights concerning its implications for the life of the ecclesiastical community and of each individual believer are always of greatest actuality. As for St Paul, for him the Church is a great mystery that one can only understand properly if one is "in Christ" and a partaker of the Holy Spirit. This great mystery is made up of other mysteries which the Apostle prefers to refer to in metaphors and allegories the meaning of which – points out St John – can only reveal itself fully to those who live in true unity with the others limbs of the Body and in close communion with the Head, through the Holy Spirit. Such an interpreter tries to be himself; therefore his insights into St Paul's ecclesiology give testimony not only to his exegetical effort, but also to his pneumatical life in Christ.

Keywords: Church, Ecclesiology, Ephesians, St John Chrysostom.

I. St John – exegete of the Pauline writings

St John Chrysostom is primarily known as exegete of the Holy Scripture. Being firmly convinced that the Holy Scripture is fundamental in any Christian's life and that ignoring it is the cause of all evil, St John has dedicated a great part of his life to interpreting it for the believers. This is why his commentaries „are not written for scientific purposes; he interprets the Holy Book in his preaching, delivering homilies in which he addresses practical needs of the believers”.¹

Among all the inspired authors of the books which make up the Holy Scripture, St Paul enjoys special veneration from the great hierarch. For him, the Apostle Paul is “the chosen vessel, the temple of God, the mouth of Christ, the lyre of the Holy Spirit, the teacher of the universe, [...] the one who broke the thorns of

¹ I. MOISESCU, *Sfânta Scriptură și interpretarea ei în opera Sfântului Ioan Hrisostom*, Cernăuți, 1942, reprinted in the collection Patriarhul Iustin. *Opera integrală*, vol. 3, București, 2003, 180.