THE EXPRESSIVE USE OF ADJECTIVES IN METROPOLITAN ANTHONY BLOOM’S RELIGIOUS DISCOURSE—A LANDMARK AT THE CROSSROADS OF ENCOUNTERING WORLDS. A PRAGMA-LINGUISTIC AND STYLISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

An overwhelming personality of the 20th century, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom was the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain (1948-2003) who really raised the British people’s awareness of what Orthodoxy meant. He provided the realm of religious discourse with a particular outlook on Christianity (mainly sprung from his own revelation of the risen Christ), which he expressed in a perfectly natural and unsophisticated manner. Interestingly enough, Anthony Bloom and C. S. Lewis can be viewed as “kindred spirits”, as not only did they embrace Christianity after being non-believers, but their writing styles are also similar in that “both have an uncanny ability to explain difficult concepts with simple and engaging language” (“Beginning to Pray (A. Bloom)” [book review]). In Metropolitan Anthony’s view, Christian life represents the personal encounter with God. His discourse is in fact a place of encounters; it is where Eastern Orthodoxy meets Western spirituality, where the sacred realm meets the secular realm and, perhaps most importantly, where the metropolitan’s inner world meaningfully interacts with his addressees’ spiritual searches. We hereby examine the ways in which adjectives contribute to creating an image of a particular world in the following books: Living Prayer (1999a), School for Prayer (1999b), Meditations on a Theme: A spiritual journey (2003). Our approach relies on the Jakobsonian model (1960/1987) of language functions, Kinneavy’s (1980) Theory of Discourse, van Eemeren’s (2002) pragmatic-dialectical theory of argumentation and various studies on religious discourse. The current
paper reveals such discourse constants as the triadic pattern of adjectival constructions, the abundant use of the adjectives “real” and “true”, as well as the presence of adjectives in parallelism and repetition. All these expressive uses of adjectives contribute to the creation of a complex network in which the world of the Gospel, the discursive ethos (conveying the author’s attitude in its diversity) and the reader’s image intermingle in a most harmonious manner.

Keywords: language functions, religious discourse, argumentation, discourse style, adjectives

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at answering the following research questions:
1) What does the abundance of adjectives in Metropolitan Anthony’s religious discourse point at? Are adjectives a marker of the author’s ‘self-expression’? If so, how can one account for the presence of an addressee and of a third (divine) person, which is obvious in the texts?
2) In which ways do adjectives contribute to the depiction of various encountering worlds in the envisaged corpus?

Our hypothesis is that, at the crossroads of encountering worlds, oscillating between persuasion and expressiveness, adjectives play a significant part in conveying the author’s attitude towards the propositional content, as well as in depicting the world of the Gospel and that of the addressee. Thus, the adjectival class contributes in a meaningful way to the realization of particular language functions.

“I used not to be a believer, then one day I discovered God and immediately he appeared to me to be the supreme value and the total meaning of life, but at the same time a person.” This is what Metropolitan Anthony Bloom states in one of his published books, entitled Living Prayer (7). Elsewhere he confesses that the revelation referred to occurred after a lecture he had attended in his youth. Doubtful about what a certain priest had said during the respective lecture, André Borisovich Bloom opened the Holy Bible just to have a look at the shortest Gospel; he was then struck by the presence of Christ (Metropolitan Anthony, School for Prayer 12-13). At another, perhaps infinitely less spiritual level, one might be struck by the occurrence of adjectives when approaching Anthony Bloom’s legacy.

Linguistic choices are said to be made in relation to a universe of discourse. One of the choices a writer must make is the choice of a form to encode his meaning. Out of all possible grammatical forms, the writer chooses the one
that is the most strategic with reference to his reader and to the larger verbal contexts of which the proposition is a part. Intelligent choices are simultaneously appropriate to all the dimensions of a universe of discourse (Young et al 278-317). Pragmatically speaking, it has been argued that adjectives “exist and have been created with the exclusive purpose of functioning in the language”, contributing by the relationships of signification they create “to the purpose of communication in a system of communication” (Martinez 312). Zafiu signals the presence of adjectives as emotional markers in contemporary Romanian sermons, where the adjectives occur in exclamations comprehending evaluation. In his Theory of Discourse, Kinneavy (292, 435) mentions the use of superlatives as a marker of both persuasion and expressiveness.

Along this line, the current paper sets out to investigate the role played by adjectives in the construction of different worlds as manifest in several of Metropolitan Anthony’s classic books of Orthodox spirituality which were published in English, namely Living Prayer (1999a), School for Prayer (1999b), Meditations on a Theme - A Spiritual Journey (2003), and in a series of recorded and transcribed talks available online, namely Sacraments (XXIII-XXVII, 1983-1984). In our insight into the abovementioned pieces of contemporary religious discourse, we will rely on the theoretical frameworks summarized below.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

On the basis of the six factors or elements which are required in order for communication to occur¹, Jakobson’s model of language functions as presented in Linguistics and Poetics (1960/1987) puts forward six language functions (the emotive, conative, referential, poetic, phatic, and metalingual functions). A seventh function of language, namely ‘the magic, incantatory function’, is added to these (68).

The comprehensive framework of discourse proposed by Kinneavy (35-447) comprises four modes of discourse, each of which displays its own characteristics and specific subtypes: reference discourse (comprising scientific discourse, informative discourse and exploratory discourse); persuasive discourse (discourse primarily focused on the decoder, which subsumes advertising, political speeches, religious sermons, legal oratory, editorials); literary discourse (where language calls attention to itself, to its own structures, as structures worthy of contemplation in their own right); and expressive discourse (where expressive

¹ an addresser, a message, an addressee, a context referred to, a code (common to the addresser and the addressee) and a contact residing in a physical channel or psychological connection between the sender and the receiver of the message
components become dominant). The author draws attention to the overlapping of discourse aims, specifying that in many cases one of the aims is dominant, while the other has a subordinate role.

Oriented towards the addressee, the conative function (in Jakobson’s terms) roughly corresponds to what Kinneavy (211) calls “persuasive discourse”. Eliciting a specific action, emotion or conviction from the decoder, this kind of discourse displays its own characteristic features residing in its nature, logic, organization, and style. The emotive function described by Jakobson (66) corresponds to the expressive use of language highlighted by Kinneavy (38).

Since our research focuses on pieces of religious discourse, we find it justifiable to highlight some of the specific traits displayed by this discourse type. Lexically speaking, the religious style is known for allowing a reduced range of synonymous terms as well as for its relative reluctance to neologisms. The vocabulary of religious texts comprises terms possessing a moral significance which regard such concepts as right(eousness), good, well. Religious discourse can thus be characterized as specialized discourse subsuming a multitude of specific discursive subtypes. In the religious text, which is strongly marked by intertextuality, redundancy displays specific connotations. (See Obrocea 2004-2005, Teleoacă 2016.)

Preaching involves bringing arguments, therefore we consider van Eemeren et al.’s pragma-dialectical theory of argumentation to be an adequate approach to contemporary religious discourse. Besides defenses consisting of one single argument, complex argumentation is often to be encountered. This subsumes multiple argumentation (consisting of alternative defenses of the same standpoint), coordinative argumentation (where the arguments must rather be taken together to constitute a conclusive defense) and subordinative argumentation (which involves arguments being given for arguments in order for the defense to seem conclusive). The three main argument schemes that can occur in the defense of a standpoint include: argumentation based on a symptomatic relation, argumentation based on a relation of analogy and argumentation based on a causal relation. (See van Eemeren et al. 56-104.)

3. A BIRD’S EYE VIEW ON ANTHONY BLOOM’S LIFE AND WORK. ENCOUNTERING WORLDS IN METROPOLITAN ANTHONY’S LEGACY

Acknowledged as an overwhelming personality of the 20th century, Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, also called “Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh”\(^2\), was the

\(^2\) The presence of a bishop stands for the existence of the Church in a particular area. Since it was the Apostles who ordained the first bishops, the apostolic continuity of the Church
spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church in Great Britain and Ireland between 1948 and 2003. By means of his widely spread published books, the numerous talks he held, as well as the television and radio broadcasts he appeared in, Metropolitan Anthony managed to raise the British people’s awareness of what Orthodoxy actually meant (Viați Mitropolitului Antonie de Suroj 121). Addressing his audience without any pre-elicorated drafts, the metropolitan provided the realm of religious discourse with a certain freedom of expression or rather a sort of simplicity and naturalness of expression. This unsophisticated way of expressing himself is in connection to the fact that most of his published texts are transcribed talks, lectures or sermons.

Faithful to the teaching of the Church Fathers and at the same time open to its reflections in the Western writers (either Church or secular), Metropolitan Anthony regards Christianity as a form of knowledge (God and Man viii-ix) and insists on a worshipful attitude to God, to people, to life in general. His approach to Christianity must have been influenced by the varied professional and intellectual education he received³, as well as by his very complex background (he worked as a doctor, fought in the army and served as a clergyman).

In Metropolitan Anthony’s view, Christian life represents the personal, face-to-face encounter with Christ. His discourse is in fact a place of encounters; it is where Eastern Orthodoxy meets Western spirituality, where the sacred realm meets the secular realm and, perhaps most importantly, where the metropolitan’s inner world meaningfully interacts with his addressees’ spiritual searches. His persuasive pursuit is strongly marked by expressiveness. The following excerpt is meaningful in this respect:

We sometimes pray for someone we love, who is in need and whom we are not able to help. [...] In that spirit we can turn to God, put the whole situation into his care and say: ‘O God, who knowest everything and whose love is perfect, take this life into thine hand, do what I long to do, but cannot.’ (Living Prayer 95-96)

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³ “I was trained to be a scientist and I treat things as experimental science”, the Metropolitan would argue.
4. BETWEEN PERSUASION AND EXPRESSIVENESS—LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS AT PLAY IN THE CORPUS

Most often throughout the corpus, the expressiveness in prayers and invocations intermingles with persuasion, thus one can speak of a ‘sacramental function’—the correspondent of the so-called “magic, incantatory function” highlighted by Jakobson, which in our corpus accompanies the conative and expressive functions: “So let us set out to do this and let us also every evening of this week, pray a very simple prayer: ‘Help me, O God, to put off all pretences and to find my true self.’”; “I suggest that you should, this week, pray the following prayer: ‘Help me, O God, to discard all false pictures of thee, whatever the cost to my comfort.’; “Before I enter into the subject of ‘Unanswered Prayer’, I would like to pray to God that he might enlighten both me and you, because it is a difficult subject, yet such a vital one.” (Metropolitan Anthony, *Living Prayer* 148-160).

The conative (persuasive) function seems to be dominant in the hierarchy of discourse functions. The focus on the addressee, frequent intrusions of speaker and audience, along with direct imperatives are to be encountered in Metropolitan Anthony’s discourse:

I have said that one of the problems which we must face and solve is: where should I direct my prayer? The answer I have suggested is that we should direct it at ourselves. Unless the prayer which you intend to offer is important and meaningful to you first, you will not be able to present it to the Lord. (Metropolitan Anthony, *School for Prayer* 58)

The conative function intermingles with the phatic, emotive and referential functions in passages revealing the institutionally established ethos (scriptural and patristic references, as well as appeals to Russian sayings, literary works or even Muslim sayings and Buddhist stories). The corpus thus provides a precious multitude of encountering worlds, to the construction of which the adjectival class has a significant contribution. In what follows, we shall have an insight into the various ways in which adjectives support communicative functions with respect to the considered texts.

5. AT THE CROSSROADS OF ENCOUNTERING WORLDS—THE ROLE OF ADJECTIVES IN DEPICTING THE AUTHOR’S OWN WORLD IN RELATION TO OTHER WORLDS

Making reference to Metropolitan Anthony’s activity in her “Introduction to Bloom’s *Essential Writings*”, Gillian Crow states that
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His aim was always to speak from the heart to the hearts of his listeners, without any desire to convert but simply to bring the Gospel message to people and to bring those people to Christ. He spoke with fervor, with simplicity and sincerity, often with humor, and invariably without notes. (in Bloom, *Essential Writings*, 15-16). . . He would use anecdotes from his own life to illustrate how to live as a Christian in the modern world.” (23)

Sincerity, a basic characteristic of expressiveness, is a prominent feature of the author’s discourse. The principle of finality or purpose operates throughout the envisaged corpus. For instance, in *School for Prayer*, the author uses the account of a personal experience to illustrate the fact that “Two often the kind of thanksgiving we offer is too much a general thanksgiving, and the kind of repentance we bring to God is too much a general repentance” (Metropolitan Anthony, *School for Prayer* 44):

I have experienced this once, in a most unromantic and unspiritual way. When I was a teenager I remember going to a place, and I calculated my journey very well because I hoped I would arrive at the moment when people have lunch . . . I arrived after lunch, ravenously hungry. I was with a friend, and since we were really too hungry to go on we asked whether there was anything they could give us. They said ‘We have half a cucumber’. We looked at this cucumber and at each other and thought ‘Is that all God can give us?’ Then my friend said ‘And now let us say grace’. I thought ‘Goodness for a cucumber!’ . . . In all my life I haven't been so grateful to God for any amount or quantity of food. I ate it as one would eat sacred food . . . not to miss any moment of this rich delight of the fresh cucumber. (Metropolitan Anthony, *School for Prayer* 44-45)

As the metropolitan himself confesses in an interview reproduced in *School for Prayer*, his discovery of the Gospel began “as an event that left all problems of disbelief behind because it was a direct and personal experience” (13). This conviction of the existence of God, sprung from the experience of life he had, is noticeable in Anthony Bloom’s texts and leads to the idea of authenticity (with respect to oneself, to others, and to the world around): “All you can do is to be at every single moment as true as you can with all the power in your being . . . ” (16). The Being-for-Itself, the Being-for-Others, and the Being-in-the-World are all sustained aspects of the self throughout the corpus, as revealed by the following excerpt:

. . . how little we need to hurry but how important it is to be real, to occupy in relation to God and to the world around us the true situation which is ours, within

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4 See Kinneavy.
which God can act. . . . If we look carefully at what is at the bottom of this dark labyrinth that is our heart, our consciousness, our past, our present, our impulses towards the future, can we say that we are prepared for a meeting with God? (Metropolitan Anthony, Meditations on a Theme 38-39).

5.1. Landmarks of Metropolitan Anthony’s Expressiveness. Adjectives in Repetition and Parallelism

The central pillars of Metropolitan Anthony’s outlook are experiential authenticity and emotional intensity. Viewing prayer as an encounter with “the living God”, as a “live and real relationship”, the metropolitan emphasizes the profoundness of one’s relationship with God and the freedom it presupposes. Apart from being authentic, one’s spiritual experience must be intense, and this intensity involves emotions. The author’s conviction of the need for spiritual experience to be authentic has been linguistically expressed by means of intensional adjectives, hence the abundant use of the adjectives “real” and “true” along with the adverbs “really” and “truly” (“Real silence is something extremely intense, it has density and it is really alive.” Metropolitan Anthony, School for Prayer 103).

The emotive function of the corpus resides in Metropolitan Anthony’s personal stylistics which also comprises such constants as the triads of adjectives, nouns and verbs which come to support one another in completing the author’s expression of feelings and ideas: “To wipe out the past has little to do with constructive, imaginative, fruitful forgiveness; the only thing that must go, be erased from the past, is its venom; the bitterness, the resentment, the estrangement; but not the memory.” (Metropolitan Anthony, Meditations on a Theme 106); “… the Kingdom of love, … of the Father who rescues, reintegrates, restores life” (83).

In Metropolitan Anthony’s discourse, the use of repetition has an expressive function, in addition to the conative one. A landmark of Metropolitan Anthony’s style resides in the use of parallelism, where the pre-modifying adjectives come in units of three (sometimes four). The use of the same syntactic frame is evident in the excerpts below; the rhythm it creates brings about the poetic function along with the expressive one.

God speaks once and he speaks twice, says a passage in the Old Testament, and then, as a modern writer puts it, he withdraws sadly until we are hungry for God, hungry for the truth, hungry enough to be ready to receive any word, which is the Bread of Life. (17)

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5 See Cornilescu 224.
Because, as soon as we make an image of God and say: ‘Look, this is God’, we transform the dynamic, living, unfathomable, infinitely profound God who is our God, into something limited, of human dimensions, since all revealed knowledge must be of human dimensions, there is nothing in revelation which is not, for if it were otherwise either the infinitely great or the infinitely small would escape us. (70-71)

First, there is the very clear fact that we possess nothing which we can keep, whether we want to or not; it is the discovery that I am nothing and that I have nothing—total, irremediable, hopeless poverty. (School for Prayer 41)

That would be tantamount to speaking of ‘The Almighty’ or ‘The Lord’, but the name of Jesus is a live, real, personal name.” (117)

So that even these sacraments, which are such an incredible, unthinkable, unfathomable union between God and man, are incomplete and only a foretaste of things to come. (Metropolitan Anthony, Sacraments)

For when you have made your passionate, deep, intense prayer concerning the person you love and the situation that worries you, and you turn to the next item, which does not matter so much - if you suddenly grow cold, what has changed? (29)

5.2. Adjectives in the Construction of the Ethos, the Pathos and the Logos

The intermingling of persuasion and expressiveness can be viewed as a ‘red thread’ running throughout the corpus. As regards the ethos, adjectival phrases with adverbial modification are very effective in building Metropolitan Anthony’s argumentation, being at the same time very expressive:

When I was a young priest I preached a sermon, one of the many I preached in a parish, and a young girl came up to me and said ‘Father Anthony, you must be appallingly evil’. I said ‘I am certainly evil, but how do you know that?’ She said ‘Because you have described our sins so well that you must have committed them all yourself’. (Metropolitan Anthony School for Prayer 31-32)

The adjectives employed in the passage below to describe the human condition play an important role in persuading people to be kind and understanding to others; thus the conative function acts as a superordinate of the expressive function.

But how difficult it is to be just. We usually think of justice in terms of attribution or retribution, of allotting to everyone his due, but justice goes farther and claims more, much more, from us. It begins at the moment when I see my neighbour
(individual or collective) as different from me, at times irreducibly different, and recognising his total right to be so, accept the fact that he is himself and has no reason to be merely a replica of myself. He is as much God’s creature as I am; he was not made in my image but in God’s. He is called to be the likeness of God, not to be the likeness of me; and if he seems to me to be very far from being God’s like and kin, if he appears to be a repulsive caricature and not an image of God—has he not as much ground to see me likewise? We are all very ugly indeed, and also very miserable and should have such compassionate regard for one another. (Meditations on a Theme 48-49)

Metropolitan Anthony’s discourse brings to light genuine associations of the language functions. In the passage below, the qualifying adjectives used as noun epithets to describe the soil help to build a conceptual metaphor (a personification). The referential and expressive language functions, however, serve to appeal to the people’s consciousness in order to help them defeat vanity and surpass difficult situations by being humble:

Basically humility is the attitude of one who stands constantly under the judgement of God. It is the attitude of one who is like the soil. Humility comes from the Latin word humus, fertile ground. The fertile ground is there, unnoticed, taken for granted, always there to be trodden upon. It is silent, inconspicuous, dark and yet it is always ready to receive any seed, ready to give it substance and life. The more lowly, the more fruitful, because it becomes really fertile when it accepts all the refuse of the earth. (Living Prayer 128)

According to the ones who knew him well, Metropolitan Anthony was extremely reluctant to the manifestation of faith through emotions. He considered emotions to be inconsistent, easy to manipulate, a dangerous surrogate for authentic living—different from that mysterious thrill of the heart which responds to God’s call without being influenced by external aspects. (See Crow 2017.) Nevertheless, since experiential authenticity involves emotional intensity, Metropolitan Anthony’s discourse comprises such components of the pathos as narrative sequences, subjective, emphatic repetitions, and exclamations. In “Meditations on a Theme”, for instance, there are exclamations (pages 38, 43, 45, 51, 97), specialized vocabulary for expressing emotions (pages 54, 68-69), narrative sequences (pages 42-43, 50, 76, 78), evaluative vocabulary possessing affective connotations (pages 5, 35, 38, 39, 48, 58, 97). The role of adjectives in building the pathetic argument is obvious in the passages below:

How easy it is for man to slip from kindness into feracious brutality; how quickly pussy can become what she always is at heart – a beast of prey! Watch then! (Meditations on a Theme 97)
Therefore, before we set out on the so-called thrilling adventure of prayer, it cannot be too strongly stated that nothing more significant, more awe-inspiring, can occur than meeting the God we set out to meet. (Living Prayer 14)

We must recapture an attitude of mind which, usually, we cannot conjure even out of our depth, something which has become strangely alien to us – the joyful expectation of the Day of the Lord—in spite of the fact that we know that this day will be a day of Judgement. It is striking to hear in church that we are proclaiming the Gospel, the gladdening news, of Judgement, but we are proclaiming that the Day of the Lord is not fear but hope . . . (Meditations on a Theme 2)

If we only stopped at the gate and knocked humbly, shyly, and listened for a call to come in, we might discover with wonder and amazement that, on the other side, Someone is also knocking: ‘I stand at the door and I knock,’ says the Lord (Revelation 3.20). We might discover that on his side the door is unlocked; it is on our side that it is locked, it is our heart that is sealed and oh! so narrow, so unwilling to take the risk of letting go the law and entering into the realm of love where everything is as frail and as unconquerable as love and life itself. But God goes on knocking with hope, insistence, patience, unceasingly, through people, circumstances and the still, small voice of our conscience, as the beggar knocks at the rich man’s door, because, having chosen to be poor, he waits that our love and our charity would open to him a true, human heart. (Meditations on a Theme 44)

And so, with that spark of hope that made despair even deeper and more acute, he [Bartimaeus] sat by the gate of Jericho. . . . Because his despair was so profound he did not listen to the voices commanding him to be quiet, to hold his peace; and the more they tried to prevent him from reaching out to Christ, the louder he said: “Thou, son of David, have mercy on me!” (Living Prayer 62 - 64)

Emotional emphasis lies in the use of repetition built with adjectival phrases coming in units of three: “. . . but the kind of weakness which means being completely supple, completely transparent, completely abandoned in the hands of God” (School for Prayer 34). It is also brought about by the postnominal position of adjectives in noun phrases such as “a life attentive and worshipful” (53), “my neighbour (individual or collective)”, “love human and love divine” (Meditations on a Theme 48, 105), “prayer, faithful and patient as it has been” (Living Prayer 118), “love, unselfish and thoughtful”, “life eternal” (Meditations on a Theme 7, 82-83).
5.3. Grammaticalised Intensifiers at the Crossroads of Encountering Worlds

The corpus provides numerous passages where grammaticalised adverbs—expressive markers situated at the borderline between the grammatical and the lexical—help to convey the addresser’s attitude towards the propositional content. The world of the Gospel meets the world of the addresser and the addressee in a meaningful way:

Whenever we approach God the contrast that exists between what he is and what we are becomes *dreadfully clear*. (Metropolitan Anthony, *Living Prayer* 13)

So that, at those moments, to try to use a spontaneous prayer is *a completely illusory exercise*. (103)

Zacchaeus is *desperately anxious* to see Christ. (Metropolitan Anthony, *Meditations on a Theme* 57)

This ‘as we forgive’ is the moment when we take our salvation into our own hands, because whatever God does depends on what we do; and this is *tremendously important* in terms of ordinary life. (39)

Prayer is essentially standing face to face with God, consciously striving to remain collected and *absolutely still and attentive* in his presence, which means standing with an undivided mind, an undivided heart and an undivided will in the presence of the Lord; and that is not easy. (74-75)

5.4. Adjectives in Argumentation

The Saviour’s parables in the New Testament represent a primary source for preachers of all times, including Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh. One of the books in the corpus, namely *Meditations on a Theme*, provides the interpretation of several scriptural parables: “The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican”, “The Parable of the Prodigal Son”, “The Parables of the Judgement”, respectively. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom generally makes use of complex (especially multiple) argumentation, the three argument schemes identified by van Eemeren et al. being frequently encountered in the interpretation of the parables as provided in the corpus.

As far as “The Parable of the Prodigal Son” is concerned, argumentation based on a causal relation can be grasped in the following paragraphs, which exhibit the author’s great power of conveying his ideas:

Once in possession of all the wealth that the ‘death’ of his father bestowed upon him, without even looking back as young people so lightly-minded do, the young
man leaves the dull security of his home and, with a quick step, hastens towards the land where nothing will prevent him from being free: free of constraint, of all moral ties, he can now surrender himself unreservedly to all the impulses of his wayward heart. (Metropolitan Anthony, Meditations on a Theme 76)

He imagines that it is to him that his new friends cling; the truth is that he is being treated as he treated his father . . . he is alone and destitute. He is hungry, thirsty, cold, desolate and rejected. He is left alone as he left his father alone but to face an infinitely greater misery—his inward nothingness; while his father, although deserted, was rich with an invincible charity, that charity which made him lay down his life for his son, accept repudiation, so that his son might freely go his way. (76-77)

The stylistic effect of intensification is produced by the ‘clusters’ of predicative adjectives such as the ones used to describe the state of the prodigal son which resulted from his turning away from his father, from God: “. . . he is alone and destitute. He is hungry, thirsty, cold, desolate and rejected.” (77). Unlike the first four adjectives in the chain, the last one is not a qualifying, but a participial adjective, which makes reference to the pitiful state that was induced by the prodigal son’s life of sin and the delusion he was under due to his seemingly everlasting luxury.

The alternating subjects of the sentences (he-we) signal the ongoing intermingling of plans (the narrative of the parable and the life of the interlocutors). The ethos goes on to meet the pathos; from general to particular (“And because the prodigal son has opened his heart to his father, he is ready for forgiveness.”), Metropolitan Anthony depicts the sensitive scene of the father’s long waiting and longing for his son by means of exclamation and stylistic inversion: “How often had he stood on the threshold, looking at the road his son had travelled away from him!” (79). While opposing the initial point of the prodigal son’s departure to the final point of his return home, the metropolitan manages to create the causal relation (the effects of the vicious life the son has led are visible in his appearance): “this time the father sees him returning a beggar, in rags, utterly dejected, burdened with a past of which he is ashamed and with no future . . .” (80).

The climax of the parable is an opportunity for the author to present his argument regarding the Christian value of repentance. Here again we can trace the author’s conviction of the need for spiritual experience to be authentic, an ideological trait which has been transposed to the formal level by means of intensional adjectives: “And in this he discovers the true nature of repentance, for true repentance blends together the vision of one’s own evil and the certainty that there is forgiveness even for us because true love can neither falter nor be quenched.” (78).
Among the various stylistic and rhetorical means of building the argumentation in the parables, one can mention: imaginary dialogues, rhetorical questions, explanation of terms, stylistic intensification, expressive markers of gradation etc. In “The Parable of the Prodigal Son”, adjectives occur within the argumentation in comparisons (“resplendent like a new dawn”) and antitheses (“how different this joy is from the quiet and deep felicity of the Kingdom of God revealed at the marriage-feast of Cana in Galilee”; “Vanity had done what neither humility, nor wisdom, nor even simple friendship had been able to achieve. How sad . . . How different was the generous, loving, free forgiveness which the Father granted his Prodigal Son!” (197).

As regards the occurrence of adjectives in “The Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican” (40-56), the pre-modification of nouns by two adjectives is accompanied by the triadic pattern (“He [the pharisee] believes that between God and his creatures there is a relation that is fixed, fossilized, immutable.”; “Of God he knows the law—not the Person. He has no terms of reference to condemn himself; he is just, cold, dead.”; yet near enough to feel related, responsible, committed). These triadic patterns have a completion role, both semantically and stylistically; they add to the rendering of a particular attitude or state of mind until it is completed in a most satisfactory manner. In the antithesis established between the publican and the pharisee, Metropolitan Anthony employs a pre-modifying intensifying adverb, which is a marker of expressiveness: “And from his hard, cruel experience, emerges that unfathomably deep and authentic prayer ‘Lord, have mercy on me a sinner’” (42).

6. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The present paper has aimed at highlighting the role of adjectives in depicting various worlds as revealed in Metropolitan Anthony Bloom’s religious texts. At the crossroads of encountering worlds, the analysed discourse displays such constants as the triadic pattern of adjectival constructions, the presence of adjectives in parallelism and repetition, the abundant use of the adjectives “real” and “true” as well as the occurrence of grammaticalised intensifiers. All these expressive uses of adjectives contribute to creating a complex network in which the world of the Gospel, the discursive ethos (conveying the author’s attitude in its diversity) and the reader’s image intermingle in a most harmonious manner.

Works Cited


**BIONOTE**

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