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THE HISTORICAL AND GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION
OF JOHN CHRYSOSTOM
EVALUATED ON THE BASIS OF HIS HOMILIES ON ROMANS

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of New Testament Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
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May 1947

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THE HISTORICAL AND GRAMMATICAL INTERPRETATION
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Sound interpretation requires knowledge of sound hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is generally regarded as the science and theory of interpreting Scripture, whereas exegesis is the art and practice of interpreting Scripture. Analyzed in the simplest terms, hermeneutics is half common sense and half reverent affection for Holy Scripture. Since most pastors are endowed with such a knowledge of hermeneutics, they rarely give special attention to hermeneutic matter. The principles of hermeneutics are therefore often taken for granted. Unfortunately, for many pastors the need for a knowledge of sound hermeneutics becomes apparent only when controversies in the Church spew forth erroneous interpretations. Comparatively few pastors realize that the conscientious application of sound hermeneutical principles is always necessary. All pastors, therefore, must not only know which interpretations are correct and which are wrong but also why they are correct or wrong.

In the fourth century a number of men, identified as the School of Antioch, were included in a movement to promote

a historical and grammatical system of interpretation. The Church had relaxed her efforts in the self-defense of apologetics, for Christianity had become the recognized religion of the empire. The canon of Scripture had practically been settled, But the Arian controversies had arisen, and the whole Church was involved in the struggle. The excesses of allegorical interpretation became widespread. These factors created a situation which raised the question of interpretation. The School of Antioch felt that the answer to the situation was recourse to historical and grammatical interpretation.

In view of the fact that the School of Antioch made no little contribution to the history of interpretation and that its hermeneutical principles are relevant to current problems of the Church, a brief study of the historical and grammatical interpretation of John Chrysostom, the most successful representative of the School of Antioch, may be of some value to pastors who wish to preserve the Church from error and to present the Gospel of Christ in all its truth and power. It is the purpose of this paper, therefore, to outline the hermeneutical principles of John Chrysostom and to show how they came to be what they were. It is to indicate the methods of his historical and grammatical interpretation particularly on the basis of his homilies on the epistle to the Romans. It seeks to evaluate Chrysostom's hermeneutical principles rather than the specific results of his exegesis.

I. The School of Antioch

Unlike the Alexandrian School which had a succession of connected teachers, the Antiochian School was more a theological movement than a well established school. It included a number of men who opposed contemporaneous excesses in interpreting Scripture and advocated a common sense approach to interpretation. One of the first of these men was Lucian, who studied at Edessa under Macarius, a prominent teacher. Some consider him the founder of the School of Antioch. While he was with Macarius, Lucian developed a sympathy for thorough scholarship. Later he moved to Antioch, was ordained presbyter, and acquired renown for his critical study and interpretation of Scripture. His methods checked the allegorical methods of Origen, whose system enjoyed great popularity at that time.

Diodorus (d. 393) carried on the critical methods of Lucian. He was a noted presbyter of Antioch and became bishop of Tarsus. Because Diodorus occupied a strategic position in the history of the Antiochian School, many regard him as its true founder.¹ He was a learned and pious man and was the teacher of Theodore of Mopsuestia and John Chrysostom. He came from a noble family and was friend to Meletius. When

1. Frederic Farrar, The History of Interpretation, p. 212, says, "Diodorus of Tarsus must be regarded as the true founder of the School of Antioch."

Meletius was exiled for a second time under Valens, from 370 to 378, he entrusted the care of his diocese to Diodorus and the priest Evagrius. Because Diodorus was a warm friend of Meletius, he was in danger of attack from the Arian party during this time. But he regularly came to the old town on the south side of the Orontes to Minister to the people. Diodorus wrote voluminously. His commentary on the Old and New Testaments indicates that he always sought after the literal and historical meaning of the text. He objected to the allegorical interpretations of Origen and the Alexandrian School. He saw a certain harmony in the whole of Scripture which showed how all of it served to bring men to Jesus Christ, but he rejected the idea that every small detail of Scriptural history contained prophecies, parallels, and allusions. He noted a gradual development in revelation. Knowledge and morality gradually developed. His approach was based on common sense, but it was excessively critical. He wished to derive the literal meaning from the text rather than to introduce mystical meaning into the text. Socrates, the church historian, refers to him as president of a monastery and author of "many treatises, in which he limited his expositions to the literal sense of Scripture, without attempting to explain what was mystical."² It is regrettable that a treatise which he wrote "on the difference between allegory and spiritual

2. Quoted by Milton Terry, Biblical Hermeneutics, p. 38.

insight" is no longer extant.³

Ephraem Syrus, Eusebius of Emesa, Chrysostom, Severianus, Theodore of Mopsuestia, and Theodoret may be included in the School of Antioch.⁴

Chrysostom and Theodore were the most noteworthy disciples of Diodorus. In Antioch they had attended the school of Libanius, the noted sophist and friend of Emperor Julian. With Libanius they studied philosophy and rhetoric. As interpreters Theodore and Chrysostom differed considerably. Theodore was rationalistic and critical, whereas Chrysostom was conservative and practical. As a presbyter at Antioch Theodore became known for his learning and sharp intellect. In 390 he became bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. Of his many writings only the commentaries on the Minor Prophets are now extant; commentaries on Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians are preserved in a Latin version.⁵ Farrar indicates his high regard for Theodore when he says, "The ablest, the most decided, and the most logical representative of the School of Antioch was Theodore of Mopsuestia. That clear-minded and original thinker stands out like 'a rock in the morass of ancient exegesis.'"⁶ Theodore was independent in his thinking and exhibited straightforward, historical in-

3. Farrar, op. cit., p. 213. Some fragments of Diodorus' commentaries are given in Migne's Greek Patrologiae, vol. 33.

4. Ibid., p. 212.

5. Terry, op. cit., p. 38.

6. Farrar, op. cit., p. 213.

terpretation. Theodore, however, was no Hebrew scholar. This is evidenced by the fact that he inferred that the writer of Job was a heathen because one of Job's daughters was called "Amalthea's horn."⁷ Like other Greek Fathers he relied upon the Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text. The Syrian Nestorians considered him to be the greatest of exegetes. But a more universal judgment is that Theodore was excessively critical. He emphasized the historical and literal meaning to such an extent that his interpretations lack warmth and vigor.

In contrast to Theodore, Chrysostom evidenced more intimate contact with Scripture. Though he lacked the intellectual acumen and originality of Theodore, he showed more practical wisdom, a deeper insight into Scripture, and a fruitful interpretation with logical and grammatical principles. The judgment of Terry is that "although his credulous nature yielded to many superstitions of his age, and his pious feeling inclined him to asceticism and the self-mortification of monastic life, John Chrysostom is unquestionably the greatest commentator among the early fathers of the Church."⁸ The homilies of Chrysostom, which number more than six hundred, show his deep religious sympathy with the holy writers.

Theodoret (d. 457) spent twenty years in religious

7. Farrar, loc. cit.

8. Terry, op. cit., p. 39.

study at the monastery near Antioch. He depended almost exclusively upon the system of biblical interpretation of Theodore and Chrysostom, whom he termed luminaries of the world. That he followed a via media Theodoret indicates in his Preface to the Psalms, "When I happened upon various commentaries, and found some expositors pursuing allegories with great superabundance, others adapting prophecy to certain histories so as to produce an interpretation accommodated to the Jews rather than to the nurselings of faith, I considered it the part of a wise man to avoid the excess of both, and to connect now with ancient histories whatever things belonged to them."⁹ Theodoret did not claim originality for his work. Many apologetic and controversial elements find a place in his expository works that remain. Theodoret covered most books of the Old Testament and the epistles of Paul.¹⁰ He is a familiar figure in the history of the Church, for he played a prominent role in the controversies of his time.

After the time of Theodoret the influence of the Antiochian School gradually declined. When the pupils of Diodorus and their immediate contemporaries died, there were no teachers to take their place. Because Diodorus and Theodore came to be regarded as the precursors of Nestorianism, their

9. Ibid., p. 40.

10. Theodoret's works are in volumes 80-84 of Migne's Greek Patrologiae.

works were not widely circulated. Through Chrysostom the influence of the school was chiefly perpetuated and to some extent also through Theodoret.

The influence of the Antiochian School may be noted in three areas: in the Eastern Church, in the Eastern Church outside the limits of the empire, and in the West.¹¹ Isidore, of Alexandria, shows by his wide correspondence that he took Chrysostom as his guide in interpretation. He was a theologian and prominent ascetic teacher, inclined somewhat to Alexandrian mysticism. A monk of Mount Sinai named Nilus was a pupil of Chrysostom who commented on Canticles. Another pupil of Chrysostom, Victor, was a priest of Antioch who commented on Mark. The Greek Catenists from the Sixth Century on often used Chrysostom's writings to form the basis for their compilations. They also used the writings of Severian, Theodoret, and Theodore to some extent. In this area, then, the influence of the Antiochian School is clearly indicated. In the eighth, ninth, tenth, and eleventh centuries, John of Damascus, Photius, Oecumenius, and Theophylact, respectively, leaned heavily upon the interpretations of Chrysostom and other Antiochians.

In the Eastern Church outside the limits of the empire, from the fifth to the ninth centuries the theological school at Nisibis showed the influence of Theodore in its Biblical

11. These areas are noted by Frederic Chase, Chrysostom, a Study in the History of Biblical Interpretation, p. 23ff.

studies. In 489 when the Emperor Zeno broke up the school at Edessa, under Nestorian influence, the fugitives made their way to Nisibis. Here outside the empire, they joined the theological school which Rabulas had been promoting for fifty years.

In the West, Pelagius is indebted especially to Theodore in the writing of his commentaries. Lightfoot states that in the sixth century the commentaries of Pelagius were assigned to Pope Gelasius.¹² Later on, Pelagius' commentaries were assigned to Jerome and often printed with Jerome's works. Anianus a Deacon, a Pelagian, translated Chrysostom's homilies on Matthew and panegyric on St. Paul into Latin. Perhaps Cassianus, the father of Western Monasticism did most to spread the influence of the Antiochian School in the West. He influenced the monasticism of the Middle Ages at its source. Other points of contact in the West with the Antiochian School may be noted.

12. Lightfoot in his commentary on Galatians, p. 229, is quoted by Chase, op. cit., p. 25.

II. The Life of John Chrysostom

There is little possibility of determining the exact date of John Chrysostom's birth. The evidence available indicates that he was born in about 345, in Antioch in Syria. His father, named Secundus, reached the rank of "magister militum" in the imperial army of Syria and had the title of "illustris." Secundus died when John was an infant. John's mother, Anthusa, a widow twenty years old, found herself in comfortable circumstances but with the responsibility of managing the household and rearing John and his older sister in a large dissolute city without securities familiar to the present time.

Anthusa was a pious Christian woman, and she resolved to give all her means and energy especially to bringing up John. She did not marry again. She was devoted to John as Monica to Augustine. Anthusa succeeded in keeping John from the common vices of nominally Christian Antioch, such as excessive luxury, sensuality, greed, and display. In early childhood John received careful religious and moral training from his mother. Since it was customary for some Christian parents at that time to send their children for training to the monks of nearby monasteries, it is possible that John also received training of this kind. When he was twenty, he began to attend the lectures of Libanius, a renowned sophist.

The legal profession was John's aim when he studied literature, rhetoric, and philosophy under this able defender of paganism. Libanius corresponded with Julian and had friendly relations with the Emperors Valens and Theodosius.

Chrysostom relates that Libanius once asked him who and what his parents were. When Chrysostom told him that he was the son of a widow who at the age of forty had lost her husband twenty years ago, he exclaimed with jealousy and admiration, "Heavens! What women these Christians have."¹³ That Chrysostom was an able student is indicated by Libanius' reply to one who questioned who might succeed him, "It would have been John had not the Christians stolen him from us."¹⁴

Though the opportunities for success and distinction for Chrysostom were great in the legal profession, he was persuaded to withdraw from a profession largely permeated with greed and trickery. He became intimately acquainted with a young man named Basil, who perhaps is the same Basil who was later bishop of Raphanea in Syria, near Antioch. Of him Chrysostom says, "He was one of those who accompanied me at all times; we engaged in the same studies, and were instructed by the same teachers; in our zeal and interest

13. W. R. W. Stephens, Saint Chrysostom, His Life and Times, p. 12.

14. Sozomen viii, c. 2., quoted by Stephens, ibid., p. 13. Palladius, Martyrius, Socrates, and Sozomen are the best sources on Chrysostom. Theodoret and Zosimus are less reliable. The best biography of Chrysostom is that of Stephens. Chrysostom's works are in volumes 47-64 of Migne's Greek Patrologiae.

for the subjects on which we worked we were one."¹⁵

Chrysostom was much impressed by Basil's early decision to follow monasticism. Chrysostom described monasticism as following the "true philosophy." Although he himself was not ready to take such a step, Chrysostom began to spend less time in secular matters and more on the study of Scripture. He became acquainted with Meletius, who was the Catholic Bishop of Antioch and commanded great respect. After the customary three years of probation for catechumens he was baptized by Meletius.¹⁶ At this time the influence of the Arian controversy was woefully apparent in Antioch. The activities of Catholic, Arian, and Semi-Arian elements make up a picture of confusion that is more distressing than interesting. No doubt Chrysostom's baptism meant a great deal to him. After his baptism he entered a new phase of his life. For a while he went all out for ascetism. Enthusiastically he entered upon an ascetic way of life. Then after a time the fire of his ardor gradually became a steady, controlled flame of piety and love for God.

Miletius soon ordained him to the office of a reader, for he saw that Chrysostom's talents might find good use in the Church. Chrysostom realized now more than ever the great gulf between Christian holiness and the heathen depravity

15. Stephens, op. cit., p. 15.

16. Stephens discusses the problem of why Chrysostom's baptism was delayed so long, ibid., p. 16ff.

which surrounded him in Antioch. He wished to join Basil in a plan to live together in some quiet place where they might engage in study, meditation and prayer. But Anthusa could not bear to be separated from her son. She regarded him as her only joy and treasure. For him to leave her would amount to making her a widow for a second time. Evidently his older sister had died at an early age. Chrysostom yielded to his mother's entreaty. At the same time, however, he began to live an ascetic life at home and seldom left the house. In studying, praying, keeping vigils, fasting and sleeping on the bare ground he made the house virtually a monastery. Some of his friends felt that he had undergone a melancholy change.

Chrysostom's association with Basil became greater. They formed a voluntary association with Theodore, who later became bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia, and with Maximus, who became bishop of Seleucia in Isauria. All four had studied together under Libanius. Though this group did not live in an established monastic community, they lived according to rule and subjected themselves to monastic discipline. They turned to Diodorus and Carterius, who were presidents of monasteries near Antioch, for guidance in their studies and discipline. Diodorus exerted a great influence on Chrysostom and Theodore, who were his most distinguished students. Theodore was influenced largely by the intellectual feature of Diodorus' thought and reflected this influence especially in

his statements concerning the natures of Christ and his virtual denial of eternal punishment by holding to a final restoration of mankind. Chrysostom was influenced largely by his practical features and consequently worked with a literal and common sense interpretation of Scripture.

When Theodore's enthusiasm for the ascetic life began to lag, he withdrew from the group for a time. He fell in love with a girl named Hermione and wished to marry her. Chrysostom regarded this action of Theodore almost as a shameful sin, for he felt that turning from what he regarded as the highest kind of Christian life was truly sinful. Therefore, he wrote two letters to Theodore urging him to return to monastic life. They indicate Chrysostom's spirit and ability at that time. He begins the first letter with the words of Jeremiah, "'Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears.' If the prophet uttered that lamentation over a ruined city, surely I may express a like passionate sorrow over the fallen soul of a brother."¹⁷ In relating this event Stephens comments concerning Chrysostom, "An eminent characteristic of Chrysostom is that he is always hopeful of human nature; he never doubts the capacity of man to rise, or the willingness of God to raise him." This characteristic of Chrysostom becomes apparent later on in his homilies where it evidently influences his insight in interpreting

17. Ibid., p. 34.

Scripture. Chrysostom's appeals were not in vain; Theodore was persuaded to return.

When a few vacant sees needed to be filled in about 373, the clergy and people looked also to Chrysostom and Basil as suitable candidates for office. It was customary at that time for the clergy and people to seize and forcibly conduct suitable men to be ordained. So the people dragged the weeping Augustine to the bishop and demanded his ordination. In view of this alarming possibility Basil begged Chrysostom that they act together to accept, evade, or resist should they be approached. Chrysostom seemingly agreed to this, but really decided piously to defraud Basil. When Basil consequently was made bishop, he complained bitterly to Chrysostom. Chrysostom, therefore, tried to explain his action and comments on the priestly office in his treatise on the priesthood. It is a more mature work than the letters to Theodore and contains no excessive praise for the monastic life.

Some time before the Arian Emperor Valens issued an edict of persecution against the monks in 373, and perhaps after the death of Anthusa, Chrysostom entered one of the monasteries south of Antioch. There for about six years Chrysostom practiced monastic discipline. During the last two years of this period he lived in a cave as a solitary anchorite. Need of medical treatment forced him to return to Antioch in about 380.

In 381 just before setting out for the Council of

Constantinople, Meletius ordained Chrysostom as a deacon. Chrysostom's life now turned from the contemplative to the practical. The decree of Valens in 373 directed that "the monks should be dragged from their retreats, and compelled to discharge their obligations as citizens, either by serving in the army, or performing the functions of any civil office to which they might be appointed."¹⁸ In his treatise addressed "to the assailants of monastic life" Chrysostom met the arguments to monasticism by pagans, worldly Christians, and nominal Christians.

During his diaconate Chrysostom probably came in close contact with the Christian people of Antioch, especially the poorer classes. Chrysostom estimated that the whole population of Antioch was about 200,000 and that the Christians numbered about 100,000. Of the Christians, 3,000 received support from the Church. To the mind of Chrysostom one of the greatest Christian duties was to give alms to the poor. His continual insistence upon this matter is evident in most of his homilies. In ministering to the people of Antioch he increased his knowledge of human nature and the needs of the people about him. Though he had learned much about people and home life during his earlier years in the home of his mother, he had been away from normal social intercourse for about eight years.

18. Ibid., p. 76.

In 386 Bishop Flavian ordained Chrysostom as a priest. His services in the office of a deacon indicated that he was eminently qualified to be a preacher. Flavian, therefore, appointed him to preach frequently in the church of Antioch.

From 386 to 398 Chrysostom lived in Antioch and spent most of his time in the work of preaching. Chrysostom indicates that he usually preached about twice a week. The years spent in meditation and study of Scripture during his ascetic period now bore rich fruit. As a preacher Chrysostom was above all an interpreter of Scripture. But his interpretation was not an end in itself. As a student of Scripture his investigations always sought practical application. "His point of view is that of the scholarly pastor rather than of the accurate, conscientious commentator."¹⁹ In the tenth year of his public life at Antioch and the fifth year of his priesthood Chrysostom delivered the homilies on Romans to the people of Antioch. The population of Antioch included Asiatic, Syrian, Greek, Jewish, and Roman elements. Antioch was a connecting link between the East and the West. Here a person could find the abundant luxury of the East and the growing corruption of the West. In the face of unsettled political conditions the people of Antioch at the end of the fourth century lived to eat, drink, and seek pleasure. In Antioch proponents of Arianism retained an influence though

19. Chase, op. cit., p. 14.

elsewhere it had been subjugated successfully. The Marcionites, Valentinians, followers of Paul of Samosata, Novatians, Manichaeans added to the distress of the church in Antioch. Half of the city was Christian, but for the most part it was Christian only in name. Chrysostom complained about the love of the people for the foulness of the theater and the barbarities of the circus. These were the evils and enemies which Chrysostom endeavored to combat. His preaching was aimed primarily to engender pure morality and sound faith.

In 398 Chrysostom was taken by force to become archbishop of Constantinople. For six years Chrysostom was occupied with the responsibilities of the archiepiscopal throne. Nectarius, the successor of Gregory Nazianzen as archbishop of Constantinople had died in 397. Determining who was to fill this office involved political intrigue. Eutropius, the chamberlain who was the power behind the throne of the weak emperor Arcadius evidently felt that Chrysostom might fit into his scheming. While in Antioch on matters of public business Eutropius had heard the eloquent preacher. The appointment of Chrysostom would surely meet with public approval, and Eutropius needed a boost in his own popularity.

Conditions at Constantinople were similar to those at Antioch. Chrysostom as archbishop played the role of a reformer. He was largely successful in purifying prevalent practices of the clergy. Within the course of time his enemies, however, succeeded in exiling him. In June of 404

Chrysostom was exiled to Nice. After a few weeks his enemies had him removed to Cucusus, a village in the Tauric range on the edge of Cilicia and the lesser Armenia. Chrysostom's friends pleaded with Empress Eudoxia on his behalf, but she remained hostile. Though he was almost sixty years old and was subjected deliberately to hardship and danger, Chrysostom continued his labors in repelling paganism and promoting missionary enterprises. Almost all of his letters were written during the years of exile. In June of 407 he was ordered to be removed to Pityus near the frontier of the empire where he might be subjected to dangers from barbarians and the hardships of a desolate country. Two praetorian soldiers were ordered to accompany him and force him on with such haste as might cause his death on the way. Weakened by fatigue and infirmity, Chrysostom died in Comana in Pontus, September 14, 407. His last words to the ecclesiastics who gathered about him at the martyrdom in Comana were, "Glory be to God for all things, Amen."²⁰

20. Stephens, op. cit., p. 404.

III. Chrysostom's Works

More of Chrysostom's writings are extant than of any other of the Greek Fathers. His numerous writings indicate an extensive knowledge of Scripture. His first writings, however, did not directly concern Scripture. During his years of ascetic and monastic life he wrote two opuscula to Theodore, six books on the priesthood, and a treatise on virginity. Most of the writings which show his worth as an interpreter come from the period of his life as a priest and preacher at Antioch, from 381 to 398. In about 386, the year in which he was ordained presbyter, he delivered eight homilies on Genesis. During March of 387 he delivered the famous homilies on the statues. The following year he delivered additional homilies on Genesis and his first homilies on the Gospel of John. Homilies on Matthew followed in 389 and 390. The homilies on Romans Chrysostom delivered in 391, the tenth year of his public life at Antioch. The homilies on Corinthians followed in 392. A commentary on Galatians dates from 393, as well as homilies on Ephesians, Philippians, Timothy, Titus, and Philemon.

From time to time during these years he delivered homilies on the Psalms. Perhaps in 397 Chrysostom wrote his commentary on the first eight chapters of Isaiah. When he was archbishop of Constantinople, he wrote homilies on Thes-

salonians and Hebrews in 400 and 402, respectively. Other works of Chrysostom include homilies on special occasions, treatises, and letters.

Suidas and Cassiodorus state that Chrysostom wrote commentaries on the whole Bible. But, as indicated above, the writings which are extant and known to be genuine include interpretations only on Genesis, the Psalms, and Isaiah in the Old Testament, and on Matthew, John, the Acts, and the Pauline epistles in the New Testament. Chrysostom included Hebrews among the Pauline epistles.

Chrysostom's interpretation of Genesis is put down in the form of sixty-seven homilies. His interpretation on the first eight chapters of Isaiah is in the form of a commentary proceeding verse by verse. This work and the one on Galatians are the only extant writings of Chrysostom which properly may be called commentaries. The interpretation of Matthew included ninety homilies; of John, eighty-eight homilies; of the Acts, fifty-five homilies; of Hebrews, thirty-four homilies.

Because Chrysostom presented almost all of his interpretations in the form of homilies which were delivered to the people of the fourth century of Antioch and Constantinople, it is hardly possible to determine his hermeneutical principles as precisely as might be desired. It becomes necessary to draw off the verbiage that is included in these homilies which results from their being delivered to an audi-

ence in which many were not well educated and from their being delivered largely for the purpose of edification. To do this, an understanding of the nature of the homily is necessary.

The homily might be defined as a discourse or sermon. It has a unique character and differs somewhat from the sermon as it is understood in modern times. Concerning the homily's form Henry Osborn Taylor states, "There was a kind of actually spoken Christian literature, the growth of which was due to the inspiration of Christian teaching and Christian needs. This was the sermon, the homily, that spoken combination of instruction and exhortation."²¹ At the time of Chrysostom Christian orators used the form of pagan rhetoric to present Christian themes. What they presented in this florid style was more living and real than what the pagan rhetors had to offer. Therefore, it was not a systematic, literary style which Chrysostom used to present his interpretations but rather a flowery and popular style.

Since Chrysostom delivered his homilies on Romans in 391 when he was at the peak of his public career, it is probable that these homilies indicate the hermeneutical principles of Chrysostom rather reliably. By this time the "golden-mouthed" preacher had gained considerable experience in working with Scripture. He delivered these homilies in a connect-

21. Taylor, The Classical Heritage of the Middle Ages, p. 224.

ed series. Some were delivered on consecutive days.²² These homilies evidence careful preparation. In later years, especially during his archiepiscopate at Constantinople, Chrysostom was occupied with many things which interfered with his study. Some later homilies were somewhat sketchy and showed less intensive preparation.

22. Chrysostom says, "Did I not seem yesterday to you to have spoken some great and exorbitant things of Paul's love toward Christ?" Romans 9:1, Homily 16, translation by J. B. Morris and W. H. Simcox, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, first series, edited by Philip Schaff, vol. 11, p. 459.

IV. His Attitude Toward Scripture

The most significant thing about Chrysostom's attitude toward Scripture is his intense personal regard for its worth. When Chrysostom delivered the homilies on Romans, he had already developed a love of the Bible like Luther, who said, "Die Worte des Herrn Christi sind am Kräftigsten und haben Hände und Füße."²³ Again and again Chrysostom dwells on the duty of every Christian man and woman to study the Bible. He could talk about the value of studying Scripture from his own experience. The greater portion of all the time he had spent in study involved the study of Scripture.

Chrysostom, it is said, was the first writer to employ the familiar term τὰ Βιβλία, "the Bible." He regarded it as a library of books which were strongly and closely related to each other and to be distinguished from all other writings.²⁴ He saw a certain harmony in the whole Bible. The aim of both testaments was "the reformation of mankind."²⁵ But he also wished to show the distinction between the Old and New Testaments. The Antiochian School made a special effort to make such a distinction.

Chase epitomizes an important conception of Chrysostom

23. Quoted by Chase, op. cit., p. 18.

24. Ibid., p. 39.

25. Ibid., p. 40.

regarding the Scriptures when he says, "The Bible owes its very existence to the condescension of God (συγκατάβασις). The Bible is profitable to men because one of its essential characteristics is its minuteness, its detailed significance (ἀκριβεία). God speaks to man in Man's words. But in that adaption their tone is not blunted; the articulation is clear."²⁶

Many of Chrysostom's homilies clearly show his great familiarity with the whole of Scripture. He used Scripture alone to fortify his argument in his homilies of a controversial nature. He nowhere in his homilies on Romans relied upon existing tradition or the authority of the Church to back up his arguments. "The dispute with the most rationalistic and critical Arians seems never to have turned on the authority, but only on the interpretation of Scripture."²⁷ The controversial situation provided some degree of incentive for Chrysostom in arriving at the exact meaning of the words of Scripture.

In his preliminary remarks on the epistle to the Romans Chrysostom shows his estimate for the worth of Scripture when he says, "For from this it is that our countless evils have arisen--from ignorance of the Scriptures; from this it is that the plague of heresies has broken out; from this that there are negligent lives; from this labors without advantage.

26. Ibid., p. 41.

27. Stephens, op. cit., p. 122.

For as men deprived of this daylight would not walk aright, so they that look not to the gleaming of the Holy Scriptures must needs be frequently and constantly sinning, in that they were walking in the worst darkness."²⁸

In his exhortation to the twenty-eighth homily Chrysostom points out many things that may be learned from the Psalms. He shows regard for their worth by saying, "These things do thou say continually: by these be instructed. For every single word of this has in it an undiscoverable ocean of meaning. For we have been just running over them only: but if you were minded to give these passages accurate investigation, you will see the riches to be great."²⁹

In his approach to understanding Scripture Chrysostom usually does not attempt to reason out the mysteries of divine truth. This is shown, for example, when he comments on the words of Romans 16, "'to Whom be glory forever, Amen.'" And he (Paul) uses a doxology again through awe at the incomprehensibility of these mysteries. For even now they have appeared, there is no such thing as comprehending them by reasonings, but it is by faith we must come to a knowledge of them, for in no other way can we."³⁰

28. Nicene, p. 335.

29. Ibid., p. 541.

30. Ibid., p. 534f. It should be noted that the translation appearing in the Nicene edition is not altogether adequate. Typographical errors are not infrequent. Where Chrysostom quotes the New Testament Greek and the Septuagint, the translators offer the Authorized Version translation, with few exceptions.

In commenting on Priscilla and Aquila mentioned in Romans 16:2, Chrysostom says that it was the words of Paul that made them what they were. Therefore he exhorts his hearers to hold a "continual discourse" with the writings of Paul. "For through Paul's tongue even He will discourse with thee."³¹

31. Homily 30, Nicene, p. 551.

It is interesting to note one comment of Chrysostom on the worth of the more obscure books of the Bible and the canon. "But there are some even so low-minded, and empty, and conceited of Heaven, as not to think that books only, but whole books of the Bible are of no use, as Leviticus, Joshua, and Acts besides. And in this way many of the simple ones have been for rejecting the Old Testament, and attending on to the way, that results from this habit of mind, have likewise crossed away many parts of the New Testament also. But of these men, so intoxicated and living to the flesh, we do not make much account..."³²

As we might expect in homilies addressed to common people, Chrysostom rarely discusses variant readings of the text. One occasion where he discussed another reading is in connection with Romans 2:26. Chrysostom comments, "He did not say, shall be reckoned (λογισθήσεται), but shall be termed (καλεσθήσεται), which is a more forcible word."³³

32. Romans 16:5, Homily 31, Nicene, p. 555.

33. Quoted by Chase, St. 21, p. 84. Chase notes that there seems to be no other authority for this reading.

V. Chrysostom as a Scholar

Chrysostom accepts the Syrian canon of the Peshito, which includes the Old Testament with the Apocrypha and omits Second Peter, Second and Third John, Jude, and Revelation from the New Testament. Theodoret accepts the same canon. It is interesting to note one comment of Chrysostom on the worth of the more obscure books of the Bible and the canon. "But there are some even so low-minded, and empty, and unworthy of Heaven, as not to think that names only, but whole books of the Bible are of no use, as Leviticus, Joshua, and more besides. And in this way many of the simple ones have been for rejecting the Old Testament, and advancing on in the way, that results from this habit of mind, have likewise pruned away many parts of the New Testament also. But of these men, as intoxicated and living to the flesh, we do not make much account..."³²

As we might expect in homilies addressed to common people, Chrysostom rarely discusses variant readings of the text. One occasion where he discusses another reading is in connection with Romans 2:26. Chrysostom comments, "He did not say, shall be reckoned (λογισθήσεται), but shall be turned (τραπήσεται); which is a more forcible word."³³

32. Romans 16:5, Homily 21, Nicene, p. 553.

33. Quoted by Chase, op. cit., p. 84. Chase notes that there seems to be no other authority for this reading.

In Romans 5:1 Chrysostom reads ἔχωμεν, the subjunctive form, not ἔχομεν, the indicative. The text of Chrysostom here adds strong confirmation to the subjunctive form which is strongly attested by various manuscripts.

Sometimes Chrysostom engaged in a discussion of punctuation. No examples of this, however, may be noted in his homilies on Romans.

That Chrysostom, as a preacher, quoted from memory is indicated in some passages. In connection with Romans 4:1 he omits εὐρηκέναι and wavers between πατέρα and προπάτορα (διὸ καὶ σφόδρα σεμνόνες προπάτορα καλῶν). In connection with Romans 6:17 he adds καθαρός from 1 Timothy 1:5, 2 Timothy 2:22.³⁴

Chrysostom is the chief witness of the Syro-Constantinopolitan recension for the text of the New Testament. In this text he was followed by most of the later Greek Fathers.³⁵

In dealing with the original language of the New Testament Chrysostom had the advantage, as a commentator, of speaking the same language as that of the writings which he interpreted. This gives his opinion some authority. But this also involved a disadvantage in that it tended to take away the incentive accurately to investigate the language of these

34. Ibid., p. 88.

35. Philip Schaff, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, vol. 9, p. 19.

writings. It must also be noted that the Greek language had undergone changes from the time of the apostles to Chrysostom's own time.³⁶

When Chrysostom quotes from the Old Testament, he usually discusses only the text of the LXX. There are times, however, when he also discusses the text of other Greek versions.³⁷ Because of his ignorance of the Hebrew language, Chrysostom was an expounder of the LXX rather than of the Hebrew text. He indicates, however, that the greater obscurity of the Old Testament came from its being read in a translation.

As a rule Chrysostom regarded the LXX as being free from error. Deviation of the LXX from the original text apparently did not disturb him. He felt that the Spirit which guided the writers of the original text also served to preserve the translators of that text from error.³⁸

Perhaps it should be noted at this time that conclusions drawn from matters of small detail in Chrysostom's homilies cannot attain absolute certainty. This is due to the fact that most of his homilies were taken down by shorthand writers as they were spoken. It was a custom in the Eastern Church to take down the homilies of famous preachers in this

36. Chase points out three periods in the history of Byzantine Greek, *op. cit.*, p. 90ff.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 33ff.

38. For Chrysostom's personal account of the origin of the LXX see *ibid.*, p. 30ff.

way. Absolute certainty is ruled out in some cases also by the fact that the correct reading for the text of Chrysostom's homilies cannot be definitely determined.

One of the greatest factors which directed the efforts of Chrysostom as he applied his homiletical principles to Romanians was the desire to edify the people of orthodox who gathered to hear him. Chrysostom's exegesis of Scripture was directed primarily toward this practical end. Though in his language he seems sometimes to soar to the highest heights, still in his purpose of promoting a holier life he keeps his feet on the ground. This purpose of his interpretation may be noted in the following passages.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." As examples worthy of this blessed spirit, and able to teach all men to offer unto God the firstlings of their good deeds and words, and to render thanks not only for their own, but also for others' well-doings: which also maketh the soul pure from envy and grudging, and draweth God in a greater measure towards the loving spirit of them that so render thanks.

You see him (Paul) painfully desiring to see them, and yet not enduring to see them contrary to what seemed good unto God, but having his longing singled with the fear of God. For he loved them, and was eager to come to them. Yet he did

VI. Factors which Influence the Direction of Chrysostom's Exegesis

One of the greatest factors which directed the efforts of Chrysostom as he applied his hermeneutical principles to Romans was the desire to edify the people of Antioch who gathered to hear him. Chrysostom's exegesis of Romans was directed primarily toward this practical end. Though in his language he seems sometimes to soar to the highest heavens, still in his purpose of promoting a holier life he keeps both feet on the ground. This purpose of his interpretation may be noted in the following passages.

"First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.' An exordium worthy of this blessed spirit, and able to teach all men to offer unto God the firstlings of their good deeds and words, and to render thanks not only for their own, but also for others' well-doings: which also maketh the soul pure from envy and grudging, and draweth God in a greater measure towards the loving spirit of them that so render thanks."³⁹

"You see him (Paul) painfully desiring to see them, and yet not enduring to see them contrary to what seemed good unto God, but having his longing mingled with the fear of God. For he loved them, and was eager to come to them. Yet he did

39. Romans 1:8, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 343.

not, because he loved them, desire to see them contrary to what seemed good unto God. This is true love, not as we love who err on both sides from the laws of love: for either we love no one or if we ever do love, we love contrary to what seemeth good unto God, acting in both against the Divine law."⁴⁰

"'Given to (Gr. pursuing) hospitality.' He does not say doing it, but 'given' to it, so to instruct us not to wait for those that shall ask it, and see when they will come to us, but to run to them, and be given to finding them."⁴¹

Chrysostom's training in the theology of the School of Antioch is a second factor which gives considerable direction to what he emphasizes in his exegesis. The following passages indicate his emphasis upon the love of God toward man and the free will of man.

"Strange! how mighty is the love of God! we which were enemies and disgraced, have all at once become saints and sons."⁴²

"This fruit then let us keep growing by us, that we may be in the fruition of joy here, and may obtain the kingdom to come by the grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom and with Whom, be glory to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit, now and always, even unto all ages. Amen."

40. Romans 1:11, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 345.

41. Romans 12:13, Homily 21, Nicene, p. 504.

42. Romans 1:7, Homily 1, Nicene, p. 342.

This is the customary close of Chrysostom's homilies; it stresses the love of God to man.⁴³

"For the Cross is for our sakes, being the work of unspeakable Love towards man, the sign of His great concern for us."⁴⁴

"Yet, be not afraid: for the reason of my saying this was not that I might thrust you into despair; but that I might show the love of the Lord toward man..."⁴⁵

"He does not say, let not the flesh live or act, but, 'let not sin reign,' for He came not to destroy our nature, but to set our free choice aright."⁴⁶

"Next that you may learn that it came not of your own willing temper only, but the whole of it of God's grace also, after saying, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart,' he adds, 'that form of doctrine which was delivered you.' For the obedience from the heart shows the free will."⁴⁷

Thirdly, the controversial factor frequently enters into Chrysostom's exegesis. Many of his interpretations are directed against prevalent heresies. This controversial factor is evident in the following passages.

"Do you observe, how by degrees he shows it to be not an accuser of sin only, but in a measure its producer? Yet

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43. Homily 21, Nicene, p. 342.
 44. Romans 1:16, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 348.
 45. Romans 3:23, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 377.
 46. Romans 6:12, Homily 11, Nicene, p. 410.
 47. Romans 6:17, Homily 11, Nicene, p. 412.

not from any fault of its own, but from that of the froward Jews, he proves it was, that this happened. For he has taken good heed to stop the mouths of the Manichees, that accuse the Law..."⁴⁸

"Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.' On this text, those who find fault with the flesh, and contend it was no part of God's creation, attack us. What are we to say then? Just what we did before, when discussing the Law..."⁴⁹

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?' And he does not say of God, so indifferent is it to him whether he mentions the Name of Christ or of God."⁵⁰

"But when you hear him say, 'to the only wise God,' think not that this is said in disparagement of the Son."⁵¹

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit.' Here he again puts forward Christ and the Spirit, and makes no mention whatever of the Father. And I say this, that when you find him mentioning the Father and the Son, or the Father only, you may not despise either the Son or the Spirit."⁵²

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48. Romans 7:7, Homily 12, Nicene, p. 420.
 49. Romans 7:17.18, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 428.
 50. Romans 8:35, Homily 15, Nicene, p. 455.
 51. Romans 16:27, Homily 27, Nicene, p. 535.
 52. Romans 15:30, Homily 30, Nicene, p. 549.

VII. Characteristics of His Homilies

The homilies of Chrysostom on Romans are usually divided into two distinct sections. The first consists of explanation of Scripture and the second of exhortation. The homilies vary in length. As a rule Chrysostom chooses about two paragraphs according to the Greek text to cover in one homily. He explains a sentence or two at a time from these paragraphs. These smaller units closely parallel the verse divisions of the Authorized Version. Some of the longer homilies probably took about one hour to deliver, some of the shorter ones about twenty minutes. Usually about two-thirds of a homily is devoted to explanation and one-third to exhortation. Chrysostom makes a clear distinction between explanation (exegesis) and exhortation (application). Sometimes the exhortations are closely connected with the preceding explanation of Scripture, but frequently the exhortations have only a remote connection with it.

The language which Chrysostom employs in his homilies is not on a difficult plane. That his language is usually simple and direct in spite of his long sentences is probably due to the fact that he was speaking to the common people of Antioch. Almost every homily, however, clearly indicates that he was steeped in the tradition of a rhetor. Many expressions are florid and imaginative. Much of what he says

is designed to stir the hearer. In his concluding homily on Romans he refers dramatically to Paul, "Fain would I see the spiritual Lion. For as a lion breathing forth fire upon the herds of foxes, so rushed he upon the caln of demons and philosophers, and as the burst of some thunderbolt, was borne down into the host of the devil..."⁵³

The effect which his homilies had upon the people is sometimes exhibited in the homilies themselves. In the fifteenth homily specific mention is made of the spontaneous applause of the people. "For what is the good of these applauses and clamors? I demand one thing only of you, and that is the display of them in real action, the obedience of deeds."⁵⁴ It is said that such reactions of the people were not infrequent.

Many homilies include references to Chrysostom's environment in Antioch. He often gives concrete examples of the inordinate luxury of this colorful metropolis. He notes the love of the people for barbarities of the circus and the foulness of the theater. He describes the life of gladiators. He notes current attitudes toward virginity and martyrdom. "And for this reason among the ancients, if any were found practising virginity, it was quite astonishing. But now the thing is scattered over every part of the world. And death in those times some few men did with difficulty despise, but

53. Homily 32, Nicene, p. 563.

54. Nicene, p. 458.

now in villages and cities there are hosts of martyrs without number, consisting not of mean only, but even of women."⁵⁵

No systematic outlines can be traced in any of Chrysostom's homilies on Romans. He frequently digresses from the subject at hand to discuss matters which seem to be of more immediate importance. Brief summaries are inserted from time to time. The controversies of Chrysostom's time become evident in certain of his comments.

The exhortations abound in quotations from almost every book of the Old and New Testaments. Classical allusions may be noted occasionally, the most remarkable of which occurs in the second homily. "Where now are the wise of the Greeks, they that wear long beards and that are clad in open dress, and puff forth great words? All Greece and all barbarian lands has the tentmaker converted. But Plato, who is so cried up and carried about among them coming a third time to Sicily with the bombast of those words of his, with his brilliant reputation, did not even get the better of a single king, but came off so wretchedly, as even to have lost his liberty..."⁵⁶

His homilies contain many illustrations and illustrative anecdotes. "And for this reason too when he had said above, 'To declare His righteousness,' he added, 'at this time.' If any then were to gainsay, they do the same as if

55. Romans 7:6, Homily 12, Nicene, p. 420.

56. Romans 1:13, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 347.

a person who after committing great sins was unable to defend himself in court, but was condemned and going to be punished, and then being by the royal pardon forgiven, should have the effrontery after his forgiveness to boast and say that he had done no sin. For before the pardon came, was the time to prove it: but after it came he would no longer have the season for boasting. And this happened in the Jews' case."⁵⁷

"For it is said that a certain one of them, who went into a palace that shone with gold in abundance, and glistened with the great beauty of the marbles and the columns, when he saw the floor strewn with carpets in all directions, spat in the face of the master of the house, and when found fault with for it said, that since there was no other part of the house where he could do this, he was obliged to do this affront to his face. See how ridiculous a man is, who displays his taste in exteriors, and how little he is in the eyes of all reasonable men."⁵⁸

One remark Chrysostom made shows a quality of the people of Antioch which caused him considerable difficulty. "I know that ye are warmed thoroughly now, and are become as soft as any wax, but when ye have gone hence ye will spew it all out. This is why I sorrow, that what we are speaking of, we do not show in our actions, and this too though we should be greatest gainers thereby."⁵⁹

57. Romans 3:27, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 378.
 58. Homily 12, Nicene, p. 415.
 59. Homily 22, Nicene, p. 510.

VIII. Basis for His Hermeneutical Principles

The basis for Chrysostom's hermeneutical principles involves several considerations. The first requisite for proper interpretation, according to Chrysostom, is a genuine sympathy for the writer. He acknowledged that his understanding of Romans was based chiefly upon sympathetically identifying himself with the apostle Paul. "For it is not through any natural readiness and sharpness of wit that even I am acquainted with as much as I do know, if I do know anything, but owing to a continual cleaving to the man, and an earnest affection towards him."⁶⁰ Chrysostom's great affection for Paul is strikingly apparent in the conclusion to the homilies on Romans. In a burst of rhetorical speech Chrysostom exclaims, "Therefore I admire the city (Rome), not for the much gold, not for the columns, not for the other display there, but for these pillars of the Church (Paul and Peter). Would that it were now given me to throw myself round the body of Paul, and be riveted to the tomb, and to see the dust of that body that 'filled up that which was lacking' after 'Christ,' that bore 'the marks,' that sowed the Gospel everywhere..."⁶¹

Second, that the Scriptures are not obscure but rather open to anyone who wishes to seek their meaning Chrysostom

60. Introduction, Nicene, p. 335.

61. Homily 32, Nicene, p. 562.

implied when he said, "And so ye also, if ye be willing to apply to the reading of him with a ready mind, will need no other aid. For the word of Christ is true which saith, 'Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'"⁶² Chrysostom's love for Scripture and his personal regard for its worth already has been indicated.

Third, on no occasion does Chrysostom offer any infallible rule to be followed in matters of interpretation unless it be the rule of common sense. The principles which he follows are in accord with the everyday laws of common language. The words of a given passage in a given context can have only one intended meaning by the writer. Words are to be taken literally unless another meaning is indicated by the context. Meaning must be derived from a passage and not introduced into it.⁶³

62. Introduction, Nicene, p. 335.

63. Luther said of Chrysostom, "Er hat's sensus literalis, der thut's, da ist Leben, Kraft, und Wahrheit drinnen." Quoted by Farrar, op. cit., p. 222. Farrar holds that Luther admired Chrysostom more than any other of the Fathers. Perhaps Luther was somewhat unjust when he said of Chrysostom, "Multos splendidos composuit libros, sed tantum fuit chaos et saccus verborum." Quoted by Farrar, op. cit., p. 471.

IX. Five Principles of Historical and Grammatical Interpretation

The historical and grammatical interpretation of Chrysostom may be summarized under five hermeneutical principles.

1) The meaning of individual words must be noted carefully. This principle is indicated in the following passages.

"See how continually he puts the word 'called,' saying, 'called to be an Apostle; among whom ye also are called; to all that be in Rome, called:' and this he does not out of superfluity of words, but out of a wish to remind them of the benefit."⁶⁴

He shows the connotation of the word "grace" which Paul uses in Romans 1:7. "Oh address, that bringeth countless blessings to us! This also Christ bade the Apostles to use as their first word when entering into houses. Wherefore it is from this that Paul also in all places takes his beginning, from grace and peace..."⁶⁵

He points out the quality of words. "'Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness.'" See how everything here is intensive. For he says, 'being filled,' and 'with all,'..."⁶⁶

64. Romans 1:7, Homily 1, Nicene, p. 341.

65. Homily 1, Nicene, p. 342.

66. Romans 1:29, Homily 5, Nicene, p. 360.

He indicates Paul's choice of certain words. "'And do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.' See, here is another accusation again. For what defence can he set up, who flees from the light and chooses the dark? And he does not say, who are 'compelled by,' 'larded over by,' but who 'obey unrighteousness,' that one may learn that the fall is one of free choice, the crime not of necessity."⁶⁷

He shows the special connotation of the word "Jew."
 "... and first the very name itself, which was of great majesty, as the name Christian is now. For even then the distinction which the appellation made was great."⁶⁸

He distinguishes between various meanings of the same word. Commenting on Romans 1:14 he notes three meanings of the word "law." "'For the Gentiles,' he says, 'which have not the Law.' What Law, say? The written one. 'Do by nature the things of the Law.' Of what Law? Of that by works. 'These having not the Law.' What Law? The written one. 'Are a law unto themselves.' How so? By using the natural law. 'Who show the work of the Law.' Of what law? Of that by actions. For that which is by writing lieth outside; but this is within, the natural one, and the other is in actions. And one the writing proclaims; and another, nature; and another, actions. Of this third there is need, for the sake of which also those two exist, both the natural and the written."⁶⁹

67. Romans 2:8, Homily 5, Nicene, 362.

68. Romans 2:17, Homily 6, Nicene, p. 368.

69. Homily 6, Nicene, p. 370.

Chrysostom notes Paul's choice of language. "And this is why he uses so literal an expression, saying, 'that every mouth may be stopped,' so pointing out the barefaced and almost uncontrollable pomposity of their language, and that their tongue was now curbed in the strictest sense..."⁷⁰

He shows the meaning of ἀπολυτρώσεως. "And he does not say barely λυτρώσεως, but ἀπολυτρώσεως, entire redemption, to show that we should come no more into such slavery."⁷¹

He notes how individual words are used. "'Do we then,' he says, 'make void the Law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the Law.' Do you see his varied and unspeakable judgment? For the bare use of the word 'establish' shows that it was not then standing, but was worn out."⁷²

He indicates the connotation of words. "'Because the love of God is,' he does not say 'given,' but 'shed abroad in our hearts,' so showing the profusion of it. That gift then which is the greatest possible, He hath given..."⁷³

Close attention to individual words is necessary. "And what he has said looks indeed like tautology, but it is not to anyone who accurately attends to it."⁷⁴

He stresses the meaning of individual words in their specific context. "'And not only so, but we also joy in

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70. Romans 3:19, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 376.
 71. Romans 3:24, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 377.
 72. Romans 3:31, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 380.
 73. Romans 5:5, Homily 9, Nicene, p. 398.
 74. Romans 5:9, Homily 9, Nicene, p. 398.

God through our Lord Jesus Christ by Whom we have now received the atonement.' What meaneth the 'not only so?' Not only were we saved, he means, but we even glory for this very reason, for which some suppose we ought to hide our faces."⁷⁵

He indicates why Paul used one word in preference to another. "And for this cause, he does not here say 'grace,' but 'superabundance of grace.' For it was not as much as we must have to do away the sin only, that we received of His grace, but even far more."⁷⁶

He notes the meaning of a word in a specific context. "What then does the word 'sinners' mean here? To me it seems to mean liable to punishment and condemned to death."⁷⁷

He notes various meanings of the same word. "And even weakness he does not ascribe to it (the Law), but to the flesh, as he says, 'in that it was weak through the flesh,' using the word 'flesh' here again not for the essence and subsistency itself, but giving its name to the more carnal sort of mind."⁷⁸

He indicates reasons for Paul's employing certain words. "For as he called it 'sinful,' this was why he put the word 'likeness.' For sinful flesh it was not that Christ had, but like indeed to our sinful flesh, yet sinless, and in nature the same with us."⁷⁹

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75. Romans 5:11, Homily 9, Nicene, p. 399.
 76. Romans 5:17, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 403.
 77. Romans 5:19, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 403.
 78. Romans 8:3, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 432.
 79. ibid.

He notes Paul's choice of one word rather than another. "And yet he does not say 'for' Him; for what he says is, I would wish that I were accursed 'from' Him for my brethren. And this comes of his humbleness of mind."⁸⁰

He notes the connotation of certain words in connection with the people to whom they are addressed. "And he does not mention the 'sand of the sea' without a reason, but to remind them of the ancient promise whereof they had made themselves unworthy."⁸¹

He notes the meaning of a word in a given context. "But 'slumber' is a name he here gives to the habit of soul inclinable to the worse, when incurably and unchangeably so." He shows how it is similarly used. "For in another passage David says, 'that my glory may sing unto Thee, and I may not be put to slumber (Psalm 30:12, LXX):' that is, I may not alter, may not be changed. For as a man who is hushed to slumber in a state of pious fear would not easily be made to change his side; so too he that is slumbering in wickedness would not change with facility. For to be hushed to slumber here is nothing else but to be fixed and riveted to a thing. In pointing then to the incurable and unchangeable character of their spirit, he calls it 'a spirit of slumber.'⁸²

He notes the meaning of a word in a given context and

80. Romans 9:3, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 460.

81. Romans 9:27, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 470.

82. Romans 11:8, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 487.

shows how it is similarly used in another passage. "'For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits.' Meaning by mystery here, that which is unknown and unutterable, and hath much of wonder and much of what one should not expect about it. As in another passage too he says, 'Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.'"⁸³

He observes that Paul uses his words carefully. "And observe how great the exactness wherewith he useth each word. For he does not say, offer your bodies as a sacrifice, but 'present them,' as if he had said, never more have any interest in them."⁸⁴

He notes the meaning of a word in a given context. "And he does not say in order to be lowly in mind, but in order to sobriety, meaning by sobriety here not that virtue which contrasts with lewdness, nor the being free from intemperance, but being sober and healthful in mind. And the Greek name of it means keeping the mind safe."⁸⁵

He notes the reason for Paul's use of a certain word. "What then is the reason of his saying 'only'? To set Him in contrast with every created being."⁸⁶

The exhortation in the twenty-eighth homily includes

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83. Romans 11:25, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 493.
 84. Romans 12:1, Homily 20, Nicene, p. 497.
 85. Romans 12:3, Homily 20, Nicene, p. 498.
 86. Romans 16:27, Homily 27, Nicene, p. 535.

many references to the Psalms of David, in particular to Psalm 104. Chrysostom shows that close attention to individual words is necessary for proper understanding when he says, "These things do thou say continually: by these be instructed. For every single word of this has in it an undiscoverable ocean of meaning. For we have been just running over them only: but if you were minded to give these passages accurate investigation, you will see the riches to be great."⁸⁷

He notes the distinction between words of similar meaning. "And he does not say as teaching, nor simply putting in mind, (διδάσκων) but he uses a word (ἐπιταμιωνόντων) which means putting you in mind in a quiet way."⁸⁸

He notes the usus loquendi of certain words. "What is the force of, 'In the fulness of the blessing? Either he speaks of alms, or generally of good deeds. For blessing is a name he very commonly gives to alms. As when he says, 'As a blessing and not as covetousness (2 Corinthians 9:5).' And it was customary of old for the thing to be so called."⁸⁹

He shows the meaning of a word by giving synonyms. "For as though they were not at once to be discerned, he says, 'I beseech you to mark,' that is, to be exceedingly particular about, and to get acquainted with, and to search out thoroughly..."⁹⁰

87. Nicene, p. 541.

88. Romans 15:15, Homily 29, Nicene, p. 542.

89. Romans 15:29, Homily 30, Nicene, p. 548.

90. Romans 16:17, Homily 32, Nicene, p. 559.

He notes the meaning of a word in a given context.

"For by the word ξένον, used here, he means a host, not a guest."⁹¹

2) An interpretation must be in conformity with rules of grammar. This principle is indicated in the following passages.

He shows the meaning and relationship of various prepositions. "For the 'before,' is equivalent to 'alike with.'"⁹²

He notes the function of a ἵνα clause in a given context. "But the particle 'that' again does not assign the cause but the result."⁹³

He notes the meaning of εἴπερ in a given context. "'If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.' He often uses this 'if so be,' not to express any doubt, but even when he is quite persuaded of the thing, and instead of 'since' as when he says, 'If it is a righteous thing,' for 'seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you (2 Thessalonians 1:6).' Again, 'Have ye suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain (Galatians 3:4)?'"⁹⁴

He notes the significance of the passive in a given context. "Wherefore he calleth him not only 'a vessel of wrath,' but also one 'fitted for destruction.' That is,

91. Romans 16:23, Homily 32, Nicene, p. 561.
 92. Romans 4:17, Homily 8, Nicene, p. 390.
 93. Romans 5:20, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 404.
 94. Romans 8:9, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 435.

fully fitted indeed, but by his own proper self."⁹⁵

He indicates the meaning and relationship of various prepositions. "Wherefore he proceeds to say, 'For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.' Himself devised, Himself created, Himself worketh together."⁹⁶

He notes Paul's special use of the preposition ἀπό. "'Abhor (ἀποστουχοῦντες) that which is evil.' And he does not speak of refraining from it, but of hating it, and not merely hating it, but hating it exceedingly. For this word ἀπό is often of intensive force with him, as where he speaks of 'earnest expectation' (ἀποκαρδοκία Romans 8:19), 'looking out for' (ἀπεκδεχόμενοι Romans 8:23), (complete) 'redemption' (ἀπολύτρωσις Romans 8:23)."⁹⁷

3) An interpretation of a passage must be in harmony with the context. This principle is indicated in the following passages.

Chrysostom points to the immediate context to ascertain the meaning of a given passage. "But what it is 'to hold the truth in unrighteousness,' learn from the sequel."⁹⁸

The general context indicates meaning. "And then having come to the enquiry concerning the punishment, he shows that the Jew is so far from being at all profited by the Law, that he is even weighed down by it. And this was his drift

95. Romans 9:22, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 468.
 96. Romans 11:36, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 494.
 97. Romans 12:9, Homily 21, Nicene, p. 503.
 98. Romans 1:18, Homily 3, Nicene, p. 351.

some way back."⁹⁹

The context serves to determine whether a certain interpretation is admissible or not. "I know indeed that some take the 'entrusted' not of the Jews, but of the oracles, as much as to say, the Law was believed in. But the context does not admit of this being held good. For in the first place he is saying this with a view to accuse them, and to show that, though in the enjoyment of many a blessing from above, they yet showed great ingratitude. Then the context also makes this clear."¹⁰⁰

The immediate context confirms the meaning of a given passage. "What does 'we are dead' mean? Does it mean that as for that, and as far as it goes, we have all received the sentence of death? or, that we became dead to it by believing and being enlightened. This is what one should rather say, since the sequel makes this clearly right."¹⁰¹

The following context may serve to interpret what precedes. "And that what I am saying is not mere guesswork, hearken to Paul's own interpretation of this very thing in what comes next."¹⁰²

Unusual statements are made clear by their context. "And I am aware that what I am saying will seem a paradox to you. Still if ye do not make a disturbance, I will pre-

99. Romans 2:10, Homily 5, Nicene, p. 363.
 100. Romans 3:2, Homily 6, Nicene, p. 372.
 101. Romans 6:2, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 405.
 102. Romans 6:6, Homily 11, Nicene, p. 409.

sently endeavor to make it clear. For what he has said he has not said nakedly..."¹⁰³

The context is important in determining the meaning of a passage. Chrysostom emphasizes this fact when he covers a passage as long as Romans 9 in one homily. "And this is why I have continued longer upon this explanatory part of the discourse, that I might not be compelled to break off the continuity of the context, and so spoil the clearness of the statements. And for this cause too I will bring my discourse to a conclusion here, without saying anything to you on the more immediately practical points, as I generally do, lest I should make a fresh indistinctness in your memories by saying so much."¹⁰⁴

4) An interpretation must be in conformity with the historical background. This principle is indicated in the following passages.

In his introductory homily on Romans Chrysostom dwells at length on the date of the epistle. On the basis of internal evidence he discusses the relationship of Romans to the other epistles. "And as we are going to enter fully into this epistle, it is necessary to give the date also at which it was written. ... But let no one consider this an undertaking beside the purpose, nor a search of this kind a piece of superfluous curiosity; for the date of the epistles contributes

103. Romans 5:5, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 460.

104. Romans 9:33, Homily 17, Nicene, p. 471.

no little to what we are looking after."¹⁰⁵ Thus he indicates that a proper interpretation must include a consideration of the historical background.

Chrysostom comments on the historical background relating to Romans 1:27, where unnatural vice of the heathen is mentioned. "Yet of old the matter seemed even to be a law, and a certain lawgiver among them bade the domestic slaves neither to use unguents when dry (i.e. except in bathing) nor to keep youths, giving the free this place of honor, or rather of shamefulness. Yet they, however, did not think the thing shameful, but as being a grand privilege, and one too great for slaves, the Athenian people, the wisest of people, and Solon who is so great amongst them, permitted it to the free alone. And sundry other books of the philosophers may one see full of this disease."¹⁰⁶

He notes that Paul's reference to Jews and Gentiles in Romans 2:10 refers to Old Testament times. "What Jew does he here mean? or about what Gentiles is he discoursing? It is of those before Christ's coming. For his discourse had not hitherto come to the time of grace, but he was still dwelling upon the earlier times, so breaking down first from afar off and clearing away the separation between the Greek and the Jew, that when he should do this in the matter of grace, he might no more seem to be devising some new and

105. Nicene, p. 336.

106. Romans 1:27, Homily 4, Nicene, p. 357.

degrading view."¹⁰⁷

He holds that Romans 8:26 is not clear to a person if the historical background is not known. "This statement is not clear, owing to the cessation of many of the wonders which then used to take place. Wherefore I must needs inform you of the state of things at that time, and in this way the rest of the subject will be cleared."¹⁰⁸

In connection with Romans 11:10, Chrysostom feels that the passage is clear to his hearers because they are acquainted with the historical background that makes the passage clear. "'Let their eyes be darkened that they may not see, and bow Thou down their back alway.' Do these things then still require any interpreting? Are they not plain even to those ever so senseless? And before our words, the very issue of the facts has anticipated us in bearing witness to what was said. For at what time have they ever been so open to attacks? at what time such an easy prey? at what time hath He so 'bowed down their backs?' At what time have they been set under such bondage? And what is more, there is not to be any unloosing from these terrors..."¹⁰⁹

He comments on the historical background as he feels it applies to the first words of Romans 13. "For in this way he was more likely to draw the governors who were unbelievers

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107. Romans 2:10, Homily 5, Nicene, p. 363.
 108. Romans 8:26, Homily 14, Nicene, p. 447.
 109. Romans 11:10, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 487.

to religion, and the believers to obedience. For there was quite a common report in those days, which maligned the Apostles, as guilty of a sedition and revolutionary scheme, and as aiming in all they did and said at the subversion of the received institutions."¹¹⁰

He notes historical background for Paul's comment about Priscilla and Aquila. "'Who for my life have laid down their own necks.' You see they are thoroughly furnished martyrs. For in Nero's time it is probable that there were thousands of dangers, at the time as he even commanded all Jews to be removed from Rome."¹¹¹

5) An interpretation must be in conformity with the analogy of scripture. This principle is indicated in the following passages.

He enlarges upon the meaning of Paul by quoting from the Gospels. "'And art confident that thou thyself.' Here again he does not say that thou art 'a guide of the blind,' but 'thou art confident,' so thou boastest, he says. So great was the unreasonableness of the Jews. Wherefore he also repeats nearly the very words, which they used in their boastings. See for instance what they say in the Gospels. 'Thou wast altogether born in sin and dost thou teach us?' (John 9:34)."¹¹²

110. Romans 13:2, Homily 23, Nicene, p. 512.
 111. Romans 16:4, Homily 30, Nicene, p. 550.
 112. Romans 2:19, Homily 6, Nicene, p. 368.

Chrysostom interprets passages in the New Testament in the light of the Old Testament. "... for to be called a Jew and to know His Will and to approve the things which are more excellent, was no well doing of their own, but came of the grace of God: and this the Prophet also says, upraising them; 'He hath not done so to any nation, neither hath He showed His judgments unto them (Psalm 147:20);' and Moses again; 'Ask now whether there hath been any such thing as this?' he says, 'did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire and live (Deuteronomy 4: 32.33)...?'¹¹³

Chrysostom rules out a proposed false interpretation of "the carnal mind is enmity against God" on the basis of other portions of Scripture. "And what hope of salvation is there left, if it be impossible for one who is bad to become good? This is not what he says. Else how would Paul have become such as he was? how would the (penitent) thief, or Manasses, or the Ninevites, or how would David after falling have recovered himself? How would Peter after the denial have raised himself up? How could he that lived in fornication have been enlisted among Christ's fold? How could the Galatians who had 'fallen from grace' have attained their former dignity again?"¹¹⁴

He establishes his interpretation of "flesh" in Romans

113. Romans 3:1, Homily 6, Nicene, p. 372.
 114. Romans 8:7, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 434.

8:8 on the basis of the Old Testament. "And this mode of speaking is to be met with in many parts of the Old Testament also, to signify by flesh the gross and earthly life, which is entangled in pleasures that are not convenient. For to Noah He says, 'My Spirit shall not always make its abode in these men, because they are flesh (Genesis 6:3 as the LXX give it).'"¹¹⁵

Chrysostom interprets a given passage in the light of what he regards as a clearer passage. "For he does not say, that which is to be, but 'which shall be revealed in us,' as if already existing but unrevealed. As also in another place he said in clearer words, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God.'"¹¹⁶

The meaning of a given passage is confirmed by other passages. "For this is why he says, 'For we know not what we should pray for as we ought.' In order that the learner might not feel shame at his ignorance, he does not say, ye know not, but, 'we know not.' And that he did not say this merely to seem moderate he plainly shows from other passages."¹¹⁷

One passage of Scripture serves to interpret another. "'Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.' Now when you come to know of what kind the seed of Abraham is, you will see that the promise is given

115. Romans 8:8, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 435.
 116. Romans 8:18, Homily 14, Nicene, p. 443.
 117. Romans 8:26, Homily 14, Nicene, p. 447.

to his seed, and know that the word hath not fallen to the ground. Of what kind, pray, is the seed then? It is no saying of mine, he means, but the Old Testament itself explains itself by saying as follows, 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called (Genesis 21:12).' "118

He compares the words of Paul with certain parables. "Through their fall salvation is come unto the Gentiles, for to provoke them to jealousy.' This language is not his own only, but in the Gospels too the parables mean this. For He who made a marriage feast for His Son, when the guests would not come, called those in the highways. And He who planted the Vineyard, when the husbandmen slew the Heir let out His Vineyard to others..."119

He notes passages with similar meaning to a given passage. "But in saying, 'Put ye on,' he bids us be girt about with Him upon every side. As in another place he says, 'But if Christ be in you (Romans 8:10).' And again, 'That Christ may dwell in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16.17).' "120

He compares passages which express the same thought. "But if they sin willingly, spring away from them. And in another place too he says this. For he says, 'Withdraw from every brother that walketh disorderly (2 Thessalonians 3:6):' and in speaking to Timothy about the coppersmith, he gives

118. Romans 9:7, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 462.
 119. Romans 11:11, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 489.
 120. Romans 13:14, Homily 24, Nicene, p. 518.

him the like advice, and says, 'Of whom be thou ware also
(2 Timothy 4:15).'¹²¹

121. Romans 16:18, Homily 32, Nicene, p. 560.

writes of the apostle to the Romans Chrysostom sought to put
himself into the position of Paul as he interprets the apos-
tle's words. He identifies himself with Paul in that he
repeatedly indicated what he felt the apostle's purpose was
in writing a given passage. Frequently Chrysostom dwells more
upon what the purpose of the writer was than upon the meaning
of the words themselves. The following excerpts illustrate
this characteristic of his exegesis.

"See the wisdom of the teacher. He said, to the end
that 'ye may be strengthened.' He knew that what he had said
would be heavy and irksome to the disciples. He says, 'to
the end that ye may be comforted.' But this again is heavy,
not indeed to such a degree as the former, still it is heavy.
He then pares down what is galling in this also, smoothing
his speech on every side, and rendering it easy of acceptance."

"But for a person richly adorned with good deeds, not
to be made just from deeds, but from faith, this is the thing
to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong
light. And this is why he passes by all the virtues, and
leads his discourse back to this one."¹²²

122. Romans 1:12, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 226.
123. Romans 4:2, Homily 4, Nicene, p. 225.

X. Characteristics of Chrysostom's Exegesis

1) In accord with his noteworthy sympathy for the writer of the epistle to the Romans Chrysostom always puts himself into the position of Paul as he interprets the apostle's words. He identifies himself with Paul in that he repeatedly indicates what he felt the apostle's purpose was in writing a given passage. Frequently Chrysostom dwells more upon what the purpose of the writer was than upon the meaning of the words themselves. The following excerpts illustrate this characteristic of his exegesis.

"See the wisdom of the teacher. He said, to the end that 'ye may be strengthened.' He knew that what he had said would be heavy and irksome to the disciples. He says, 'to the end that ye may be comforted.' But this again is heavy, not indeed to such a degree as the former, still it is heavy. He then pares down what is galling in this also, smoothing his speech on every side, and rendering it easy of acceptance."¹²²

"But for a person richly adorned with good deeds, not to be made just from hence, but from faith, this is the thing to cause wonder, and to set the power of faith in a strong light. And this is why he passes by all the others, and leads his discourse back to this man."¹²³

122. Romans 1:12, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 346.

123. Romans 4:2, Homily 4, Nicene, p. 385.

"But we must not take what is here said literally, but get acquainted with the spirit and object of the speaker, and what he aimed to compass."¹²⁴

"But here he seems to me to be attacking the Jews too, who cling to the Law."¹²⁵

2) His exegetical comments were always calculated to meet the understanding of the people. He interpreted a given passage to the extent that he thought was necessary for his hearers. This is evident in the following excerpts.

"Now has what was said become clear to you, or must one make it still clearer? Perhaps it were needful to say somewhat more."¹²⁶

"Is then the language used made plain to you? or does it still want much in clearness? I think indeed that, to those who have been attending, it is easy to get a clear view of it. But if it has slipped anybody's memory, you can meet in private, and learn what it was."¹²⁷

3) Sometimes Chrysostom divides a sentence or a phrase to get at the meaning. "'And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead, even Jesus Christ.' What is said has been made obscure by the close-folding of the words, and so it is necessary to divide it."¹²⁸

124. Romans 11:11, Homily 19, Nicene, p. 488.
 125. Romans 12:2, Homily 20, Nicene, p. 498.
 126. Romans 1:19, Homily 3, Nicene, p. 352.
 127. Romans 9:33, Homily 17, Nicene, p. 471.
 128. Romans 1:4, Homily 1, Nicene, p. 340.

"That without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers.' This is the part of genuine love, and he seems indeed to be saying some one thing, yet states four things even here. Both that he remembers, and that he does so continually, and that it is in his prayers, and that it is to ask great things for them."¹²⁹

4) He often enumerates points in presenting the meaning of a given passage.

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things.' The first charge is, that they did not find God; the second was, that it was while they had great and clear means to do it; the third, that withal they said they were wise; the fourth, that they not only did not find that Reverend Being, but even lowered Him to devils and to stones and stocks."¹³⁰

"For there are three excesses which the prophet lays down; he says that all of them together did evil, and that they did not do good indifferently with evil, but that they followed after wickedness alone, and followed it also with all earnestness."¹³¹

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to

129. Romans 1:10, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 344.
 130. Romans 1:23, Homily 3, Nicene, p. 352.
 131. Romans 3:18, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 375.

be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness.' See by how many proofs he makes good what was said. First, from the worthiness of the person, for it is not a man who doeth these things, but He should be too weak for it, but God all-powerful. For it is to God, he says, that the righteousness belongs. Again, from the Law and the Prophets. For you need not be afraid at hearing the 'without the Law,' inasmuch as the Law itself approves this. Thirdly, from the sacrifices under the old dispensation. For it was on this ground that he said, 'In His blood,' to call to their minds those sheep and calves. For if the sacrifices of things without reason, he means, cleared from sin, much more would this blood. And he does not say barely *λυτρώσεως*, but *ἀπολυτρώσεως*, entire redemption, to show that we should come no more in such slavery. And for this same reason he calls it a propitiation, to show that if the type had such force, much more would the reality display the same. But to show again that it was no novel thing or recent, he says, 'fore-ordained;' and by saying God 'fore-ordained,' and showing that the good deed is the Father's he showeth it to be the Son's also. For the Father 'fore-ordained,' but Christ in His own blood wrought the whole aright.¹³²

5) Chrysostom repeatedly paraphrases the meaning of a given passage.

132. Romans 3:24,25, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 377.

"'Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar.' What he means is something of this sort. I do not mean, he says, that some did not believe, but if you will, suppose that all were unbelieving, so waiving what really happened, to fall in with the objector, that he might seem overbearing or to be suspected. Well, he says, in this way God is the more justified."¹³³

"'But not as the offence, so is also the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto the many.' For what he says is somewhat of this kind. If sin had so extensive effects, and the sin of one man too; how can grace, and that the grace of God, not the Father only, but also the Son, do otherwise than be the more abundant of the two? For the latter is far the more reasonable supposition. For that one man should be punished on account of another does not seem to be much in accordance with reason. But for one to be saved on account of another is at once more suitable and more reasonable. If then the former took place, much more may the latter."¹³⁴

6) An old Latin proverb states that love and a cough cannot be concealed; neither can Chrysostom's bent for rhetorical expression be entirely suppressed in the statement of his interpretations. It is characteristic of his exegesis in his

133. Romans 3:4, Homily 6, Nicene, p. 373.

134. Romans 5:15, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 402.

homilies that rhetorical flourishes appear from time to time.

"For, I do not, because you are rich, and have the advantage of others, show less concern about the others. For it is not the rich that we are seeking, but the faithful. Where now are the wise of the Greeks, they that wear long beards and that are clad in open dress, and puff forth great words? All Greece and all barbarian lands has the tentmaker converted. But Plato, who is so cried up and carried about among them, coming a third time to Sicily with the bombast of those words of his, with his brilliant reputation, did not even get the better of a single king, but came off so wretchedly, as even to have lost his liberty. But this tentmaker ran over not Sicily alone or Italy, but the whole world; and while preaching too he desisted not from his art, but even then sewed skins, and superintended the workshop."¹³⁵

7) Chrysostom's exegesis is characterized by regard for the laws of language in that he notes the limitations of figurative language.

"And, that no one may condemn this language of hyperbole, I should be glad to put this question to you..."¹³⁶

"'That as sin reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.' This he says to show that the latter ranks as a king, the former, death, as a soldier, being

135. Romans 1:13, Homily 2, Nicene, p. 347.

136. Homily 7, Nicene, p. 381.

marshalled under the latter and armed by it. If then the latter (i.e. sin) armed death, it is plain enough that the righteousness destructive hereof, which by grace was introduced, not only disarms death, but even destroys it."¹³⁷ In this and in the following excerpt Chrysostom indicates that he notes the proper implications of Paul's metaphorical speech. "Next, since he had mentioned arms and a king, he keeps on with the metaphor in these words: 'For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.'"¹³⁸

8) Chrysostom frequently refers to the style of Paul.

"I have therefore whereof I may glory, through Jesus Christ, in those things which pertain to God.' Inasmuch as he had humbled himself exceedingly, he again raised his style, doing this also for their sakes, lest he should seem to become readily an object of contempt."¹³⁹

"This then he does here also in the case of alms. And consider what dignity there is in his expressions. For he does not say, I go to carry alms, but 'to minister.'"¹⁴⁰

9) Chrysostom is careful to note peculiarities of the individual writer.

"For this word ἀπό is often of intensive force with him, as where he speaks of 'earnest expectation,' 'looking

137. Romans 5:21, Homily 10, Nicene, p. 404.
 138. Romans 7:23, Homily 12, Nicene, p. 417.
 139. Romans 15:17, Homily 29, Nicene, p. 543.
 140. Romans 15:27, Homily 30, Nicene, p. 548.

out for,' (complete) 'redemption.'"¹⁴¹

10) Chrysostom notes Paul's customary methods in writing.

"However, he nevertheless draws support for this from what he is at present upon, and carries his discourse forward by the method of question. And this he is always in the habit of doing both for clearness sake, and for the sake of confidence in what is said."¹⁴²

"And let me beg you to consider how he everywhere sets down these two points; His part, and our part. On His part, however, there be things varied and numerous and diverse. For He died for us, and farther reconciled us, and brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. And so he says, 'by faith, unto this grace.'"¹⁴³

"Then since it was a great thing he had commanded them, and had bidden them even relax their own perfectness in order to set right the other's weakness; he again introduces Christ, in the following words: 'For even Christ pleased not Himself.' And this he always does. For when he was upon the subject of alms, he brought Him forward and said, 'Ye know the grace of the Lord, that though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor (2 Corinthians 8:9). And when he was exhorting

141. Romans 12:9, Homily 21, Nicene, p. 503.
 142. Romans 4:2, Homily 8, Nicene, p. 385.
 143. Romans 5:2, Homily 9, Nicene, p. 396.

to charity, it was from Him that he exhorted in the words 'As Christ also loved us (Ephesians 5:25).'¹⁴⁴

11) Chrysostom often uses the expression "bare words" and similar expressions such as "barely" or "nakedly" in his homilies on Romans. For example, he says, "For we are not to look to the bare words, but always to the sentiment of the speaker, and so come to a perfectly distinct knowledge of what is said."¹⁴⁵ The words themselves, he means, are not to be considered apart from other factors which contribute toward determining their meaning. The expression "bare words" seems to designate words which unnaturally are broken off from something which should accompany them. This unique expression which Chrysostom employs in about half of his homilies indicates his stress on the important law of language that context determines meaning.

12) Chrysostom's exegesis is characterized by his common sense viewpoint. This viewpoint is not rationalistic. He acknowledges that Scripture relates things which must be apprehended not by reason but by faith. He rules out questions which are prompted merely from curiosity.

"'And being fully persuaded that what He had promised, He was able also to perform.' Abstaining then from curious questionings is glorifying God, as indulging in them is transgressing. But if by entering into curious questions, and

144. Romans 15:3, Homily 27, Nicene, p. 535.

145. Romans 8:9, Homily 13, Nicene, p. 435.

searching out things below, we fail to glorify Him, much more if we be over curious in the matter of the Lord's generation, shall we suffer to the utmost for our insolence. For if the type of the resurrection is not to be searched into, much less those unutterable and awestrking subjects.¹⁴⁶

"And he uses a doxology again through awe at the incomprehensibleness of these mysteries. For even now they have appeared, there is no such thing as comprehending them by reasonings, but it is by faith we must come to a knowledge of them, for in no other way can we."¹⁴⁷

13) From time to time he comments on the structure of the epistle. "'For which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you.' Observe again, how he makes the end of the like texture with the introduction. For while he was quite at the beginning of the Epistle, he said, 'Often-times I purposed to come unto you, but was let hitherto (Romans 1:13).'¹⁴⁸

146. Romans 4:20, Homily 8, Nicene, p. 391.

147. Romans 16:27, Homily 27, Nicene, p. 534.

148. Romans 15:22, Homily 29, Nicene, p. 544.

XI. Three Unique Interpretations

The following interpretations which Chrysostom presents in his homilies on Romans are not commonly proposed by modern commentators.

Romans 8:26, "'But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' This statement is not clear, owing to the cessation of many of the wonders which then used to take place. Wherefore I must needs inform you of the state of things at that time, and in this way the rest of the subject will be cleared. What therefore was the state of things then? God did in those days give to all that were baptized certain excellent gifts, and the name that these had was spirits. For 'the spirits of the Prophets,' it says, 'are subject to the prophets (1 Corinthians 14:32). And one had the gift of prophecy and foretold things to come, and another of wisdom, and taught the many; and another of healings, and cured the sick; and another of miracles, and raised the dead; another of tongues, and spake different languages. And with all these there was also a gift of prayer, which also was called a spirit, and he that had this prayed for all the people. For since we are ignorant of much that is profitable for us and ask things that are not profitable, the gift of prayer came into some particular person of that day, and what was profitable for all the whole

Church alike, he was the appointed person to ask for in behalf of all, and the instructor of the rest. Spirit then is the name that he gives here to the grace of this character, and the soul that receiveth the grace, and intercedeth to God, and groaneth. For he that was counted worthy of such grace as this, standing with much compunction, and with many mental groanings falling before God, asked the things that were profitable for all. And of this the Deacon of the present day is a symbol when he offers up the prayers for the people. This then is what Paul means when he says, 'the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered.'¹⁴⁹

Romans 12:20, "'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him to drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' Why, he means, am I telling you that you must keep peace? for I even insist upon your doing kindness. For he says, 'give him to eat, and give him to drink.' Then as the command he gave was a very difficult and a great one, he proceeds: 'for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head.' And this he said both to humble the one by fear, and to make the other more ready-minded through hope of a recompense. For he that is wronged, when he is feeble, is not so much taken with any goods of his own as with the vengeance upon the person who has pained

149. Homily 14, Nicene, p. 447.

him. For there is nothing so sweet as to see an enemy chastised."¹⁵⁰

In an exhortation which warns of the torments of hell Chrysostom indicates his interpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:7. "Dost thou not hear what Nero's character was, whom Paul even calls the Mystery of Antichrist? For 'the mystery of iniquity,' he says, 'already worketh.'"¹⁵¹

150. Homily 22, Nicene, p. 508. Augustine comments on such an interpretation, "How does any one love the man to whom he gives food and drink for the very purpose of heaping coals of fire upon his head, if 'coals of fire' in this place signify some heavy punishment?"

151. Homily 31, Nicene, p. 558.

XII. Chrysostom's Doctrinal Position

Definitely to ascertain the doctrinal position of Chrysostom on the basis of his homilies on Romans is hardly possible. It is evident in these homilies that Chrysostom stressed the most popular concepts of the School of Antioch, namely, the love of God toward man and the free will of man. But the significance of these fourth century concepts is not readily apparent to students of theology in the twentieth century. The terms which Chrysostom used had not yet absorbed the various connotations from theological systems and controversies of later centuries.

In the homilies on Romans, however, it is possible to note with some degree of certainty what Chrysostom's doctrinal position on justification was. The following excerpts permit Chrysostom to speak for himself on the subject.¹⁵²

"'That He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.' Doubt not then: for it is not of works, but of faith: and shun not the righteousness of God, for it is a blessing in two ways; because it is easy, and also open to all men. And be not abashed and shamefaced. For if He Himself openly declareth Himself to do so, and He so to say, findeth a pride therein, how comest thou to be dejected and

152. Note that many excerpts previously quoted have reference also to justification.

to hide thy face at what thy Master glorieth in?"¹⁵³

"But after saying, that the gift of God was great and unspeakable, and having discoursed concerning His power, he shows farther that Abraham's faith was deserving of the gift, that you may not suppose him to have been honored without reason."¹⁵⁴

"What great demand then doth God make upon thee, since He Himself giveth thee blessings quite entire from His own stores? One thing only, hope, He asks of thee, that thou too mayest have somewhat of thine own to contribute toward thy salvation. And this he intimates in what he proceeds with: 'For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.'¹⁵⁵

"Now if all have sinned, how come some to be saved, and some to perish? It is because all were not minded to come to Him, since for His part all were saved, for all were called."¹⁵⁶

"'Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated.' What was the cause then why one was loved and the other hated? why was it that one served, the other was served? It was because one was wicked, and the other good. And yet the children being not yet born, one was honored and the other condemned. For when they were not as yet born, God said,

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153. Romans 3:26, Homily 7, Nicene, p. 378.
 154. Romans 4:17, Homily 8, Nicene, p. 390.
 155. Romans 8:25, Homily 14, Nicene, p. 446.
 156. Romans 9:10, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 464.

'the elder shall serve the younger.'"¹⁵⁷

"'And going about to establish their own righteousness, having not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.' ... For if they are still 'going about' to establish that, it is very plain that they have not yet established it. If they have not submitted themselves to this, they have fallen short of this also. But he calls it their 'own righteousness, that from faith, because it comes entirely from the grace from above, and because men are justified in this case, not by labors, but by the gift of God. But they that evermore resisted the Holy Ghost, and vexatiously tried to be justified by the Law, came not over to the faith. But as they did not come over to the faith, nor receive the righteousness thereupon ensuing, and were not able to be justified by the Law either, they were thrown out of all resources."¹⁵⁸

Chrysostom's language concerning justification was not exact. No single quotation from his Romans homilies can be cited to prove definitely what his position was. During the Reformation both Lutherans and Roman Catholics quoted Chrysostom as proof for their doctrinal positions.¹⁵⁹ It seems

157. Romans 9:13, Homily 16, Nicene, p. 464.

158. Romans 10:3, Homily 17, Nicene, p. 472.

159. In the Formula of Concord an expression of Chrysostom concerning free will is rejected. "As to the expressions of Chrysostom and Basil: 'Trahit Deus, sed volentem trahit; tantum velis, et Deus praeoccurrit,' likewise, the saying of the Scholastics, 'Hominis voluntas in conversione non est otiosa, sed agit aliquid,' that is, 'God draws, but He draws the willing;' likewise: 'Only be willing, and God will anticipate you;' likewise: 'In conversion the will of man is not idle, but effects

that Chrysostom said what he did about justification in connection with what he wished to accomplish in the mind and life of the people whom he addressed. The people before him in the church at Antioch were influenced by the idea that men in wickedness were left to the irresistible course of fate. To promote holy life he insisted upon the freedom of the human will. Seeing what he termed a "listlessness" toward Christian living in the people before him, he urged them gradually to develop their will with the assistance of God. He pointed out the weakness of man's moral purpose rather than a total corruption of his nature. He did not speak of faith as an instrument or hand that merely received forgiveness from God in an act of forensic justification. But he spoke of faith as the first in a series of good works; he stressed faith as the fruitful source of holy conduct.

something' (expressions which have been introduced for confirming the natural will in man's conversion, against the doctrine concerning God's grace), it is manifest from the explanation heretofore presented that they are not in harmony with the form of sound doctrine, but contrary to it, and therefore ought to be avoided when we speak of conversion to God." Concordia Tri-glossa, p. 913.

In the Augsburg Confession Chrysostom is quoted to show that an enumeration of sins in confession is not necessary. "I say not to you that you should disclose yourself in public, nor that you accuse yourself before others, but I would have you obey the prophet who says: 'Disclose thy way before God.' Therefore confess your sins before God, the true Judge, with prayer. Tell your errors, not with the tongue, but with the memory of your conscience, etc." p.69f.

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession he is quoted to show that civil satisfaction is necessary. "In the heart, contrition; in the mouth, confession; in the work, entire humility." p. 305.

A statement of Chrysostom concerning Holy Communion appears in the Formula of Concord, VII. Of the Holy Supper, p. 999.

XIII. Evaluation of Chrysostom as an Interpreter

Chrysostom was one of the pioneers of historical and grammatical interpretation, and his interpretation is accordingly primitive. The results of modern exegesis are, of course, overwhelmingly superior to that which Chrysostom produced. Many things which might be regarded as failings on Chrysostom's part are easily explained. His virtues as an interpreter far outweigh his failings.

His practical purpose sometimes hindered him from entering fully into all the significant things about a given passage. At times he stressed Paul's purpose in writing a given passage to such an extent that he overlooked the full meaning of the words themselves. Sometimes he erred in his judgment of Paul's person and purpose. Some passages he treats with only hasty or scanty comment. Perhaps on certain occasions he realized his inability to interpret more difficult passages and filled in the gap with a burst of rhetorical speech. At times he may be guilty of overemphasizing the characteristic doctrinal concepts of the School of Antioch. That he at times stresses what is obvious and self-evident may be counted as one of his failings. Whenever reference is made to the Old Testament, Chrysostom became an interpreter of the LXX rather than of the Hebrew text.

It must be said to Chrysostom's credit that he was one of the earliest interpreters to show proper regard for the laws of human language in deriving meaning from the words of Scripture. He was among the first to give attention to hermeneutic matter. He was the most successful representative of the School of Antioch, and he most effectively demonstrated the historical and grammatical interpretation of the Antiochians. On many occasions he exhibits an extraordinary degree of clarity, boldness, and common sense. Unlike many of the Greek Fathers who tended to be mystical or abstract, Chrysostom always endeavored to be down to earth and concrete. Because of his intense study of the Scriptures and his extensive personal Christian experience, he showed an amazing insight into the meaning of Scripture. It is remarkable that Chrysostom withstood strong contemporaneous tendencies toward the erroneous excesses of allegorical and mystical interpretation. Chrysostom everywhere displays a fervent personal love for Scripture and a thorough knowledge of the whole Bible.

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