

## Eschatological Themes in the Catechumenal and Baptismal Rites: The Example of the Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia

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Baptism understood as entombment in Christ's death and resurrection along with Him also has its important eschatological dimension. Such an understanding of being reborn also refers to resurrection and immortality at the end of time.

Although eschatological elements are not at the forefront of baptismal theology, which has been developed in the Church since its first centuries, they form an important part of it. Thus we can observe references to them both in the ancient catechumenal rites and in the baptismal ceremony. In this article, I would like to note specific celebrations in which the eschatological motifs are especially emphasized. In order to illustrate the quoted statements, I will use the catechetical teachings of Theodor, bishop of Mopsuestia (350–428), at the same time referring to the fourth century Antioch Tradition.

Theodore of Mospuesta's catechetical homilies were discovered in the Syrian language relatively recently, and they were published in English in 1932–1933. This collection contains sixteen teachings. The first pages are commentaries on the *Credo*, while the eleventh explains the *Pater Noster*, or the Lord's prayer. The next three teachings deal with the sacrament of baptism, and the last two deal with the Eucharist. It is widely accepted that the author probably presented these teachings in Antioch in the 380s, before becoming the bishop of Mospuestia,<sup>1</sup> although the time and place when they were written is still subject to debate. Because at the present moment only

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1 R. Murawski SDB, *Historia katechezy. Katecheza w pierwszych wiekach*, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Salezjańskie 2011, p. 266.

several fragments of Theodore's teachings have been translated into Polish, my source for this article is the Italian translation.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. *Nomendatio*

The first catechumenal rite in which we can encounter the eschatological theme is the ritual of enrolling the name described also as *nomendatio* (Latin: *nomen dare* – to give a name). It is strictly tied to the process of remolding the structure of the catechumenate observed since the fourth century AD. Previously, the decisive moment was simply coming to the Church, which involved a rigorous entry exam.<sup>3</sup> Presently, the rite of enrolling a name serves this function. In light of large numbers of persons signing up for the catechumenate and sometimes remaining there for a long time, the *nomendatio* has become a determinant inaugurating candidates' direct preparations to receive the sacrament of baptism. At the same time, it was a confirmation of a serious and responsible decision on the part of the catechumens. Thus it should not be surprising that in antiquity catechumens frequently emphasized the significance of this celebration.

*Nomendatio* was thus a solemn rite during which the names of the candidates were inscribed in a special ecclesial book. Unfortunately, we know nothing about the nature of this ceremony. The ritual typically occurred at the beginning of Lent (most likely on the first Sunday of Lent), and testimonies attesting to the fact that it was practiced come from both the Christian East and the Christian West. Depending on local custom, either the bishop or the candidate inscribed the name. The entire celebration began with an exam testing the life of the candidate during the catechumenate. This was the last possibility to probe if the intentions of the person wanting to be baptized were sincere and if his or her decision was a mature one. The candidates appeared along with persons who confirmed their words; they were called guarantors or godparents. As Theodore of Mopsuestia notes,<sup>4</sup> it was necessary

2 Teodor z Mopsuestiii, *Le Omelie Battesimali e Mistagogiche di Teodoro di Mopsuestia*, ed. F. Placida, Messina: Coop San Tommaso 2008.

3 Cf. *Tradycja Apostolska*, II, 1–2, [in:] *Antologia literatury patrystycznej*, vol. 1, oprac. M. Michalski, Warszawa: Pax 1975, p. 308–309.

4 Teodor z Mopsuestiii, *Homilia XII*, 1, [in:] *Le Omelie Battesimali e Mistagogiche di Teodoro di Mopsuestia*, p. 145.

that the person administering the sacrament first received an opinion on the candidate's behavior.

It is true that in this celebration the main theme of baptismal theology, the struggle against Satan, was most emphasized. From such a perspective, the entirety of pre-baptismal rites was presented as a drama in which the person desires liberation from the influence of evil spirits; the first step to doing so was to become enrolled in the list of direct preparations, or to present one's name. In the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Today we have a feast both in heaven and on earth. Because if there is great joy resulting from a repentant sinner, the angels and archangels are joyous, as are all the powers in heaven and all on earth, because the yoke of Satan had been rejected there in order to zealously enroll in Christ's sheepfold."<sup>5</sup>

However, we can find yet another interesting comparison in the teachings of Theodor of Mopsuestia. According to his account, a candidate whose name becomes inscribed in the Church's book at the same time becomes the citizen of the city that is a heavenly Jerusalem. That is why he emphasizes the importance of the duty of the witnesses who participate in this ritual. Their role was sufficiently important that their names were also inscribed in the special book, alongside the names of the catechumens. The guarantor's duty was to show the preparations that the candidates had undertaken in order to become worthy spiritual citizens of the city.<sup>6</sup> They were not responsible for the sins that the catechumens had committed in the past; above all, they had to give a testimony on their lives up to that point.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, however, since they knew the rules of the city, they became guides or advocates of the future citizenship who helped to familiarize them with their rules. Some<sup>8</sup> interpret Theodore's views as being a completely different approach to the duties of the guarantor than those of John Chrysostom, who was close to him.<sup>9</sup> In my opinion, however, both catechists emphasize the responsibility of the

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5 Jan Chryzostom, *Katecheza I, 2*, [in:] *Katechezy chrzcielne*, przeł. W. Kania, Lublin: Wydawnictwo Kerygma 1993, p. 23.

6 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XII*, 14, op. cit., p. 152.

7 J. Pollok, *Liturgia chrztu na Wschodzie w drugiej połowie IV wieku na podstawie mistagogicznych homilii Cyryla Jerozolimskiego, Jana Chryzostoma i Teodora z Mopsuestii*, Warszawa: ATK 1992, p. 73.

8 P. Rentic, *La cura pastorale in Antiochia nel IV secolo*, Roma: Universita Gregoriana Editrice 1970, p. 39.

9 Jan Chryzostom, *Katechezy chrzcielne*, II, 15–16, op. cit., p. 46.

persons bearing witness to the candidates. While this concern is described in a slightly different way, it also encompasses the newly baptized.

It is true that for Theodore the heavenly Jerusalem is above all a symbol of the holy and universal Church. At the same time, however, he interprets this reality also within the context of future contentment and eternal life, which the candidate embarks on at the moment of his or her enrollment. Thus as he notes the city comes to the forefront, where Christ has established His eternal Kingdom.<sup>10</sup> Since it gives hope for future joy, the catechist makes efforts to urge the undecided to join. Elsewhere, he points out the relationship between the community of the faithful on earth and the above-mentioned heavenly city. By citing the fragment from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, in which Jesus gives St. Peter the keys to the Kingdom,<sup>11</sup> he binds the earthly community of Christians to God's heavenly kingdom and points to the clergy, who have succeeded the apostles as the head of the Church and along with his authority speak out on matters related to heaven and earth.<sup>12</sup> In this context he recalls that the pursuit of heaven one must first enter into the group of faithful here on earth.

## 2. Anointing

Another important rite is anointing the forehead with the sign of the cross, which is also described as the rite of *sphragis*. The truth is that there are many doubts related to this celebration. They above all result from the fact that various sources situate this gesture at different stages of Christian initiation. The Church Fathers also presented an unambiguous distinction between making the sign and anointing. Leaving aside the difficulties related to interpreting this rite, one should note that the Antioch Tradition of the fourth century situates this gesture between the rejection of Satan and immersion in the baptismal font.

Both Theodore and John Chrysostom indicate that *sphragis* is a sign of belonging to Christ intended to protect those who have been marked by Him as free from the influences of evil spirits. This gesture precedes the ceremony

10 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XII*, 16, op. cit., p. 153.

11 Cf. Mt 16,18.

12 D. L. Schwartz, *Paideia and cult. Christian Initiation in Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Washington: Harvard University 2013, p. 72.

of rejecting Satan and turning to service of Christ. It is the decisive moment that points out the intentions of the candidate; the gesture that follows it appears like a sort of solemn, public confirmation of the decision that had been previously made.<sup>13</sup> This is graphically presented by John Chrysostom: the priest anoints the candidates and marks their foreheads with the sign of the cross so that Satan is forced to look away. Because of the brightness of this gesture, Satan does not have the courage to look at the one who had previously been his slave.<sup>14</sup>

However, Theodore also notes the theme of election, of separating one from the rest in order to become a citizen of heaven: “When the priest performed all those rites on you and anointed you with the sign of the cross on the forehead, as a result of the words you said he also decided that you would be a soldier of the true king and a citizen of heaven. This sign shows that you are taking part and are close to this reality.”<sup>15</sup> Thus this sign should remind catechumens that they have been called to serve heaven, as Christ has established His kingdom. A ceremony presented as such appears as the first fruit of the future victory that will someday become participation in preparations for baptism.

In the context of Theodore’s mystagogy, one cannot ignore the concept of *parrhesia* (παρρησία),<sup>16</sup> which is key to his thinking and is very well presented in the anointing ceremony. Translated into Polish as “trust” or “closeness to Christ,” it above all indicates the intimacy of the relationship with Him that candidates can enjoy as a result of having rejected evil spirits. This is the same kind of relationship as that of Adam before his downfall. Thus consequently *sphragis* becomes a confirmation of the decision of catechumens and a sign of that closeness to Christ that is fulfilled in the kingdom of heaven. This is why in the previously quoted fragment of the baptismal catechesis the author explains: “You who have been chosen for the Kingdom of Heaven [...] first receive a sign on the forehead, which is the most noble part of the entire body. It is above the entire body and face, which we tend to come closer to when

13 H. M. Riley, *Christian initiation. A Comparative Study of the Interpretation of the Baptismal Liturgy in the Mystagogical Writings of Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom Theodore of Mopsuestia and Ambrose of Milan*, Washington: The Catholic University of America Press 1974, p. 114.

14 Jan Chryzostom, *Katecheza II*, 23, p. 49.

15 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 19, op. cit., p. 170 (przekład własny z języka włoskiego).

16 It is not my intention to discuss in detail the application of the term *parrhesia* in Theodore’s theology. I only want to note its use in the context of his eschatological reflections. I recommend that interested readers see: W. Van Unnik, *Parrhesia in the Catechetical Homilies of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, [in:] *Melangesoffertes a Chr. Mohrmann*, Utrecht 1963.

we look at each other during a conversation. Thus you receive a sign on the forehead so that this place can present your closeness.”<sup>17</sup> A similar statement is the reference to the words of St. Paul in the Letter to the Corinthians<sup>18</sup> that speaks of looking at the brightness of the Lord with an unveiled face, thanks to which our face becomes increasingly bright, becoming more like God, which is an expression of the closeness to God that man has been allowed.

At the same time, Theodor of Mopsuestia focuses on the details that accompany this celebration. Thus it is worth emphasizing that according to his testimony the priest who performed the gesture described above took off his ordinary vestments and put on a shiny linen cloak. This special attire is interpreted in the context of the joy of the future world that catechumens will participate in. They will shine in God, just as the vestment of the bishop leading the ceremony seems radiant and full of light. Meanwhile, the softness of the fabric symbolizes the delicacy and grace that are characteristic of the new reality.<sup>19</sup>

There is also one more gesture that may seem unusual; it can be found only in Theodore’s account. The guarantor stretched a belt of linen cloth above the candidate and raised it from his knees. This cloth symbolized the freedom to which the catechumen was called and that he or she became part of. Through this gesture, the persons preparing for baptism are chosen for the service of heaven and freed from earthly things in a symbolic way; thus the theme that the author wrote of earlier reappears.

As Theodore notes, since only free people are permitted to perform various functions, it is all the more important for people in the service of heaven to not be subject to any yoke.<sup>20</sup> During this gesture, the candidates experience an internal transformation thanks to which we can discern the first fruits of the sacrament. They are a foretaste of the wonderful and inconceivable things prepared in heaven.

The next rite consists of taking off clothes and anointing the entire body. We will focus on this for a moment, as for Theodore this celebration has an eschatological dimension. Upon arriving at the place of baptism, the candidates took off their clothes, and their entire bodies were anointed. The bishop who began to celebrate the rite said the following words: “This person is anointed

17 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 17–18, op. cit., p. 170 (my own translation from Italian).

18 Cf. 2 Corinthians 3: 18.

19 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 17, op. cit., p. 169.

20 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIV*, 1, op. cit., p. 174.

in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit,” after which other people continued this ministrations.<sup>21</sup>

Theodor explained to his listeners that upon taking off the clothes, which symbolized all that was mortal, through anointing they received the cloak of immortality expressed in a special way through baptism. He also notes that thanks to this celebration they receive a sign that during resurrection our entire nature will be clothed in immortality in accordance with the activity of the Holy Spirit within us.

In this way, anointing becomes an act of healing and sign of future glory. At the basis of such a perspective lies the interpretation of oil as a medicine, common at that time,<sup>22</sup> which is why using it symbolically heals the body that has been mortal since Adam's time. What is important is that unlike clothing, which only covers the external parts of the body, oil also enters into its interior, thus causing complete healing and foreshadowing immortality in the future.

It must also be emphasized that a similar meaning pertains to the description of post-baptismal anointing, which despite certain doubts<sup>23</sup> was also interpreted in an eschatological context: “As the priest anoints us, he says: ‘This person is anointed in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.’ He gives you the sign that indicates that when you were completely anointed in the name of the Father and Son, the Holy Spirit descended upon you and you became anointed and received grace, and so the Holy Spirit began to inhabit you. From the Holy Spirit you receive the first fruits and joy of good things that will come in the future, and then you receive the grace thanks to which you will become immortal and unadulterated, indestructible and imperishable, and in this time your body will last for centuries and be immune to destruction, while your soul will be freed from all tendencies towards doing evil.”<sup>24</sup>

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21 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIV*, 8, op. cit., p. 178.

22 H. M. Riley, *Christian initiation*, op. cit., p. 204.

23 The doubts included the relationship between the author's unclear description of anointing, the disproportion between the description of the pre-baptismal and post-baptismal anointing, and the lack of a reference to the use of oil. All this led to the conclusion that this fragment was added later in order to adapt the source to the dominant liturgical practices – cf. L. L. Mitchell, *Baptismal Anointing*, London, 1966, p. 41; as cited in: J. Pollok, *Liturgia chrztu na Wschodzie w drugiej połowie IV wieku*, op. cit., p. 96.

24 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 27, op. cit., p. 189 (my translation from Italian).

### 3. Immersion in the Baptismal Font

This was how the catechumen, anointed with the sign of belonging on the forehead, approached the baptismal bath. At this moment, he or she says nothing, only submerges in the water three times, while the person administering the sacrament says the formula above the catechumen.

As has been noted,<sup>25</sup> a characteristic trait of Theodore's teaching is the eschatological orientation of the sacrament of baptism. He emphasized that this sacrament not only portrayed Christ's saving of all of humanity, but it also referred to the participation of candidates in their future salvation. In this way, baptism is presented as a foreshadowing of future things and gives hope for full resurrection at the end of time: "You are baptized because we want to participate in His death, hoping for participation in His resurrection in the way He was resurrected."<sup>26</sup>

Previously in this homily, he noted the sacrament of baptism, describing it with the aid of the metaphor of rebirth. It will be fully done during the resurrection during the end times. However, baptism itself foreshadows the future reality, because in it there are signs and concepts that directly refer to it.<sup>27</sup> This is similar to a child that right after being born has the ability to speak, reason, or work, but is not capable of fully doing these things right away. This is also the case with those who have been baptized: through their baptism, they have received an immortal and indestructible nature, but they cannot fully manifest it until the moment when Christ returns in glory.<sup>28</sup> In other words, this sacrament leads to the birth of a dual life: in accordance with the principles of Christian teaching life on earth and later eternal dwelling with God in heaven. The Holy Spirit plays a dual role in the creation of this reality through changes the baptismal waters into regenerative source that protects life and destines one for eternity.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the catechist understands the baptismal birth also as a symbol and anticipation of the future resurrection. Thus unlike John Chrysostom, who above all sees this sacrament as a reference to Christ's death and resurrection,

25 Cf. J. Pollok, *Liturgia chrztu na Wschodzie w drugiej połowie IV wieku*, op. cit., p. 88.

26 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 5, op. cit., p. 176 (my translation from Italian).

27 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIV*, 2, op. cit., p. 174.

28 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIV*, 10, op. cit., p. 179.

29 Cf. W. Myszor, *Chrzest i teologia chrztu w „Homiliach katechetycznych” Teodora z Mopsuestii*, [in:] *Chrzest na nowo odczytany*, red. J. Decyk, Warszawa: Wydawnictwo UKSW 2001, p. 19.

Theodore places more emphasis on the eschatological aspect.<sup>30</sup> For him, baptism is not so much the imitation of Christ's sacrifice as above all a reference to the future resurrection from the dead, as it contains within itself the hope for the birth that we await.

#### 4. White Vestments

The last important element that should be mentioned is the post-baptismal rite of putting on white vestments. Because candidates took off their clothes before being immersed in the baptismal font, which symbolized the old selves living within them, after this act it was necessary to emphasize that by rejecting their old sins they were born for a new life.

Describing the moment that occurs directly after the baptismal bath, just as he previously described the vestments of the priest administering the sacrament of anointing, Theodore notes the glimmer of the vestment that is worn, which has its own symbolic value: "When you leave the water, you put on a shiny vestment. It is a sign of the inextinguishable brilliance into which you have entered. When, however, you are resurrected and are clothed in immortality and incorruptibility, you will no longer need these vestments. However, you need them now, because you have not yet received these gifts in reality; you have only received them as signs and symbols, which foreshadows your future joy."<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the white vestments that are a symbol of resurrection and new life in Christ also point to the joy and happiness that accompany eschatological fulfillment.<sup>32</sup> The clothes that one receives upon leaving the baptismal font were symbolically accepted and interpreted in the context predicting the coming of the next world. In it, reality partially experienced now will be fully accomplished. This is why the vestments worn then are but a transitional step in awaiting the end of times. In reality, nudity is the real symbol of the coming joy, which refers to man's initial state, when Adam was naked in Eden, yet felt no shame. However, the vestment that the catechumen receives is not a contradiction, but a necessity, and is a certain transition in the way to a new life.

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30 E. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, Grand Rapids–Cambridge 2009, p. 530.

31 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIII*, 26, op. cit., p. 189 (my translation from Italian).

32 J. Pollok, *Liturgia chrztu na Wschodzie w drugiej połowie IV wieku*, op. cit., p. 94.

## 5. The Eucharist

In accordance with the established order, right after receiving the sacrament of baptism neophytes fully participated in the Eucharist for the first time. Although John Chrystosom does not mention this event in his teachings, two of Theodore's catecheses are devoted to the sacrament of the Eucharist.

It is worth noting that Theodore also considers the Eucharist to be new nourishment necessary for the rebirth in which neophytes participate. Just as baptism becomes a symbol of a real birth that will occur during the resurrection, the Eucharist defines the food of immortality and grace of the Holy Spirit, which symbolically foreshadows eternal life and the eternal joy of heaven: "When you are born anew during the resurrection, you will receive a different food, one that is too great to be expressed in words, and you will be nourished by the grace of the Holy Spirit, thanks to which you will become immortal in body, and your souls will remain unchanged. [...] Thus today through baptism, hoping to be born again, in us there appears a certain type of image, because we have within us only the first fruits of the grace of the Holy Spirit, and we will receive them in full during our resurrection."<sup>33</sup> Thus the first purpose of the Eucharist is to maintain the new life that is developed from the moment of baptism and to maintain within those who receive this food the foretaste of eternal life, which will come along with the end of time.<sup>34</sup> This is a thought that often reappears in Theodore's catechetical teachings. Those who receive this sacrament are sustained by the hope for future goods, a hope that is strengthened by the liturgical image of salvation. In this way, they find themselves connected to the One Who gives and from Whom this spiritual food comes. Theodore cites this obvious interdependency, using the example of a relationship occurring in nature: through receiving food, every creature maintains a close bond to the mother that gave birth to it.<sup>35</sup>

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33 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XV*, 2–3, op. cit., p. 192.

34 F. J. Reine, *The Eucharistic Doctrine and Liturgy of the Mystagogical Catecheses of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Washington: The Catholic University of America 1942, p. 35.

35 Teodor z Mopsuestii, *Homilia XIV*, 5, op. cit., p. 193.

## 6. The Eschatology of Theodor of Mopsuestia

It seems natural to ask what inspired Theodore to refer to the theme of eschatology so frequently in his catechetical homilies. When trying to answer this question, one should keep in mind that the situation was somewhat different in earlier centuries. The eschatological concept of future goods seemed much more ingrained in the minds of the faithful because of the real threats and persecutions that the Christians faced. Thus there was a natural bond between the glorification of martyrdom and the emphasis on the wait for the end of time.<sup>36</sup>

As is widely known, the fourth century augured in specific changes. The new social circumstances naturally weakened zeal in the wait for Christ's second coming. Thus it has been noted that the sacraments played a decisive role in bolstering the eschatological concepts.<sup>37</sup> As a result, a large part of the teachings related to the end of time can be found in the catecheses focused on the sacraments. That also happens in Theodore's case, although it is at the same time surprising that in the baptismal teachings of John Chrysostom, who came from the same Antioch milieu, this matter is not emphasized as much. When dealing with this problem, scholars have noted that perhaps Theodore's theological profile is the result of his theological tradition, social status, or his personality.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps his own personality combined with the environment in which he spent time resulted in such a direction. Although in the middle of the fourth century Antioch was an important Christian milieu, one should remember that it was also a center of Hellenic culture, with its famous pagan temples and local Olympic games that attracted athletes and audiences from across the Roman Empire.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps that is why Julian the Apostate (361–363; in Antioch from 362) chose this city to be the place where he started his reforms. The pagan teacher of rhetoric and friend of the emperor Libanius, who undoubtedly also had a major impact on his milieu, also lived in Antioch from 354 to 393.

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36 G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini. Eschatological Thought in 4th-Century Apses and Catecheses*, Leiden–New York–Kobenhavn–Koln: E. J. Brill 1989, p. 140.

37 G. H. W. Lampe, *Early Patristic Eschatology*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd 1957, p. 22.

38 G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini. Eschatological Thought in 4th-Century Apses and Catecheses*, op. cit., p. 246.

39 G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1961, p. 382.

Thus Theodore's criticism of all the pagan elements present in this place could lead to the emphasis on the final questions. This is different than in the case of John Chrysostom, whose baptismal catecheses are limited to constant admonishments to abandon pagan pastimes that originate in Hellenic culture.

However, other scholars want to see eschatological motifs in light of the entirety of Theodore's theology, especially his teachings on salvation. In this way, the emphasis on the final questions would be the result of an insufficient realization of salvation on earth,<sup>40</sup> which seems to be a misinterpretation of Theodore's thinking.<sup>41</sup>

In sum, we should once more emphasize the uniqueness of Theodore's mystagogy. Although each stage of initiation appears to have its unique features, one of their common expressions is clearly embedded in eschatological thinking. The catechist places emphasis on the connection between future salvation and earthly life. Signs of this future joy are already present in the sacraments. This concept of Theodore, which is considered one of the most important concepts in his theology and is developed even more in his commentaries, is called the doctrine of two eras.<sup>42</sup> In accordance with this way of thinking, in an era dominated by sin there was a fundamental salvific work: the incarnation, which changed salvation to the degree that now it is an anticipation of the future times described as a state of eternal joy.

Theodore was not the only catechist who dealt with the eschatological theme in antiquity, but these elements are very clear in his pre-baptismal teachings. This is why he uses emotional, lofty language when addressing his audience. Thus keeping in mind the above observations we can say that Theodore's teachings to the catechumens seems decidedly directed towards heaven.

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40 G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini. Eschatological Thought in 4th-Century Apses and Catecheses*, op. cit., p. 207.

41 To get a better understanding of Theodore's theology, see: G. Hellemo, *Adventus Domini. Eschatological Thought in 4th-Century Apses and Catecheses*, op. cit., p. 199–247, R. A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Oxford: Clarendon Press 1963, F. A. Sullivan, *The christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, Roma: Pontificia Universita Gregoriana 1956.

42 R. A. Norris, *Manhood and Christ. A Study in the Christology of Theodore of Mopsuestia*, op. cit., p. 160.

## Abstract

### Eschatological Themes in the Catechumenal and Baptismal Rites: The Example of the Catechetical Homily of Theodore of Mopsuestia

Although the theme of eschatology is not at the forefront of baptismal theology, it plays an important role in it. It is referred to in both the catechumenal rites and during the baptism ceremony. This theme is particularly prevalent in the catechetical teachings of Theodore of Mopsuestia (350–428). In them, he explains the process and theology of the sacrament of baptism and of the Eucharist. This article summarizes the most important elements of this teaching and indicates the moments during the celebration when eschatological elements seem to be particularly emphasized; it also tries to ask about the cause of similar practices.

**Keywords:** Theodor of Mopsuestia; eschatology; School of Antioch; catechumenal and baptismal rites; Christian initiation

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